GUSGUS: AGAINST ALL ODDS

AFTER 25 YEARS OF IMPOSSIBLE HIGHS AND LAST MINUTE COLLAPSES ICELAND’S BIGGEST ELECTRONIC BAND CELEBRATES 25 YEARS THIS IS THEIR UNTOLD SAGA
Idiotic PR Failure: The Odd Story Of Samherji And YouTube

The case of the fishing company Samherji hasn’t perhaps caught the attention of the world, but if the details are true, it has hurt a lot of people. The company, which is based in Akureyri, is accused of grotesque corruption in the African state Namibia, and hiding its profits securely in offshore companies instead of paying taxes to the owners of the fish around the Namibian coastline i.e. the Namibian people. The company has also been accused of bribing ministers and officials in Namibia and there are ongoing trials in the country.

All in all, three different countries have begun to investigate these allegations. Norway is investigating the shell company and its relationship to their state-owned bank DNB NKR. The shell company, entitled Cape Cod FS, was flagged because its ownership was unclear. Based in the Marshall Islands, the company transferred 9 billion ISK through the Norwegian bank before said bank stopped doing business with the company for fear of being involved in money laundering.

Namibian authorities have already arrested the top suspects in the case: the former Minister of Fisheries of Namibia and his son-in-law. They are both in custody and have offered to pay a high amount of money to get out, but both have been denied bail.

Willem Oliver, investigator at the Namibian special corruption department, stated that their investigation revealed that Esja Fishing, a daughter company of Samherji, paid the Minister’s son-in-law 30 million Namibian dollars—or a quarter of a billion Icelandic kronur. The son-in-law claims that there is nothing illegal about these transfers.

But what is happening in connection to the case in Iceland? Not much really. No one is in custody. The economic crime department in Iceland asked for an interview with the owners of Samherji some months ago, but we haven’t heard much more. The Icelandic Minister of Fisheries revealed shortly after the scandal broke that he had called the owner of the company, Ólafur Stein í Baldvinsson, and asked him how he felt—nothing more. The Minister just wanted to explore his emotions at the moment as he and Ólafur were old friends, and he himself had worked for Samherji some 20 years ago.

It was investigative journalism that broke the story, lead by a well-known Icelandic journalist, Helgi Selján at the news show Kveikur at RÚV, the national broadcasting company.

Samherji has denied these allegations from the get-go, and accused RÚV of witch-hunting.

Samherji struck back in the middle of August, as we reported on page 6. They have now made a propaganda video in the guise of a news documentary and released it on YouTube. The purpose was to get their side of the story out, but it was mainly an aggressive attack against Helgi, accusing him of fabricating news in a story from 2012, which is completely irrelevant to the Namibia case. These attacks backfired in a spectacular way.

Of course, nothing Helgi reported on was fabricated and the people of Iceland instead saw quickly how grave such an attack against a single journalist truly is. The only honest way to describe this scenario was that it is an idiotic PR failure of a massive company that should have known better. The story is nonetheless a timely reminder of how companies use their money and time to distort the narrative. This move is unprecedented in Iceland, and quite shocking, but it’s a reality many journalists have to face all around the world. Samherji should be ashamed.

Valur Grettisson
Editor-in-chief

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What Are Icelanders Talking About?

News and views in the Icelandic discourse
Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photos: Adobe Stock & Art Bicnick

The biggest story in Iceland right now is the “second wave” of the coronavirus in Iceland. No one doubts that there has been a resurgence of the virus in this country; the point of contention is who is to blame: tourists or locals. On the one hand, there are folks pointing out that since opening the borders a bit more last June, cases have gone up. On the other hand, there are folks pointing out that every new instance of the coronavirus that we know about has been attributed to Icelandic residents either skipping re-entry recommendations or eschewing our health guidelines. One question that has still gone unanswered in all the talk about closing the borders again is: until when? Until a vaccine is available? Until the virus disappears from the face of the earth? No one seems to have a workable solution, especially as schools are due to open again soon. For now, the best bet is to continue social distancing, wear a mask, and wash your hands.

One of the most controversial transportation issues in the greater Reykjavík area is Borgarlínan (The city line), a proposed bus rapid transport system that has been in the works for many years now and has changed permutations several times. The area of conflict revolves around what effects such a proposed system would have. Car culture is very prominent in Iceland—Statistics Iceland’s data shows there are about 350,000 cars in this country of just over 360,000 people—and many of these car owners fear that Borgarlínan people would probably rely on cars less. When Borgarlínan will go into effect still remains to be seen.

Opinions are also divided when it comes to the idea of combining the Reykjavík area towns into one big city. A recent poll showed that most capital area residents support merging at least some of these towns, with the greatest level of support coming from Reykjavík, and in favour of merging at least some of them together, and merging Seltjarnarnes and Reykjavík having the second highest level of support. The most opposition to any merging notions came from residents of both Seltjarnarnes and Mosfells- bar. Were a total merge to happen, there would then be one city in Iceland comprising more than two thirds of the total population. For scale, just imagine if the population of the US remained the same, with one city populated by some 230 million people.

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LEYN

Some nine months after several news outlets—including Kvökur, Al-issa, Stundin and The Namibian—broke The Fishrot Files, which detailed how the Icelandic fishing giant Samherji engaged in bribes to secure fishing quotas in Namibia and funneled millions of dollars into tax havens, Samherji has launched a web series that aims to showcase its side of the story—not about the Namibian scandal, but a case from 2012.

**Smoking gun?**

Much of the rest of the first episode is testimony either from Samherji or its allies, wherein they accuse everyone from journalists to the Icelandic government itself of having stretched the truth in order to smear the good name of Samherji.

The most striking thing about this case is that a major Icelandic corporation has singed out an individual journalist and is putting a lot of effort into smearing his name. This is virtually unheard of in Iceland, and both Helgi and his colleagues have responded very well, categorically demonstrating the holes in Samherji’s smear campaign.

Also, interestingly enough, Samherji has poured tremendous effort into this case from eight years ago, yet remains entirely silent on the Fishrot scandal.

No doubt the embattled fishing company is trying hard to clear its name. Whether their efforts will be successful or not is as yet to be determined.

**Acusing journalists of falsehoods**

The web series, called “Skýrslan sem aldrei vart gero?” (“The report that was never made”), levels strong accusations against journalist Helgi Ólafsson, who

...works for public broadcasting service RÚV, of which Kvökur is a part. In the first episode of the series, which has just been released, Samherji contends that Helgi had falsified a report from the Exchange Rate Bureau.

Kvökur’s reporting had in part stated that a report from the Bureau showed that Samherji had sold fish way under market value to its own sister company, but the news show was aired in 2012. Samherji contends that the Bureau confirmed for them last April that this report was never made. To back up this claim, Samherji includes an audio clip of a conversation between Helgi and a former detective, wherein Helgi says that while he had had difficulty confirming the report, he believed its information was “legit.”

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**FOOD OF ICELAND**

*Andie Sophia Fontaine*

**Words:**

Want a quintessentially Icelandic way to achieve a rapidly diminishing bank balance and an even more rapidly growing waistline? Look no further than the humble snúður—literally “twist”—our native species of cinnamon roll. Ok, so we grudgingly acknowledge that this may not be an uniquely Icelandic delicacy—rumour has it that it’s kind of a Scan- dinavian thing—but the snúður is nevertheless a distinctive bread, easily spotted by its thick icing, preferably of the chocolate variety, although we have been knocking around the island since European merchants brought it back from Sri Lanka some time in the Middle Ages. Pretty much any café, bakery or supermarket will sell you a snúður, but finding a good one is a different story. Bäklebäts will direct you to the postie boy for Reykjavík bakery culture. Brand Bó. If we’re being picky, their pastries have more of a pan-Nordic aesthetic, although we have to commend their blackberry and liquorice snúður, an impressive attempt to aweake the medium. For the classic doughy, chocolate-covered Icelandic affair, your best bet is Sandholt. This bougie bakery may not be the cheapest on the block, but boy is it worth every króna. Be sure to grab an accompanying kókómjólk if you really want to blend in with the locals.

Light, we’re off to enjoy a snúður and partake in all our other eye-rollingly stereotypical Nordic pastimes. I dunno beers and boards or something? FÅ

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WELCOME 2020
**Deities Of Iceland: Íðunn**

**Æsir’s very own Instagram influencer**

If Íðunn were alive today, she would be an Instagram influencer. This goddess was associated with youth and apples, as was her husband Bragi, making them the kind of power couple whose stories you would follow religiously for tips on how to defy ageing.

So crucial was Íðunn, in fact, that when a giant named Þiassi kidnapped her, all of the gods began to turn old and wither. This could not be allowed to happen, and so Loki (who was, not surprisingly, partially responsible for Íðunn’s kidnapping) set off on a daring mission to return her to the home of the gods, Asgard. He succeeded, but Þiassi chased after him. Tough luck for Þiassi, because when he arrived, the gods jumped him and beat his ass down, killing him.

Íðunn’s apples, which she carried around in an ash wood box, were regularly eaten by the gods to keep them forever young. That’s right—without her, the gods would literally die, so she is indeed a pretty big deal. And you can see why the gods would murder anyone who messes with her.

Today, Íðunn is a not-uncommon Icelandic name. It’s also the name of an Icelandic organisation dedicated to traditional verse (rímur). Will rhyming keep you young? Hey, it can’t hurt. And in lieu of eating one of Íðunn’s apples, it’s probably your next best bet.

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**JUST SAYINGS**

“Að fleygja barninu út með baðvatninu”

This one—which is international yes, but weirdly popular in Iceland—is a bit harsh. It’s direct translation is “to toss the child out with the bath water,” meaning to sacrifice something valuable along with all the worthless stuff. But what everyone actually thinks when they hear this phrase is what the hell Mom? Did you not see me in the tub? Mean. In Iceland, this idiom is not often used by your average person, but rather by frustrated lobbyists that just really want attention. They yell this as loudly as they can in order to pressure Parliament into giving them whatever it is that those greedy fuckers want. We hope their baths drains clog.

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**COMIC**

When are you getting back? Let’s hang out again, I’m in a couple of hours.

Let’s drink and wax about life.

When you get back home, I can’t wait to hang out.

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**ANNALÍSA**

Annalísa’s first EP is a heartfelt work with beautiful Icelandic vocals, provided by a shy, yet strong voice that is accented by a musical fusion of acoustic sounds and synths. Like a mix between Þuríður and a modern soundtrack, it invites listeners to sing along.

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**BARFLIES REYKJAVÍK 2**

As the name of this book suggests, it is a follow-up to an earlier book by the same name. Again, the people portrayed are the Kalfíðirinn regulars. Some of the faces you will recognize from the first book, just a quarter of a century older. Others were not born when the bar served its first drink.

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Iceland’s No. 1 Stop
Iceland’s Second COVID Wave: Who’s To Blame? 

The conversation gets heated

Iceland is currently experiencing a resurgence of incidences of the novel coronavirus. That much is incontrovertible. But when it comes to what we can attribute to that resurgence—Iceland opening the borders again, or locals eschewing health guidelines—things get a bit more murky, and the discussion gets heated.

In order to get to the bottom of this, we need to examine what we know about the timeline of events so far, and the origins of infections. Throughout, there is much the Icelandic authorities could have done better.

The doors swing wide

Last June 15th, Iceland opened its borders again to Schengen area countries, later adding four countries that could skip border screening, in addition to the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

At the time of this writing, 93 people have been detected through border screening to have active coronavirus infections, of the nearly 120,000 people who have visited Iceland since June 15th. Certainly a small proportion, but do we know if any of those people have infected Icelanders?

To date, there is no evidence of any foreign tourist having infected any Icelanders. There was one initial report that a foreign tourist had infected a tour guide, but it later came to light that the spouse of the tour guide in question also had the virus, and that spouse had a sibling in a group infection in Akranes, which was itself traced back to an Icelandic resident. Even deCODE Genetics CEO Kári Stefánsson, long a critic of opening the borders, has conceded that no new cases of the virus have come from any of the “safe countries” that Iceland has permitted to visit without screening.

While Icelanders are subjected to a more rigorous border screening and social restrictions upon arrival in the country, this particular Icelandic resident fell through the cracks because he did not speak Icelandic, and therefore was given the English language guidelines, which are directed at tourists. Bear in mind that Icelanders have always been free to travel to and from the country—even before June 15th.

Relaxing domestic restrictions

Many people have been diligent to draw a direct correlation between the June 15th re-opening and the more recent resurgence of coronavirus cases—despite all available evidence showing that tourists are not infecting Icelanders. The use of this correlation also ignores another important thing that happened on this date: the expansion of the social gathering limit.

On June 15th, gatherings of up to 500 people were permitted in Iceland, bars and clubs were allowed to stay open until 23:00, capacity limits of local swimming pools were lifted, and the two-metre social distancing rule was relaxed. Icelanders embraced this newfound freedom with gusto—summer is a special time for Icelanders, with many of them on vacation during this period and looking for a good time, and locals actively sought to get out and party.

The effects of this have been observable, with the new domestic cases frequently traced back to public gatherings.

It’s a social distance showdown at COVIDCon

Over the Merchant’s Holiday weekend—a very popular festival for Icelanders—two new cases cropped up in the Westman Islands, which is the premiere destination for Icelanders during this festival, and 78 people were put into quarantine as a result. Clubs and bars have been packed, and one group infection was traced back to a group of Icelanders who visited a restaurant last July.

New domestic cases also ended up cropping up at the Icelandic Transportation Authority and the Reykjavik area police, none of which have been traced back to tourists.

Restrictions ignored

The flourishing of domestic cases prompted authorities at the end of July to reinstate restrictions, including a public gathering ban of no more than 100 people, the return of the two-metre social distancing rule, the requirement to provide sanitiser, and the wearing of masks on ferries and domestic flights.

These new guidelines do not appear to be respected by far too many locals. Police visited some 24 restaurants and entertainment venues over the second weekend of August and found that 14 of them were violating the new restrictions.

For the public, the local police could be forgiven for being confused by the ever-changing guidelines. In some cases, there has been a demonstrable lack of clear communication between relevant authorities. One stunning example of this was when it was announced that masks would be required on city buses. Strætó, the capital area bus service, were apparently never consulted on this matter, and would later say they would only strongly recommend that people wear masks. Clearly, relevant authorities need to do better when it comes to domestic pandemic policy.

It is hard to ignore the direct line of cause and effect between the relaxing of domestic restrictions, a resurgence of domestic cases, the reinstatement of restrictions, the continued and worry-flouting of these, and the continued resurgence of domestic cases—all of them traced back to locals. Nonetheless, calls to close the borders remain prominent.

Until when?

Kári has been actively advocating for closing the borders, and Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir has said she is considering new border restrictions, despite all evidence showing the resurgence of domestic cases can be directly connected to domestic activity.

In fairness, Kári has emphasised that tourists have not played a role in the second wave, rather, he is cautious that they might. But the talk of closing the borders leaves one important question unanswered: until when? Until a vaccine is widely available? Until the virus disappears from the face of the earth? No one has been able to answer the question adequately.

Politicalisation of a virus

It cannot be ignored that there is a political aspect to this discussion. Minister of Tourism Þórdís Kolbrún Gylfadóttir, who is also a member of the conservative Independence Party, recently told RÚV that there is an “acceptable risk” in continuing to allow tourists to come to Iceland. This unfortunate wording has struck a nerve with many Icelanders, many of whom feel that the re-opening of the borders in the first place was a decision based more on greed than science.

As in other parts of the world, discussions about how to deal with the coronavirus certainly have a political aspect in Iceland. This is unfortunate. Our public health policy must be based in science; so far, the science is showing that tourists have not caused the second wave. It does, however, underline the importance of all of us taking part in the collective responsibility of protecting one another, with relevant authorities communicating and coordinating better—no matter how bad we might want to shift the blame elsewhere.

Party hard

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None of this was supposed to happen. GusGus was just supposed to be a short film, not a band. And even when it became a band, and remained a band, it—in some ways—still felt like more than just that. By the time that catastrophic, last-minute collapses, and terrible drama, the act—one of Iceland’s most beloved—has been down for the count more than once. But intertwined with that has been a string of high-water mark moments, each more improbable than the last.

When they burst onto the scene in 1995, people immediately took notice of GusGus. Sure, their music was strikingly original, but they also possessed an attitude unparalleled within the Icelandic scene. They refused to be called a band, instead opting for the term “júlílsabúpur,” which could be translated as a multi-discipline art collective or circus. To many, this stance pretentious, but somehow, the group converted naysayers. It was an apt description.

Now, twenty five years later, the group is gearing up again with a new release set to rival the albums that many consider their landmark achievement, ‘Arabian Horse,’ as well as a crowd-funded photo book celebrating the entirety of their peculiar history. To mark their quarter-century birthday, the current lineup of the band—Daniel Ágúst Haraldsson and Birgir (“Biggi”) Birnison—sat down to give their version of the story of GusGus, the one you haven’t heard before in interviews, albums, or any former members were interviewed: This is how 2020 GusGus remember it, re-arranged, remixed, and with additional material from the author, a GusGus fan since the early days.

Setting the scene

To get to the GusGus studio, I walk past a giant grapevine on a decrepit patio and through an intricately designed garden with a stately two-story tree-house built by Birgir, better known as Víða Veira, for his children. I then enter a synth-laden paradise, a grown-up funland—it’s the studio of Biggi Veira, GusGus producer since the beginning.

This story starts with an idea. Director duo Árni & Kinski wanted to make a short film entitled ‘Nautn.’ (It’s currently on YouTube, if you want to check it out.) In their crew were cinematographer Stephan Stephensen and producer Baldur Stefánsson. The group reached out to a bunch of actors—all also musicians—among them singer Daniel Ágúst.

Everyone knew Daniel. His guitar-rock based band Nýnjuk was huge since the start of the 90s and before that he was a fresh-faced Eurovision contestant. But even without any creepin. Disillusioned with the constraints of the rock band structure, he left Nýnjuk and subsequently produced the second Bubbleflies album, where he got a taste for electronic elements in music. Then he got the call.

0. Soundtrack to ‘Nautn’

So GusGus started out as a soundtrack to a short film. Daniel Ágúst sought a collaborator who shared his fascination with the electronic. A few producers were considered before the team settled on reaching out to T-World, Biggi’s band. Daniel and Biggi can’t agree on how this happened, and won’t let this article disclose any names.

For long-time fans, it’s interesting to consider how GusGus might have turned out with other producers at the helm. Biggi—whose sound is so iconic that every musician in Iceland has, at some point, tried and failed to emulate it—might never have joined.

Biggi founded T-World in the 80s, with a guy called Beggi. They were influenced by Depeche Mode, Marc Almond and the like. When Beggi left in the early 90s, Biggi brought Maggi Legó on board, and together they started making techno. But the first wave of acid house DJs, which pushed DJ culture away from its cheesy 80s roots, Legó has always had an air of legend around him.

T-World had already had one release, ‘An-them’, on Underwater, Darren Emerson of Underworld’s label. In a way, as Biggi describes, the label staff had a cocaine problem, and when Maggi asked for an allowance to fly back to Iceland, the label boss—presumably in an altered state—fired them on the spot. Their track “Purple,” a hit in the making, was shelved.

1. Gus’ Gus’ (The Album)

Back to the main story. While the production of the short film ‘Nautn’ was postponed, the trio decided to rent a room in an old warehouse, which they shared with a gang of bikers, and make some music.

Daniel painted the space blue. He and Maggi hunted for samples to loop and the whole cast of the film dropped by to collaborate on a track or two. It was all quick and casual. Emilína Torris covered Slowblow’s “Is Jesus Your Pal?” over a bass drum beat. Magnús Jónsson brought in soul and disco influences. Ragnarhösk Asrór orchestrated a rousing, shouty rave tune. The filmmakers made some visuals and they VJ-ed on stage, mixing their own spin on songs.

The soundtrack became an album, simply called ‘Gus’ Gus’, released late in 1995. They did a few shows around the country. The filmmakers made some more ambitious and tried to push the project in directions that reflected their own personal tastes and image. But the 80s and early 90s had been improbable than the last.

The group released ‘Polydistortion’ on 4AD in 1997. Most of the album’s material originated from GusGus’ although there were some new tracks. These additions were mostly due to changes regarding the use of sampling. While the box and early 90s had been a free-for-all, by ’97 high profile court cases had bankrupted some of the early sampling pioneers. As a result GusGus removed all but two samples, one of which—the cowbell loop that drives “Believe”—ended up costing the band 70% of the proceeds from the track. They made short films as videos to each track and hype built around the collective. Then they toured the world.

III. This Is Normal

Touring—with nine members and a gigantic video projector—was hugely expensive. That said, the venues were packed and the media exposure was enormous. Apparently, the world realised, there was more to Iceland than Björk and the Sugarcubes.

Back in Iceland, the group embarked on a new record. ‘Gus’ Gus’ and Polydis- toriont had happened in such a casual manner, while but recording this new, international album entitled ‘This Is Normal’, the strain of being a band became obvious. Members became more ambitious and tried to push the project in directions that reflected their own personal tastes and image.

And so, in the record’s production stage things began to unravel. Hafdís Huld was unhappy with the material she got. Biggi and Magnús Jónsson struggled to work together. Maggi Legó didn’t want to tour again. “We became a dysfunctional pop band,” Daniel admits. Biggi, meanwhile, didn’t even believe that GusGus would survive the album—too much politics.

The band subsequently split into camps, separated in two studios. One was Biggi’s, who had been joined by Stephan Stephensen, the other was Maggi Legó’s studio, he was joined by Pórir Baldur—best known for his work on Donna Summer’s ‘I Feel Love’—who was working with Legó.

Kjartansson, Stefán Árni Porgerðisson, and Baldur Stefánsson. Interestingly enough, despite their hard work in the collective for over a year, it was only now that Stephan and Biggi Veira met in person.

The group released ‘Polydistortion’ on 4AD in 1997. Most of the album’s material originated from GusGus’ although there were some new tracks. These additions were mostly due to changes regarding the use of sampling. While the box and early 90s had been a free-for-all, by ’97 high profile court cases had bankrupted some of the early sampling pioneers. As a result GusGus removed all but two samples, one of which—the cowbell loop that drives “Believe”—ended up costing the band 70% of the proceeds from the track. They made short films as videos to each track and hype built around the collective. Then they toured the world.
The band was in disarray. 4AD went bankrupt, and was subsequently taken over by a new label. GusGus’ advance payments were cut, so the band left the label. In April 2001, they announced they had released another very different album, ‘Gus Gus vs T-World’ was a compi
dation of songs written and produced by Legó and Biggi before the formation of GusGus. The album was pushed by Daniel, who felt that it was time to re-focus on the band’s ba
cs. He helped select the tracks for the album and ensured that they were made with as few un
told numbers (since the band was called T-World, the black tracks were named D-World). But with crisis came opportunity. Palm Pictures, a company formed by Island Records founder Chris Black
ewell, offered the band, as the duo puts it, a “Million Dollar Deal.” The c
caveat? Daniel could not do any other work except GusGus. Daniel promptly refused.

Now, the band was in serious debt by the end of the year—facing the 
final payment for the 4AD-era debts last year—so his refusal was not 
unnecessary. Daniel had, however, made the final straw when Daniel was putting together a soundtrack for a perfor
mance by the Icelandic Dance Company. Biggi Veira, who was producing the project, lost interest and so Daniel had to call in another one to help.

In response, Daniel quit GusGus. Biggi, sitting here in 2023, is remark
ably honest about his role in the situ
ation and his difficulty working with others at that time. He uses harsh language to describe his time with GusGus, 
and he had in situations, such as this, where diplomacy would have been more than appropriate.

The future of GusGus was once more up-in-the-air.

The band that started as ‘Gus Gus vs T-World’ album, an offer came in to do an instrumental tour. Biggi and Stephan Stehfensen, by now the only remain
ng GusGus members, accepted and played a number of French festivals. On the following day, the band, after long discussions, 
joined GusGus on stage for an improve
visioin session featuring French rocking sensation, Pascal Nigheti. The 
glorious cacophony rejuvenated the duo. Once again they saw a future for GusGus.

Inspired, they came home and asked Maggi Leog to rejoin. The season was on for a new singer. At the time, Stephan and Legò had been perform

ing as a DJ duo. At a gig in Kaffirhúrin, a girl came over and asked if she could MC with them. They said yes, and she stayed on the roof of the house. Her name was Ubøn Hakanardottir. 

Attention

While working on their next album, ‘Attention’, Stephan stepped up as the front man force behind the band. Biggi gives most of the credit for this release to him. Alone at the studio, Stephan would make beats, with Biggi dropping in to add synths, hooks, and shaping up the mix. The staves were keen and thus, things were fun again. Around half the tracks on the album would be initiated by Stephan.

Stephen and Biggi had been DJ-ing under the moniker Alfred More, or A.More, but around this time, he adopted a new name, President Bongo. With this new identity, he began to move from behind the machines to the front of the stage, acting as hype man and singer alongside Ubøn. 

Biggi, meanwhile, was still burning out at the time of the new GusGus era, and was happy to let Stephan take the reins for a bit. Biggi directed the live shows, thus taking over the run of the band outside the studio. “Stef held the act together, he made it happen,” Biggi admits. “For a period, he kept the band alive,” he says. In a surprise move, Biggi added himself to the album with Daniel also on the went.

Returning to the Underwater label, the album was released for the 2nd time.

The main single, “David,” became a club hit across Europe, hitting #1 in Germany. GusGus was back.

Lies Are More Flexible

Underwater established Germany as the band’s new base of operation. The office enthusiasm for cocain
t had shrunk, and the band had sought a new home in Iceland. Biggi, meanwhile, was still burned out. While working on their next album, ‘Attention’, Stephan stepped up as the front man force behind the band. Biggi gives most of the credit for this release to him. Alone at the studio, Stephan would make beats, with Biggi dropping in to add synths, hooks, and shaping up the mix. The staves were keen and thus, things were fun again. Around half the tracks on the album would be initiated by Stephan.

During this era that GusGus grew as a live act, becoming the most po
lar band in Iceland and headlining the Iceland Airwaves festival year after year.

During this period, Biggi essentially dropped out of the group and started working as a programming manager for the Iceland Airwaves festival. Focused on his job, he put of work
ning on the next GusGus album, much to the dismay of Brian Liu and Ubøn. Relations between Stephan and Biggi were beginning to deteriorate, and while Daniel describes the duo’s rela
tionship in the studio as, “all love and
damn, outside it, and especially on tour, territorial tensions were ri
fe. The two would get into heated arguments on the tour bus, usually ending with them bugging and crying.

They could never settle the disputes though. As Biggi had trained Stephan, he was stepping up in the studio. Stephan refers to this as an “Olbi Wan Kenobi situation.” Biggi describes the opportunity to perform in front of 4AD at the time as, “a surprise hit, and the title track, “Arabian Horse” was a underground sensation in Eastern Europe. The album, which was released in 2002, devolved into a quibble about the merits of the proposed final track on the album to which Daniel wants it gone. Biggi is having none of it so Daniel suggests naming it “Saudarkrókur.” Biggi coun
ters with “Grass In Meat Out.”

The album, which was released by Kompakt in September, 2000, was John Grant’s favorite. He later got to work with Biggi, and this relationship snowballed into Biggi producing John’s second album ‘Pale Green Ghosts’. And just like that—big things were once again on the horizon for GusGus.

Lies Are More Flexible

The ball that started with ‘24/7’, continued rolling into ‘Arabian Horse’. The band started recording in a country-
side cottage. After that, they once again geographically split into two, divided between Biggi’s studio and Stephan’s new studio in Grindavik. Stephan brought in Hógni Eglísson, the Hjaltalin composer and singer, as a band member and also a roster of rotating live musicians—one of the main reasons behind the richness of the album.

While working on their next album, ‘Attention’, Stephan stepped up as the front man force behind the band. Biggi gives most of the credit for this release to him. Alone at the studio, Stephan would make beats, with Biggi dropping in to add synths, hooks, and shaping up the mix. The staves were keen and thus, things were fun again. Around half the tracks on the album would be initiated by Stephan.

‘Arabian Horse’ came out in 2001 and is by far their most critically acclaimed release. Biggi was sad that it was merely the crescendo. The as-of
now-unnamed album is full of hits, joy, and Biggi’s not an alpha dog, he’s a tyrant, “ Daníel jokes. Biggi, meanwhile, kept getting suggestions to change things that 
Daniel refers to this as an “Obi Wan Kenobi situation.” Biggi describes the opportuni
ty with Biggi, and this relationship snowballed into Biggi producing John’s second album ‘Pale Green Ghosts’. And just like that—big things were once again on the horizon for GusGus.
THE SAGAS AND SHIT

ICELANDIC LITERATURE CRUDELY ABRIDGED

"I HATE YOU! WHAT YOU WROTE ABOUT NÍLÁS SAGA REALLY HURT MY FEELINGS."

GRAYSON DEL FARO

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GRAYSON DEL FARO

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I’ve Seen It All... Online

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen
Photos: Art Biencik & Timothée Lambreque

It’s 1956. World War II rages on as French composer Claude Debussy lies on his deathbed. His last few days are but a fever dream, but as the renegade artist waits for the end, one lament remains on his lips: in the face of death, Debussy is sad that he won’t be able to catch the new revival of Jean-Philippe Rameau’s 18th-century opera, “Castor et Pollux,” at the Paris Opera. Louis Laloy sees Debussy only days before his passing, and as he leaves the room, Debussy has just a few dramatic words for his friend. “Say hello to Monsieur Castor!”

Rameau and Debussy were separat-
ed by hundreds of years and composed in vastly different styles, but they’ve been united on pianist— and former Grapevine cover star—Víkingur Ólafsson’s newest album, which presents the two revolutionary composers in dia-
logue with each other. Now, Víkingur will finally take the album to the Harpa stage as the Reykjavík Art Festival’s opening concert.

Two controversial Frenchmen

The project began in March last year in the weeks before the birth of Víkingur’s son. “My boy arrived two weeks later than expected, so I had all this time on my hands. I started to play all these pieces of Rameau on the piano and as I played it, I just kept thinking about Debussy, who is with them, how the devil is in the details.”

But right now, Víkingur is most ex-
cited to get back onstage. “The fact is that I can’t wait for these concerts,” he says, his voice uncharacteristically animated. “Honestly, as much as I like recording and doing TV, somewhere inside I really am an exhibitionist, so I love the spotlight. To be there alone with a piano on a big stage and to have all these people channeling into it, that’s unlike anything else in life.” He pauses. “A solo recital to me is the most interesting form of expression. To be alone with no words and only a single instrument... Well, nothing equals it for me,” he concludes. And there, per-
haps, we’ve found something that both Debussy and Rameau would agree on.

A Rameau recoprate? The pianist is understandably hesitant to speak on behalf of a dead man, but still takes a moment to ponder their hypothetical friendship. “Well, we have to remem-
ber that these are two Frenchmen and Frenchmen are often totally surprising and unpredictable in their views—and they’re not always nice to each other, especially when they are two giants,” he laughs. “I think we should be careful not to assume that Rameau would have liked Debussy. He certainly hated many of his contemporaries.”

The devil in the details

To be fair, comparing Rameau and Debussy was a rather ‘enfant terrible’ move for Víkingur to make, but unfor-
nately, the notoriously unpredictable pianist stays mum on what artist—or artists—he’s planning on diving into next. “Every album has to be a sur-
prise,” he explains with a smile. That said, he does reveal a few dream proj-
ects he’s been mulling over, such as de-
constructing a Beethoven symphony.

“There’s incredible potential in the time dimension of a piece like a Beethoven symphony,” he says. “It won’t sound at all like the original; it’ll be-
come a new piece. I think you can bend time in very interesting ways there.”

Mozart—a fellow enfant terrible—is another area of fascination. “I’d be curi-
ous to do something with Mozart and maybe five or six composers from his time. Mozart wrote during the classical period, when the rules were quite set for how to make music. On the surface, everyone sounds a little more connect-
ed and alike, but somehow Mozart still sounds completely different from any-
other else always,” he explains. “It’s not inter-
esting to take a period like that and show how extremely different Mozart was, how the devil is in the details.”

Alone, no words, one instrument

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Debussy and Rameau would agree on.
Silhouetted against the red velvet curtain, mic in hand, Arnór Daði Gunnarsson exudes an irresistible awkward charm. Though you’d never guess it from his easy stage presence, he’s in the midst of his Reykjavík Fringe Festival debut and the premier of his first solo show “Big Small Town Kid”. The hour-long special sees the comedian veer between deadpan self-deprecation and glimmers of childish mischievousness, all the while interweaving observations about parenthood and Reykjavík’s quirks as he regales the crowd with a series of bizarre anecdotes from his rural hometown.

When the Grapevine Comedy Committee convenes some days later in a top-secret bunker of undisclosed location, the decision is unanimous: Arnór is granted the most prestigious cultural accolade in town—the inaugural Grapevine Fringe Award.

Two weeks after his momentous victory, Arnór sits back with a coffee in the Icelandic Street Food Café. He’s mentally preparing for tonight’s show, which will be his first stand-up performance since the festival. “I feel like I’m just getting back up from the dead,” he laughs. “Fringe was so stressful that I didn’t even want to think about comedy for a week, but I’m excited to get back on stage now.”

**Lucky (for some)**

Arnór is a familiar face on the Reykjavík comedy scene, but this year was the first time he braved the Fringe stage, starring in not one, but two shows (one the aforementioned solo extravaganza and the other in collaboration with Huw Coverdale Jones).

“It’s the third year of the festival and every year I was nearly going to do it,” he explains. The first year he felt too new to performing. The second, he missed the application deadline, and if it hadn’t been for COVID-19, 2020 might have been another no-show. “I applied too late so I didn’t get in, but then the pandemic happened and they were looking for people. I got kind of lucky, I guess. It’s bad for the world but it benefitted me,” he laughs awkwardly.

“I feel grateful that I didn’t do a show in those two years because I’ve become a stronger comedian and performer over that time,” he reflects. But while today the comedian radiates a quiet confidence, when Arnór first left his small northern hometown for Reykjavík, that was anything but the case.

**Geese and weirdos**

Arnór first set his eyes on the stand-up stage at age 18 thanks to the nonchalant ease of Louis C. K. “That kind of style looks easy; I know now it’s one of the hardest to achieve, but back then I thought if I can do it, I can,” he relays, “I just became obsessed, I thought about it non-stop every day.”

But there was one problem: Arnór lived in a rural northern village, hundreds of miles from the open-mics of Reykjavík. In fact, as Arnór emphasises, there was no comedy scene where he grew up and in fact, very little organised entertainment full stop. He subse- quently launches into an anecdote about the most thrilling summer of his childhood, the year a goose named Goosy arrived:

“She escaped from a near-by farm and she lived in our town for a summer. It was the summer of 2003, wonderful times, since then I’ve consisted of me and nobody was laughing because nobody could hear me. Even if they could hear me, they wouldn’t have
been laughing because the whole thing was just too weird." While his debut was, as the comedian himself describes it, "horrible," the show did give him the confidence to do it again. "I got off stage and I was very happy," he smiles. "I knew I had bombed, but I had finally done the thing I'd been wanting to do for years." "It's kind of odd to think about it now because stand-up just feels way too normal now. I'm really grateful that I had the balls to do it—I don't know where I would be right now if I hadn't," Arnór reflects. "Sometimes I feel more like myself on stage than in real life. I feel like I have more control over how I feel. There's nothing else I want to do, everything else is just boring."

Gotta love those drunk farmers

Though Arnór cut his teeth on the Reykjavík comedy circuit, the first time he felt like he had truly "made it" was at a performance at a börtlot celebration for a crowd of drunk farmers in a school gymnasium in his northern hometown. "It was one of the shows that I've been most nervous for because I felt like I had to prove myself. Of course, it was just in my own head — the small town mentality isn't actually that bad," he says. "But I did ten minutes and it went really well. I made fun of some locals, which really kills in a small town. I felt like I was doing it for real, like I'd proved to them that I could do comedy."

Although Arnór has overcome this internal hurdle, he is far from complacent. Climbing the comedy ladder often feels like an impossible feat, he explains. Progress can be slow and there's always a new goal to reach or something to improve. "Sometimes I feel more like myself on stage than in real life. I feel like I have more control over how I feel. There's nothing else I want to do, everything else is just boring."

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At the same time, a new development in Arnór's personal life has made him more determined than ever to continue honing his craft. "I feel like I have a game plan now that I'm a father," he concludes. "I used to do comedy at the Secret Cellar every night and drink and not really think about it, but now I feel like I'm on a mission. If you’re leaving your girlfriend and baby to go and do something, you’d better make it count. So now when I leave, I feel like I have to improve every time."

He takes a last sip of coffee, gives profuse thanks for the award and is promptly off to the Secret Cellar for his triumphant return to the stage.
**Best of Reykjavík**

**Stay (In)Sane, Stay Inside**

How to keep calm during the second wave of COVID-19!

**Doctors hate us!**

Words: Valur Grettisson
Photos: EVE Online & Art Bionick

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**Anger: Metal, Metal, Metal**

So, you’ve been locked inside for God knows how long, and now you just want to scream. Indulge that desire by deconstructing your Spanish-villa-Vesturharf apartment and remodelling it in the style of a Norwegian black metal venue from the early 90s. To complete the look, dye your hair black, paint your face white, turn Svartidaubli and Midnytning up to eleven, and spend all night complaining on the couch. Either way works. Pick uping or wait until the neighbours call. Then faint due to all the screaming. Scream. You’re not allowed, you idiot—and become some sort of an Icelandic black metal release has just come out is not real black metal. It’s a unique insight into the real life of Hoia, a supermodel in New York who left the spotlight to be a farmer. For fiction, go to *Woman At 360 Degrees* by Hallgrimur Helgason, translated by Brian FitzGibbon. It’s about an old woman with a hand grenade who is remiscing on her batshit crazy upbringing in World War 2 and her Nazi father. Fun stuff. If you finish those and need to kill even more time, there’s always the collected works of Halliðar Laxness.

**Bargaining: Disconnecting from Reality**

Do you like to piss into bottles? How about neglecting everything that matters in your real life? Even your kids? If the answer is yes and your kids won’t talk to you and you will be bankrupt, both emotionally and financially. But hey, who needs a family when you have Sims?

**Depression: Watching “Comedies”**

The best way to sustain depression is typically to watch an Icelandic movie. How many ways can we tell a slow story about a struggling middle-aged man in the countryside? Apparently a lot! Occasionally though, Icelanders produce brilliant comedies. *Nýtt lifí*, *Dálahíf* and *Ljógdóttir* are all silly slapstick films about city boys trying to start a new life in, well, the countryside obviously. You could also check out *Með aðt í breini*, the only successful musical comedy made in Iceland, featuring Stuðmenn and the legendary feminist band Gýrhnar. Pick up all of them at Ábhiboldeigjan.

**Acceptance: Read, Studib!**

Books? Remember them? We don’t either, but we were forced to read them all in school just like you. If you really want to kill time, get the grasp of a nation, and maybe find some philosophical insight into this depressing world all at the same time, then there’s some key literature to read. To save your mental health, we’d recommend *Heiða: A Shepherd At The Edge Of The World* by Steinn Sigurdarhóttir, translated by Philip Roughton.

**Eymundsson**

**A Shepherd At The Edge Of The World**

Translated by Valda Þórðardóttir

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**RUNNERS UP**

**Bókin**

Klapprregígar 23-27

If you’re looking to buy the newest Dan Brown, Bókin may not be your thing. But if you’re looking for a collectors-edition copy of an Icelandic book long out of print, this is your place. Eymundsson is one of Iceland’s only bookstores, and that’s Bókin. *It has charisma, which makes it a winner*, one point manager said. *It’s more in Reykjavik with charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent, it’s Bókin.*

**Bóksala Stúdenta**

Sæmundargata 4

Located within the main building of the Háskóla Islands, the university bookstore runs the gamut from specialty academic texts to classics, new fiction, notebooks and much more. *Another plus? The on-site coffee shop serves up what are potentially the finest coffees in town, as does the Háskóla Islands cafeteria next door.*

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**Eymundsson: A Shepherd At The Edge Of The World**

Translated by Valda Þórðardóttir

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**FINDING MEANING:**

...the "..."
In Your Pocket

Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life

Catherine Côté

Montrealer Catherine Côté is Reykjavík’s resident neon nail art queen. Doh and ooh at her work on Instagram at @grainbonnetails, and learn about her Perfect Day in the city here.

Morning

The Perfect Day begins with some perfectly-made coffee. Maybe it’s already brewing when I wake up or maybe I have one of those alarm clocks that makes coffee, but on the Perfect Day, you wouldn’t wake up to an alarm, right? So I guess it’s just coffee. You wouldn’t wake up to an alarm, right? Why not?

Lunch

It’s 25°C and sunny and I teleport to have a picnic by the water. I have this image in my head of us carrying a picnic basket with a baguette and wine in it, but does anyone actually have a picnic basket? I don’t know, but we also take a private chef who sets up next to our blanket. He’s like a personal buffet and can cook you whatever you want. I’d get some sort of Asian food or poutine, or maybe a poutine-Asian fusion. Along with the fancy food, he serves up all the things you like but just can’t be bothered doing—like cutting a pineapple.

Afternoon

It’s time for bowling at Keiluhöllin Egglókell. Except, imagine you and all your friends have custom-made bowling outfits with UV fluorescent paint and yellow stripes and sequin. Of course, there are custom bowling shoes and a matching ball to go with it. Why not?

Dinner

For dinner, we throw a giant bonfire and barbecue next to Jökulsárlón. Don’t forget—it’s still 25°C but the icebergs aren’t melting, the planet is OK, and corona is over. Everyone who is there has gone all out with their makeup and party outfits and it’s beautiful because no one is ashamed to be looking like a fool! Maybe some bands play, I don’t know. I guess we could just teleport them over?

In the heat of the night

I’d say we would have the full rave on some beach but then I’d just be on the Perfect Day, right? So I guess it’s just coffee. Maybe it’s already brewing when I wake up or maybe I have one of those alarm clocks that makes coffee, but on the Perfect Day, you wouldn’t wake up to an alarm, right? Why not?

Venue Finder

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It’s 25°C and sunny and I teleport to have a picnic by the water. I have this image in my head of us carrying a picnic basket with a baguette and wine in it, but does anyone actually have a picnic basket? I don’t know, but we also take a private chef who sets up next to our blanket. He’s like a personal buffet and can cook you whatever you want. I’d get some sort of Asian food or poutine, or maybe a poutine-Asian fusion. Along with the fancy food, he serves up all the things you like but just can’t be bothered doing—like cutting a pineapple.

Afternoon

It’s time for bowling at Keiluhöllin Egglókell. Except, imagine you and all your friends have custom-made bowling outfits with UV fluorescent paint and yellow stripes and sequin. Of course, there are custom bowling shoes and a matching ball to go with it. Why not?

Dinner

For dinner, we throw a giant bonfire and barbecue next to Jökulsárlón. Don’t forget—it’s still 25°C but the icebergs aren’t melting, the planet is OK, and corona is over. Everyone who is there has gone all out with their makeup and party outfits and it’s beautiful because no one is ashamed to be looking like a fool! Maybe some bands play, I don’t know. I guess we could just teleport them over?

In the heat of the night

I’d say we would have the full rave on some beach but then I’d just be on the Perfect Day, right? So I guess it’s just coffee. Maybe it’s already brewing when I wake up or maybe I have one of those alarm clocks that makes coffee, but on the Perfect Day, you wouldn’t wake up to an alarm, right? Why not?

Venue Finder

In Your Pocket

Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life

Catherine Côté

Montrealer Catherine Côté is Reykjavík’s resident neon nail art queen. Doh and ooh at her work on Instagram at @grainbonnetails, and learn about her Perfect Day in the city here.

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Dining

1. Austur-Indiafélagið
Hverflaga 56
Still going strong twenty years on, Austur-Indiafélagið is an institution. Make a meal out of the deluxe salmon pollochah, kushi mappas and kuchas and share it family style. Keep your eyes peeled for the vegetarian and vegan dishes as well.

2. Gaeta Gelato
Aðalstræti 6
Gaeta Gelato is owned by newly-arrived Italian transplants with nearly 25 years of experience as gelatai. Their artisanal and authentic flavours, from blueberry to Piedmontese hazelnut, are made with fresh and well-sourced Icelandic ingredients. Though only recently opened, Gaeta Gelato has already won over a crowd of committed regulars.

3. Ódinn
Hafnarstræti 1-3
With big portions and a tasty menu, this hip restaurant offers everything you might desire, from crispy brocoli and big bowls of mussels to a great leg of lamb and a taste of lobster. Try and get a seat upstairs: it’ll be like dining under a starry sky.

4. Valdí
Grandagarður 21 & Frakkastígur 10
This beloved ice cream parlour— which has a Grandi and downtown location— makes everything in-house each morning and you can’t go wrong. If you like licorice, try Tyrikj Fæber. While it looks like liquid cement, it tastes more heavenly. The spot doesn’t have a large seating area, so take your cone on a stroll along the harbourside or enjoy it in a parked car.

5. Bastard Brew & Food
Vegamótstræti 4
This downtown drinking hole is something of a bear and bar-food palace. It’s an English pub style environment, without the sense of history—everything from the tables to the plush leather seating are catalogue-fresh—but with eleven bars on the ground floor, the generally good ‘Fat Bastard’ burger on offer, it’s a firm departure favourite. Their tacos are pretty notable too.

6. Noodle Station
Laugavegur 103
Bellowing clouds of onirocendar any month-warming introduction to Noodle Station. Choose beef, vegetable or chicken, and add an extra spice or flaky chilli sauce until your nose runs, your tongue throbs and your gums howl. It’s bar-style seating and cheaper prices (for Reykjavik) attract prudent solo travellers.

7. Grandi Mathílí
Grandagarður 16
Brandi Mathíll has an immediately comfortable feel, with various booths, benches and couches scattered throughout the space. There are nine concessions and a bustling, social feel as people meander between the vendors, who shout out names as their orders are ready. Our tip: Vegg food from Þens and friend chicken from KOKI. Everyone’s happy!

8. Vitabar
Bergþönguðgata 21
This old-school burger ‘n’ beer joint is right downtown—near Skólibíó—but feels like a real neighbourhood bar. Its unassuming exterior hides a cosy, no-frills dining room, where you’ll mostly be surrounded by locals for once.

9. Salka Valka
Skólavörðustígur 33
For a piece of good ol’ Icelandic fish, there’s no better spot than Salka Valka. The restaurant serves up a steamed fillet in their Fish of The Day menu, with the fish options depending on what is the freshest available. They also have potentially the best plóflakafiskur in the city some stellar soups and—quite recently—a pizza menu.

10. Bejarins Beztu
Trjóggavatn 1
Icelanders have a weird obsession with hot dogs—trust us, you won’t understand until you’ve been here. It’s universally agreed through that the tiny stand Bejarins Beztu serves the best one. Pro Tip: When they ask what toppings you want, say ‘ALL’! This is the only way to eat it.

11. Mama
Laugavegur 2
Nothing tastes better than ethics, which is why we can’t wait to try the rainbow salad and “niceneekw” bowls at Mama, a plant-based restaurant with big dreams. The company is proudly environmentalist—they hope to use their profits to transform the land so that the kitchen can become self-sufficient. The restaurant also donates profits from its vegan options offering a whole host of yoga sessions and breathing workshops. Have your plant-based prayers been answered?

Drinking

12. Ólafur’s
Hverflaga 12
Röntgen is a party bar in the purest sense, with a rowdy dance floor, delicious cocktails and a barbeque that’s just growing and growing. Run by the legends behind Hrúa (KRP), Röntgen unexpectedly grabbed the runner-up for the Best Goddamn Bar category at the 2020 Best of Reykjavík awards. We stan.

13. Lebowski Bar
Laugavegur 20a
This fully carpeted bar honouring the “Lebowski” Lebowski (not The Dude, man), is a nice place that offers two vibes: start the night nice and cool with an artisinal White Russian, and end it on one of the rowdiest and most understated dance floors in the city. Yup, Lebowskia is a great place to hang at, but that could just be, like, our opinion man.

14. Jungle Cocktail Bar
Austurstræti 9
The verdant Jungle Cocktail Bar came in like a tropical storm this winter. Devoted to the elevation of all things cocktail culture, some say Jungle’s stranger offerings over the past months have included a kale cocktail, but there’s no shortage of level-headed concoctions like the signature “The Bimbeshl” (tequila, rhubarb & vermouth) along with any classic you can name.

15. Port 9
Yehúðarsætragóður 9
Cosy and tucked away with a secretive vibe, Port 9 is a true hidden gem. Starting a delicious wine list as well as potentially the most intimate atmosphere in Reykjavík. It also has a nice balcony—the ideal locale for sipping some Pino in the summer sun.

16. Mengi
Öðinagóður 2
Mengi’s concert room is more white cube than dive bar. The programme encourages new collaborations and experimental performances, so even if you don’t like the work the musicians you’re seeing, you might be treated to something brand new on any given night.

17. Luna Flórens
Grandagarður 23
Luna Flórens is Iceland’s only ‘gypsy bar’. Part flower-child, part spiritual and with a whole lot of whimsy thrown into the mix, this cozy and hand-crafted bar is so intimate it makes you wanna spend the day musing. With an artisinal White Russian, and vibes: start the night nice and cosy and with a whole lot of whimsy thrown into the mix, this cozy and hand-crafted bar is so intimate it makes you wanna spend the day musing. With an artisinal White Russian, and card-readings. You can do all this and more while sipping on their excellent house cocktails and an excellent slice of vegan cake.

18. RVK Brewing Company
Skipholt 31
Yes, there is a bar on Skipholt, and yes, it is one that you need to check out. The RVK Brewing Company has slid...
under the radar since it opened, but now, we’re here to bring it out of the shadows. The brewery and beer hall offers a varied list of brews, most of which they make themselves locally. Come and experience your new beer-addiction.

19. English Pub
Austurstræti 12
True to its name, the English Pub offers many different kinds of lager on tap and a whiff of that genuine UK feel. Try the famous “ahwell of fortune” where one can win up to a metre of beer with a single spin.

20. Hildur Yeoman
Skólahreppur 22b
As well as selling her own designs—women’s wear characterised by flowing shapes made from fine fabrics with colourful, distinctive, busy prints—Hildur Yeoman’s boutique also features sunglasses by Le Specs, jewellery by Vanessa Mooney, French tea, and other interesting trinkets.

21. nomad.
Frakkastígur 8f
A relative newbie to the Laugavegur scene, nomad was a surprise runner-up for the Best Design Store at the 2020 Best of Reykjavík awards. They have a fantastically curated selection of books, lamps, candles and more. Plus, the owner is a photographer and often has exhibitions on the lower floor.

22. Wasteland Reykjavík
Ingólfstraeti 5
For super à la mode downtown Reykjavík looks—i.e. cheerleader uniforms, Guy Fieri t-shirts, and astronaut-esque jumpsuits—this second-hand store is the go-to.

23. Lucky Records
Rauðararárstígur 10
Lucky Records is the punky underground horse of the Reykjavík record scene. It’s one of those shops that is easy to get lost in—expect to easily spend an entire afternoon perusing their selection.

24. Melabúðin
Hagamál 39, 107
For foodies looking for artisanal dell meats, fresh figs, rare cheeses and all sorts of unexpected, hard-to-find treats, Vesturbær’s beloved Melabúðin should satiate your desires.

25. Pastel Flower Studio
Baldursgata 36
Pastel Flower Studio is only open on Fridays from 13:00 to 18:00—so plan accordingly. The studio uses cut, dried, and fresh flowers to create unique arrangements that reference classic Icelandic nature in an unexpected and innovative way. Trust us. You won’t find a florist in the city that’s in any way comparable.

26. Street Rats Tattoo
Reykjavík
Kristófer, a.k.a. Sleepofer Tattoo, has proven himself to be a fresh, experimental artist whose works have become a somewhat coveted symbol in the city. So if you’re looking to get your travel tattoo, go there. It’s way more interesting than a Vegvisir.

New In Town
Flash Vesturgata 17
Flash is back! The art venue—whose name translates to “Flow”—has finally re-opened in a new central Vesturgata spot and we could not be more jazzed. Since their humble beginnings last year on Óðinsgata, the team behind the space has sought to showcase marginalised artists and counter the bourgeois art gallery culture found in other spaces here and abroad. Alongside exhibitions, they host concerts, events, and basically anything else under the sun. Here’s to flowing and growing, friends!
ROKKY first burst onto the scene in 2018 with her electro-pop banger “My Lips.” Now, she’s back with her long-awaited first EP. We sat down to talk with the Berlin-based chanteuse about it track by track.

My Lips
This song is the party starter and therefore rightfully so, the EP starter. Some people have asked me what exactly I’m referring to with “My Lips,” but I love a bit of mystery—it makes things more exciting, so I’d like to leave that open to interpretation. But one thing’s for sure, it’s sensual!

Somebody Else
The day I wrote this nugget, I realised I’d been worrying too much about what other people thought of me. So I wrote it to remind myself that I am happy with who I am. I don’t have to act or dress according to what other people want, and I can be with whomever I want to be. I’m sure many people can relate to this.

Feel good about yourself and who you are. Don’t let other people get you down or tell you what to be or not to be—just love yourself!

Sunshine
“You’re my sunshine, everybody knows”—this is the EP’s other cutie. Most of us know that feeling of being completely infatuated with someone. They mean absolutely everything to you in that moment.

I spent a few months in France learning to surf a few summers ago. After only a month, I managed to somehow crack some ribs, which meant no more surfing. To say I was sad is an understatement, but it gave me more time to record music. I’d often played around with “Sunshine” on the guitar and even busked with it in the Berlin U-Bahn stations. It seemed to always make people smile, so while I was recording in France, I decided to try it out as an electronic song and there it was born! I returned to the exact same beautiful place to film some of the atmosphere that had helped create the song.

Music

“I love French electronic music. The way they sing is so sexy and effortless. I had the language stuck in my head after staying there, so when I started improvising the lyrics and melody to this song, it simply came out best in French.”

My Lover
“My Lover” is pure power. Having a lover isn’t always easy or simple—it can be confusing and messy, but it’s also a lot of fun and makes you smile. This song is all those things mashed together and blasted out all at once.

My Mum
My mum’s favourite. She’s been waiting for this one to be released and here it is, just in time for her birthday! “My My” is filled with empowering emotion that makes me close my eyes, clench my fists and wave my arms around. The song is slightly heartbreaking because there’s not always a happy ending to every love story and there’s a chance that the answer to your questions could actually end up hurting you. I think people can connect to this feeling and the chorus’ uncertain lyrics: “When you see me there, will you love me more?”

This song is packed with emotions and allows you to release them while you sing along as loud as you can.

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“Taste the best of Iceland”

ICELANDIC GOURMET FEAST

Starts with a shot of the infamous Icelandic spirit Brennivín

• Smoked puffin with blueberry “brennivín” sauce
• Icelandic Arctic Char with peppers-salsa
• Lobster tails baked in garlic
• Pan-fried line caught blue ling with lobster sauce
• Icelandic lamb with beer-butterscotch sauce
• Minke Whale with cranberry & malt sauce

And for dessert
• White chocolate “Skyr” mousse with passion coulis

8.990 kr.
**Music**

**The Core Of The Winter**

Turn off the lights and get claustrophobic for Bára Gísladóttir's newest release

*Words: Hannah Jane Cohen  Photo: Art Binck

"The funny thing is that I wasn’t even planning on releasing this album," Bára Gísladóttir says, a wide, animated smile taking over her face. The composer and double bassist is only weeks away from releasing her newest solo album, ‘HÍBER,’ a piece in eight movements for double bass and electronics. "I’ve been working on it for three years so it’s been a lot of time. I’ve wanted to think and digest rather than actually working," she admits. "The musical part is just the tip of the iceberg, which is always the case for us all, but it’s even more so than usual here."  

In person, Bára’s somewhat of a contradiction. Musically, her works tread the line between discomfort and beauty: Harsh, unrelenting and digesting rather than actually working, she admits. "The musical part is just the tip of the iceberg, which is always the case for us all, but it’s even more so than usual here."

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Known for her smooth, jazzy sounds and rhythms, she’s one of the current Icelandic music scene’s reigning queens. Last February, she dropped her eponymous second album. Though some songs like “Fóllor” and “Fugnaður” stay true to the relaxed, quiet vibes of her previous album, “Núggi,” most of the songs on the new album such as “Melody’s Gift,” “Tryp,” and “Höfin” show off newer, jazzy sorts of upbeat sounds and rhythms that one can’t help but sway along to. Having already rescheduled the release concert due to the original gathering ban, she looks forward to hopefully definitely celebrating her release with welcome fans to Háskólabíó in September.

Concerts & Nightlife

Events listed are all live performances, shows and DJs. Venues are listed by day. For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit grapevine.is/happening. Send your listings to: listings@grapevine.is.

Our Picks

Friday September 14th

Mullin Jazz Club: Karl Orloftur
20:00 Harpa

Glorusar
17:00 12 Tónar

Friday Night Comedy Show
21:00 Secret Cellar

Harpa Guided Tour
14:00 Harpa

Open Piano Recital
15:00 Harpa

Saturday August 15th

Listabíó i Reykjavík: Fjálfræði // Roðnó
13:00 Secret Location

Saturday Night Comedy Show
21:00 Secret Cellar

Harpa Guided Tour With Live Music
15:30 Harpa

Sunday August 16th

Demonstration of Support for LGBTQ People In Poland
16:00 The Polish Embassy

MBB Sundays
17:00 Secret Cellar

Monday August 17th

Soulfood: Women & Queer Open-Mic
Comedy Show
20:00 Baukvern

Open-Mic
21:00 Secret Cellar

Tuesday August 18th

Listabíó i Reykjavík: Fjálfræði // Roðnó
15:00 Secret Location

Karl Orloftur - Karaoke Party!
20:00 Baukvern

Pub Quiz
20:00 Secret Cellar

Wednesday August 19th

Lord Of The Rings Movie Quiz
17:00 Stúdentakjallarinn
All You Can Eat Wednesdays
All Day, Bred og Drygun

Harpa Guided Tour
14:00 Harpa

August 14th—September 10th

All Day, Bred og Drygun: Rått og Förtrygt

Thurman August 27th

Museum Free Thursdays!
17:00 Hafnarhús

Pub Quiz
21:00 Studentakjallarinn

Dumplings Night!
17:00 Makaka Restaurant

Kayla Hafstein
19:00 Secret Cellar

Friday August 28th

Hipsunhafs
21:00 Börn Birri

Brett Brokvik
17:00 12 Tónar

Friday Night Comedy Show
21:00 Secret Cellar

Saturday August 29th

Björk Orkustofnun
17:00 K7 Online

Record Store Day
All Day, Everywhere!

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Ensemble International
Theatre: I Shall Always Return
16:00, 18:00 ÍBGT

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Bessi Blónnórsdóttir & Marina Ósk
15:00 Jónfríður

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Chie Arai & Yoko"nori
19:30 Harpa

Tómas Lárus Party
21:00 Harpa

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Arnar
22:30 Harpa

Saturday Night Comedy Show
21:00 Secret Cellar

Sunday August 30th

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Ensemble International
Theatre: I Shall Always Return
16:00, 18:00 ÍBGT

ÍBGT Sundays
17:00 Secret Cellar

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Hafdis Jóhannsdóttir & Parállax
20:00 Harpa

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Silent Movie Concert "The General"
20:30 ÍBGT sólluminn

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Öskar Guðbjörgson & Skuli Ólafsson
21:15 Harpa

Monday August 31st

Soulfood: Women & Queer Open-Mic
Comedy Show
20:00 Baukvern

Open-Mic
21:00 Secret Cellar

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Kristjana Stefánsson Ólafsson
12:00 ÍBGT sólluminn

Record Store Day!
Aug. 29th - All Day, Everywhere!

Take your music home after celebrating with your local record store. There’ll be events everywhere! cinéma.
Wiola Ujazdowska uses her voice to level criticism at the treatment of immigrants in Iceland

Words: Sam O’Donnell  Photo: Provided by subject

Wiola Ujazdowska was born in the Polish city of Toruń, where she studied art history and painting. In 2014, she accepted an internship with the Living Art Museum and moved to Iceland. Since then, she has been active in the art scene here, engaging in a number of different projects.

These days she focuses on video, performance and installation rather than painting. Her inspirations and mentors are performance artists, namely Joseph Beuys and Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

Inspirations
Joseph Beuys was a firm believer that everyone is an artist. He said his greatest work as an artist was education, and Wiola sees him as a mentor. “His works definitely had a huge impact on me,” she says.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles was a New York based artist who created the idea of maintenance art. She worked as a janitor, cleaning museums in New York City. As a working wife and mother, she didn’t have time to create art in a conventional sense, so she made these household actions an art. “His voice of other groups is not heard, and very often the art world doesn’t want to hear it.”

The Scandinavian Dream
This focus on the working class spoke directly to Wiola, and inspired her to make performance art. In June, she did a performance at the Reykjavík City Library where she vacuumed up the words “Scandinavian Dream.” She says that this is a commentary on how Iceland treats the working class.

“There is this idea that Scandinavia is seen as this egalitarian kind of utopia...”

Recent and upcoming stuff
In September, she will be involved in an exhibition called Common Ground, which features Icelandic artists, as well as Polish and Lithuanian artists living in Iceland. She will be displaying artwork that is inspired by the fire on Bræðraborgarstígur. “It shows that there are some spots in the system that allow for people to be used, especially foreign and temporary workers,” she says.

From now until the 24th of August, she is in the eastern part of the country, working as a producer-slash-curator-slash-artist of the VOR/WIOSNA festival featuring art from Polish people living in Iceland. The festival doesn’t feature art from Poles in Poland. “We present and promote and talk about Polish minorities here because I think it’s different circumstances.”

“Often the voice of other groups is not heard, and very often the art world doesn’t want to hear it.”
**Art Listings**

Events are listed by venue. For complete listings and detailed information on venues, visit grapevine.is/happenings.

Send your listings to: listings@grapevine.is

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### Opening

**REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Forest / Glaciers**

In this exhibition, award-winning photographer Takashi Nakagawa concentrates on the relationship between Icelandic forests and glaciers. Around the time of human settlement in Iceland more than three thousand years ago, nearly 50% of the country was covered by forest. That number quickly dropped to less than 1%, because of deforestation. Restoration began around 100 years ago, but still forests only cover around 2% of the land. What impact does this have?

- Opens on August 8th, 2020
- Runs until January 3rd, 2021

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**Kling og Bani**

**Forsa Tomorrow**

Wall effects and sculpture, video, sound, text and performance. Ævindur Ólafsson’s art explores the apparent barrier of and between individual objects. Using shapes and materials found in manual special effects and prop productions, he draws on the aesthetic language of Science Fiction to reflect contemporary states of humanity.

- Opens on August 22nd, 2020
- Runs until September 27th, 2020

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**Ingólfshöfði National Park**

**Hvitserkur**

Hvitserkur is a spectacular sea stack located off the northwest coast of Iceland. This offshore rock formation is an example of a large pillow basalt lava neck that formed during a period of volcanic activity roughly 6,000 years ago. The rock was deposited as a huge flow of basaltic lava that solidified to form the Iceland Sea. Over time, the basalt was eroded into its current shape, which is a conical structure with a flat top.

- Opens on August 20th, 2020
- Runs until August 27th, 2020

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**National Gallery of Iceland**

**Solastalgia**

In this contemporary installation, explore a mix of augmented reality with contemporary art, multisensory effects and cutting-edge design. Enter a mysterious future in a post-human world where only a few remnants of digital culture have survived. Do you still have faith in technology? (Re.)

- Runs until January 10th, 2021

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**Our Picks**

In his third solo exhibition, Stuttgart-based artist David Órn Ólafsdóttir showcases his signature unconventional methods of painting, most notably using found furniture as a canvas for his bold, vibrant creations. We’re talking old doors, random bits of chewing gum—whether its contents of your grandma’s garage have never looked this good. David Órn trained as a visual artist at The Icelandic Academy of the Arts before relocating to Germany, but frequently exhibits his works in Reykjavik. The curators at Hverfandið are sure your stuff will fit so they rate David Órn 10/10. (Right? PA)

- Runs until September 30th, 2020
- Ásmundur For Families
- Children get free entry to learn about Ásmundur Sveinsson, after whom the museum is named.
- Runs until September 30th, 2020

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**REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM**

**Hafnarhofs Eyri: Cyborg**

This series of the great Eyri was inspired by technology, science and the combination of the human and the mechanical. In particular it examines how technology invades the body and how the human body adapts to the machine. The images offer questions concerning the borderslines between human beings and technology.

- Runs until December 31st, 2020
- Gilbert & George: The Great Exhibition
- For over five decades, British artist duo Gilbert & George have shaped contemporary art. At this special exhibition, come challenge the prevailing bourgeois ideas of taste and decorum while empowering gays and other minority groups. What else could you want?
- Runs until January 3rd, 2021

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**REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM**

**Fish & Folk**

Name a better duo than fish and Iceland. Can’t. So come learn about the history of Icelandic fisherwomen. The exhibition contains all his works. Here, she dismantles a connection to, and interpretation of the world of adven-
ture to be discovered within it.

- Runs until December 31st, 2020
- **What It’s About - Reality on Canvas 1970-2020**
- Many painters seek to achieve an impression of realism in their works. But is everything it seems in paintings made in a realistic style? We don’t know, that’s why they made an exhibition about it.
- Runs until October 4th, 2020

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**Gerðarsafn Kópavogr Art Museum**

**After All**

Twelve contemporary Icelandic artists show their take on everyday beauty, light and humour in reflection of the present situation in the world and what really drives and matters to us.

- Runs until August 23rd, 2020

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**Hannurarsafn**

**The Factory**

A monument to a harrowing-ear gold rush, ‘The Factory’ is a roadmap of how such buildings as the abandoned and remote Djúpavík herring factory can be used to foster community, culture and tourism. On the other side of the Blústdjórr, there will be a sister exhibition to ‘The Factory’.

- Runs until September 14th, 2020

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**Reykjavík Grapevine**

**Icelandic Visual Language**

**Behind the Scenes**

Icelandic Visual Language

**Flokk Til You Drop Clothing Market**

- August 30th - 12:00 - Museum of Design And Applied Art
- Selling treasures found while rummaging out a ton of material from the Red Cross, as well as unique garments made from “stuff that are looking for a new home.” This clothing market serves up sustainability. (Of)
- August 22nd - Sept. 21st - Kig-Bang
- Maria Þorðardóttir’s first solo exhibition presents her artistic take on contemporary concerns such as cli-
time, change, feminism, the relationship between nature, and man. (Of)
- Hverfandi

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**Museum of Design and Applied Art**

**Treasures Of A Nation**

This exhibition provides insight into Reykjavik’s farms at the time of the first settlers. The exhibit contains 300 artworks including a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist’s sculptures.

- Runs until January 3rd, 2021
- **Gilbert & George: The Great Exhibition**
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THE SWEETEST CENTURY

Since opening our bakery in 1920, we have constantly pushed the boundaries of traditional Icelandic baking methods. Find us in the heart of Reykjavík serving piping hot, fresh pastries made from scratch, every morning from seven-thirty AM.

Not a sweet tooth? That’s OK. Come by for a savory brunch or taste one of our homemade sodas or craft beers.

While the coronavirus pandemic has shut down a lot of events in Iceland this summer, the members of the Icelandic Comics Society (TICS) have been keeping themselves occupied nonetheless. Atla Hrafney, chairman and co-founder of the Icelandic Comics Society, and a comics author in her own right, tells us that this summer has given TICS plenty to do.

“We were very fortunate, up until this month, to be able to get every single event that we wanted to do off the ground,” she says. “Covid was never an exceptional issue for us. It wasn’t until August that we had to cancel anything.”

To the libraries

“We had a week-long workshop with teenagers aged between 10 and 14 at the Reykjavík Art Museum,” Atla says. “This was done as a way to do more long-form workshops. We then got an offer from Hít Húsi to apply for their summer work, and two of our comics creators got in. This allowed us to push a couple of comics creators into a government-sponsored summer jobs.”

They have been seeing a lot of success with more children-oriented events, such as their participation in the Children’s Cultural Festival, but have also set their sights on expanding the readership of local comics creators through Reykjavík area libraries.

“We’ve been trying to create zines sections in government and municipal libraries,” she says. “There’s already been a potential success in Garðabær, which we’re still finalising, but they’ve agreed to have a zine section and we’re excited to see that come to fruition. There have been talks with a lot of municipalities about this, to find a home for shorter-form comics in library systems. That’s been our mission during the pandemic, when we don’t really have a lot of energy to do a lot of different events. Experimenting with a lot of different infrastructure-building like that.”

Islands in the stream

While they have had to cancel a couple of big events this month due to the pandemic, they’re focusing more on “low-key events” while also moving towards streaming events.

In fact, they held a streaming event last spring featuring comics artists from all over the country engaging in “a digital comics jam, with the idea of our vice chairman Vigdís would draw up things we were talking about. We filled a whole board with doodles based on our comics conversation topics.” They hope to bring in more international artists for these streaming sessions in the future.

For the new year, they’re aiming to create “a shared space for comics creators and illustrators outside the capital area. If that comes to fruition, we would have a place to hold workshops in more of a wild setting, engaging both local and international artists.”

But here in this year, they plan on translating Scott McCloud’s ‘Understanding Comics’ into Icelandic, and will also release an anthology of the comics their members have done.

If they had it all

The goals that TICS aims for are within what they are able to do, but even if there were no limit to their available resources, their aims would still be altruistic.

“If we had all the money and resources in the world, we would probably be trying to find ways to help gently change structures in ways that are positive beyond comics,” Atla says. “We would push for more festivals and more comics societies in Iceland. We’ve also run into a unique situation where comics are at the forefront of school literacy discussions, and if we had our way, we’d be able to help kids with reading disabilities to access comics on a more academic level. Beyond that, we’d be able to help every person to do comics, so that their personal expression could be heard.”

As it is, TICS is doing everything they can within the confines of the pandemic.

“We’re just trying to do as much as we can with the limited resources that are available to everyone right now, seeing what sticks and what doesn’t, what actually engages people,” she says. “And we’ve found surprisingly a lot of success given the restrictions of this year.”
A Day In The 900
Food, folks, and fulmars in the Westman Islands

In a country already known for its isolation and dazzling nature, the Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar) still manage to feel especially far-flung. The archipelago shines bright under its green summer cloak, while grey seabirds called fulmars twirl and dance effortlessly through the gale, some of them soaring right alongside the ferry, which journeys daily from Landeyjahöfn to Heimaey, the largest island and home to the Westmans’ only town.

On the final approach to the harbour, the bright greens contrast starkly with the vibrant coppery and tawny browns of the cliffs flanking the harbour. My travel companion, Grapevine photographer Art Bicnick, has been to Heimaey numerous times and puts it quite aptly: “When the sun is out here, it looks like somewhere in the Caribbean.”

**Lunch & learning**

After the early morning, two-hour drive and forty-minute ferry ride to reach Heimaey, a good, substantial lunch is in order. Enter Gott. One of the Islands’ best-known eateries, its owners make all sauces, stews, soups, bread, and cakes on site from local ingredients with great care. The cauliflower burger makes for a filling, but refreshing lunch, stuffed with a mixture of cauliflower, avocado, quinoa, and tomatoes, held together with fluffy mashed sweet potatoes and served with a side of small potatoes baked to absolute perfection.

With body and mind reenergized, it’s off to the Sagnheimar Folk Museum, which features exhibits on many surprising and peculiar episodes of the Islands’ history: for example, the importance of the annual festival, its 1627 invasion by Ottoman pirates, its numerous inhabitants who converted to Mormonism and emigrated to Utah, puffin hunting traditions of yore (now largely abandoned), the 1973 eruption that saw the evacuation of all islanders for several months, and the numerous locals who represented Iceland in the 1936 Olympics. Museum curator Hóður Baldvinsson gestures to a notebook on the wall belonging to one of the athletes, filled with handwritten notes on its pages. “[He] was friends with Jesse Owens, who left him a note in this memory book of his,” he explains. “We got it from his family.”

**Puffins & plant-based**

While the puffins relish their catch, we instead opt for mid-afternoon drinks at the Brothers Brewery. A wide selection of beers is on offer, with something on the menu for all tastes, from fruity IPAs to hearty lagers. One of the most notable drinks on the menu is the Óskar imperial stout, a strong beer with a hint of almond that gives it an almost coffee-like taste, the latest in a long-running series of annual house brews named after local sailors.

The day ends with dinner at Éta, a burger restaurant newly opened by the owner of Slippurinn just across the street. Roasting a crispy cooked bean patty topped with generous quantities of pickled onions, served alongside cauliflower buffalo wings cooked to perfection, the vegan burger combo makes for a satisfying, filling, and delicious end to the day.
Rifts, Rain And Rebirth

Getting up close and (very) personal with the Þríhnúkagígur volcano

Words: Poppy Askham  Photos: Art Bieniek

Childhood adventure books led me to believe that descending into a volcano would be a far more frequent occurrence than it has proven to be in my life so far. Today, with the help of the Inside The Volcano tour at Þríhnúkagígur, I will begin to right that wrong. Þríhnúkagígur—which roughly translates to “try to pronounce that you English-speaking suck-er” (or to be pedantic “three peak volcano”)—is a geological oddity. When magma cools after an eruption, it solidifies and fills the volcano’s cone. But after Þríhnúkagígur erupted, the magma simply disappeared as though someone had pulled out the plug, leaving a uniquely preserved cavity, ready to be explored by wannabe spelunkers like myself.

When it rains, it pours

Much to my dismay, on arrival at Bláfjöll Nature Reserve, I discover that a 3.5 kilometre hike lies between me and my childhood fantasies. “The Highlands are Iceland’s wettest region,” our tour guide announces as we set out into the mossy lava field. As if to prove her point, the heavens promptly open, releasing that special kind of Iceland’s rain that defies the laws of physics to ensure you get soaked from every angle.

Halfway through the trek we cross a small wooden bridge over an unassuming fissure in the lava field. In fact, we learn, it’s the architect of today’s escape: the Mid-Atlantic Ridge—a diverging tectonic plate boundary that is pulling Iceland in half at a rate of roughly two centimetres a year, thrilling geography nerds in the process.

Journey Towards The Centre Of The Earth

Eventually we reach base camp and promptly don our unflattering mustard yellow helmets and harness, ready for the real adventure. Sartorial concerns are soon replaced with a giddy excitement as we reach the crater. A metal bridge juts out over the abyss, leading to a stepped-up window-cleaner’s lift that will transport us into the bowels of the earth. It’s at this point that fear should probably kick in. We are suspend-ed in a tiny open-lift above a 198 metre drop—for reference that’s the height of 666 puffins—but it appears my self-preservation instinct has momentarily stopped functioning. There is in fact little to be scared about; we are trussed up in safety equipment and accompanied by a trained rescue worker. What’s more, Þríhnúkagígur is dormant; the most recent eruption occurred some 4,000 years ago. Somewhat disappointingly, it seems the greatest threat to my life throughout the trip is probably my own clumsy feet—a detail I mumble something lame about a certain anatomical likeness.

“A turn for the hippier”

“When you get to the lowest point, look up at the vault, you might recognize the shape,” our guide says with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. “Well,” she demands when I return. My British prudishness has dropped to just 2°C. I return. “Exactly!” she enthuses. “I like it!”

It’s an image that is impossible to dislodge from my brain as we make our shuddering ascent back to rain-soaked reality. Spiritual rebirth was conspicuously missing from the trip’s online itinerary. I guess it’s just another one of those thrilling unexpected extras—like the bowl of steaming vegetable soup that awaits us at base camp.
A selection from Every Happy Hour in 101 Reykjavik

Get the complete Happy Hour listings!

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

Cheap Food

Here are some deals that’ll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

1,000 ISK And Under

American Bar
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

Apotheke
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

Bæjarins Bezt
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

Beer Garden
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
Free beer is on draft!

Brikku
Every day from 11:00 to 20:00.
Bour 700 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

Café Babali
Every day from 19:00 to 21:00.
Bour 600 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

Delon
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Bour 600 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

Fjallkonan
Every day from 15:00 to 17:00.
Bour 890 ISK, Wine 910 ISK.

Fire and Flower
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Bour 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

Islenki Barinn
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Bour 700 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

Iba Zimien
Every day from 8:00 to 10:00.
Coffee 400 ISK.

Isafold
Every day from 11:00 to 16:00.
Bour 600 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

Jungle cocktail Bar
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Bour 890 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

Kaffibærinn
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

Kaffi Brenn
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00.
Bour 700 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

Kaldi
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Bour 700 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

Kex Hostel
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

Lóft
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Bour 800 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.

Miami
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
Bour 700 ISK, Wine 800 ISK, Cocktails 1,200 ISK.

PapaKu
Reykjavík
Every day from 16:00 to 22:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

Pirén
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Bour 600 ISK.

Public House
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00 & 23:00 to 1:00.
Bour 890 ISK, Wine 890 ISK.

Punk
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Bour 890 ISK.

SLIPP BARÍRN
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 750 ISK, Cocktails 1,200 ISK.

Slurp
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Bour 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

Sólon
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Bour 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

Sólan
Monday - Friday.
Bour 1,200 ISK, Wine 1,500 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

Soup of the day
Monday - Friday.
Bour 1,390 ISK.

Soup of the day
Monday - Friday.
Bour 1,490 ISK.

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Flip The Switch On Those Sexy Lamps

Pórey Mjallhvít Ómarsdóttir and Dögg Mósesdóttir on their new web series “Sköp”

Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir
Images: Art Bicnick & Provided by Sköp

Pórey and Dögg in non-animated form

“Sexy Lamp”: a female character that is so unimportant to the plot that she could easily be replaced by a curvy lamp carried off by the manly man hero instead.

Another cliché trope? “Man Pain,” where the male protagonist tragically loses the woman in his life to provide him with motivation for his revenge quest. These cliché tropes can be found in everything from indie flicks to blockbusters and are now up for dissection in a new web-series entitled “Sköp” by Pórey Mjallhvít Ómarsdóttir and Dögg Mósesdóttir.

The slopes of tropes

Pórey and Dögg co-founded the production company Freyja Filmwork, which has brought out works like Tinna Hrafnsdóttir’s short film ‘Munda’ and their own documentary “Hófundur ó blik” and their own documentary “Vaxtur / Hafnarstræti 1-3 / Tel. 555 2900 / saetasvinid.is” which has brought out works from Tinna Hrafnsdóttir’s short film ‘Munda’ and their own documentary “Hófundur ó blik” and their own documentary “Vaxtur / Hafnarstræti 1-3 / Tel. 555 2900 / saetasvinid.is” production company Freyja Film - Dögg Mósesdóttir.

And given that Pórey is an animator, the two decided to follow in the cartoon-style footsteps of artists like Alison Bechdel and have their animated counterparts discuss film and TV tropes.

More “Man Pain”

The duo also provides the dubbing for their characters in Icelandic and English. They have also received help from an actress for a Norwegian version and are very open to the idea of more dubs in the future. But right now, it’s all about funding the series to ensure it continues and hopefully securing partner- ship and distribution opportunities along the way. Dögg and Pórey emphasise that they want the series to remain free from the start. They’re experimenting with various ideas for promoting the series—one idea is to screen an episode before movies in the theatre—but Patreon is currently the best way for fans to support the show. The creators can be found and supported under the username Sköp there, where it’s possible for supporters to donate in order to unlock new content, get stickers and of course make the web series production possible.

And even though the dreaded YouTube algorithm poses a constant threat of swallowing up content like theirs—especially since the project’s still at an early stage—Dögg and Pórey see the value in their work and already have lots of ideas for future episodes.

For example, the “Born Sexy” trope: a woman with no knowledge of the world but a sexy bod, whom the hero can protect but also pursue. Or the “Buffy Husband,” a more or less lovable bumbling idiot who often has to be parented by his wife as much as their children.

Pórey says. “I didn’t realize that!” and nobody feels threatened in the process,”

she concludes, “and for a healthier representation of women. That’s nice to leave behind.”

“I was basically, almost exactly like it was in the first episode,” Dögg remarks. “I mean I thought I knew a lot about gender issues in film because I was a president of Women in Film and Television in Iceland for six years and I’d been to lectures all over the world. I had heard all kinds of concepts around this and I thought ‘Why haven’t I heard about this [‘Man Pain’] and all these tropes?’”

That said, the next planned episode is about “Women In Refrigerators,” those female characters who are considered disposable and often get killed in a gruesome way to provide drama—usually for more “Man Pain.”

Dögg hopes the series will provide more opportunity to open up a conversation about these topics. “It’s kind of our [contribution] to a healthier film industry I guess,” she concludes, “and for a healthier representation of women. That’s nice to leave behind.”

“I think it’s a worthy pursuit. It’s funny and it’s needed to open up this discussion,” Pórey says. “I think that for budding filmmakers or anybody who’s in the creative business, being aware of these things is essential. You cannot just leave people to just pretend that they’re not responsible for the stuff that they create.”

Usually one has to search the depths of the internet before coming across content that investigates the slippery slopes of cinematic tropes. It’s niche—you have to know exactly where to look for it and even then, it’s usually just video essays between 15 minutes and an hour in length, which can be fun and interesting, especially if the viewer is already into the topic, but there are hardly any commodified short clips.

Pórey though, with ‘Sköp’, hopes to make the discussion a bit more graspable and maybe less dry. “Gender discussion doesn’t have to be super-serious and un-inviting. It can just be something you kind of go: ‘Oh wow I didn’t realize that!’ and nobody feels threatened in the process,” she says.

“This idea behind the web-series actually came to the two creators in a casual discussion about a movie, where the term ‘Man Pain’ was brought up by Pórey.

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Countess Malaise

Wearing:
• Chain from Harajuku Chains
• Gloves customised by me to feature the Countess Malaise logo
• To be honest this is an ugly-ass dress, but it kinda looked cute with everything else in the outfit
• Goth lil’ skirt, which in this case is paired with a belt to cinch in the waist
• Custom handbag made by my wifey and stylist Sofie, the creator of Puer Parasitus
• High-heeled boots from Queer POC-owned company SYRO that sells shoes for big feet like myself

Describe your style in 5 words:
My style is chaotic. It’s dirty scene kid x dominatrix x DIY glamour x hand-me-downs x literal garbage from the streets.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík: Fatamarkaður Jörmundur—that lil’ crowded second-hand store in a basement somewhere in the middle of Laugavegur that this stylish old man runs on his own. It’s like a “gentlemen’s wear”-type store. There is a lot of quality stuff down there but navigating through the clothes is like re-enacting an episode of Hoarders.

Favourite piece: My sweatsuit from SOTO. I would have worn it today but it’s too hot out.

Something you would never wear: Those stretchy tie-dye euro-hippie pants. The ones with the extra long crotch situation, like past the knees. I can not get behind them...choices.

Lusting after: Stef Van Looveren’s dick/pussy/ass handbag.

Fjallkonan is a new lively restaurant & pub in the heart of Reykjavík offering a selection of Icelandic and international dishes from local ingredients.
Casual and cozy atmosphere yet still fun and festive. Stop by for snacks & drinks, lunch or dinner.

LAMB & FLATBREAD
Slow cooked lamb, traditional Icelandic flatbread from the Westfjords, carrot purée, pickled red onions, horseradish sauce

ARCTIC CHARR & BLINI
Lightly cured arctic charr, chickpea blini, horseradish sauce, roe, crispy lentils, yuzu-elderflower dressing

ICELANDIC PLATTER
• Puffin, crowberry gel
• Minke whale, malt glaze
• Lamb tartar, chive mayo

THE LAMB BURGER
Bacon, mushroom & date duxelle, pickled red onions, pickled cucumber, rucola, smoked cheese, fries

SKYR ETON MESS CHEESECAKE
White chocolate “Skyr” mousse, meringue, raspberries, raspberry sauce
If like me, you haven’t got over the scallops at Óx and the glistening medallions of cod at Dill, or been enthralled by the sea urchin at the three Michelin-starred Frantzen in Stockholm, chances are you’ve sampled some of the best seafood Iceland has to offer.

It is with these memories swirling through my mind that I excitedly reach out to Nora Seafood, a Westfjords-based seafood processing company that has in its six-year reign made gainful strides in the world of fine dining while also straddling concerns about sustainability and innovation.

Its young founder and CEO, Víðir Ingibjörgsson, has graciously offered me a tour of their fishing operations, topped off by a meet-and-greet with Sveinbjörn Hjálmarsson a.k.a. Simbi, their famed diver who hand-harvests sea urchins from local fjords. An educational, gastronomic afternoon awaits me.

Víðir admits that the industry is rife with many that lack the education and/or skill to handle seafood efficiently. “The majority are driven by volume and not necessarily quality,” he confesses. “To use Icelandic products in a creative fashion, there was definitely a window there. We take great pride in our fish.”

“[Every fish] is so precious, you have to handle it like a treasure,” he continues. “You have to cool it down and get it in the hands of your customer as soon as possible.” Nora prides itself on on these speedy deliveries, regularly transporting live shellfish from Iceland to the swankiest restaurants in Europe.

“At Nora, everything starts for us at the very beginning. For a beautiful cod going to the finest restaurants in the world, it’s a matter of one hour in the sun. That determines whether it’s going to the finest restaurants in Europe.”

How such an enterprise will adapt to a COVID or post-COVID reality is clearly on Víðir’s mind. “Life is just sweet and sour you know? The times before COVID were incredible and we learnt a lot, but now it is sour and we will continue to use that knowledge to experiment and grow,” he smiles.

On my way home, something Víðir said earlier plays over in my mind. “I choose to respect nature and respect the raw material, each tail of the fish, each eye of the fish. I’m blessed to be able to do this everyday,” he relayed. This drive and attention to detail is what sets Nora Seafood apart from its competition.

One of Nora’s unique offerings are their sustainably harvested sea urchin, scallops and mahogany clams. Simbi single-handedly scours the ocean floors throughout the year, no matter the weather, for these decadent delights.

In their quest for sustainability, Simbi only picks sea urchins to order. He cracks a still-alive urchin open to reveal persimmon-hued uni. It is such an incredible privilege to be able to savour fresh uni for its floral, briny sweetness that we all enjoy it in a moment of silence and smiles. “These are quite the aphrodisiac,” Simbi winks.

We also sample some ‘Princess Scallops’, so called for their palm-sized size. The glistening morsels are miles apart from their sorry cousins, which most of us encounter in restaurants. Mahogany clams, the grand dame of the shellfish world, are like crunchier scallops— their feisty muscles snapping shut tight making it quite a feat to open them.

The phrase “líf er saltsfiskur” (“Life is salted fish”) frequents my mind while in the Westfjords. Currently ranked 15th globally in production, Iceland has long been a fishing nation. It isn’t an exaggeration to say that it is a saturated market, so how does one stand out here?

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Sustainable epicurean delights

For those who might be left with a hankering to try some of Nora’s fares, Fiskirn Heima home-delivers a selection of frozen seafood from the Westfjords across the country.

Curated quality

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Joy & Jollof Rice

Introducing Ogolúgo, 101’s only African restaurant

Words: Poppy Askham Photos: Art Bicnick

Ogolúgo means “welcome” in Hausa and the name couldn’t be more fitting for Laugavegur’s latest culinary arrival. Since its early July opening, the team behind the restaurant have been determined to deliver a taste of Africa to 101 by offering a host of authentic dishes from atiéke to domuda, all served with a generous helping of laughter and hospitality.

Filling a gap in the market

“I want it to feel like home, that was the main idea,” explains Alex Jallow, Ogolúgo’s owner, waiter, and resident TikTok superstar. “The taste of the food, the smell of the spices, the crowds of people—when you walk in you feel like you’re home, like you’re in Africa.”

Alex hails from the Gambia and Senegal region of West Africa, but grew up in the U.K. and has been living in Iceland for over ten years. “I love Iceland, but I just felt that that African touch was missing in this country, so when I was able to make it happen, it was a dream come true.”

Before taking up the role of restaurant frontman, Alex worked as a chef. “I got my love for food from my mum. I was always in the kitchen, running in and stealing food from her whilst she was cooking,” he explains. “When I was 11, I would always ask to go to the market. My mum would ask me what I wanted to buy, but I just wanted to go so that I could get close to all the different ingredients. That’s the kind of person I’ve been ever since I was little. I’ve always loved food.”

He suddenly jumps up from the table and disappears into the kitchen, emerging with a plate of jollof rice served with crispy plantain and grilled tilapia. He also brings the rather reluctant head chef Dawda in tow. “This is West Africa’s favourite dish, but it can be found all across the continent,” Dawda explains. “I have lots of favourite recipes to make and I’m always experimenting, but at the end of the day I’ll always love jollof rice.”

Service with a smile

Although the food is superb, what really stands out from a dining experience at Ogolúgo is the atmosphere, largely thanks to the overbrimming enthusiasm of the restaurant’s owner. Alex practically leaps from table to table, frequently breaking out into dance as he delivers steaming meat pies and huge bowls of okro soup. It’s this exuberance that has earned him hundreds of thousands of views on the restaurant’s hit TikTok account—username ogolugo101—where he puts his own vivacious spin on the trends of the day. His cheerfulness is infectious; within moments of entering the restaurant, you’re grinning along with him and even agreeing to make a TikTok cameo.

“Trust me, I don’t even know where I get my energy from myself and I’m in here every single day,” he laughs. “It’s all about happiness. There’s so much positive energy in this restaurant. My customers look forward to coming here, and they love it when I’m dancing around the place. It makes me happy to make them happy so I don’t even notice that I’m running around and that time is going by. I can’t complain. I am happy, very happy.”

And there we find Ogolúgo’s secret: not only is it 101’s only African restaurant, it’s also the postcode’s most joyful dining spot. I leave the restaurant like every other diner, with a full stomach and a smile on my face, having promised a swift return.

Visit Ogolúgo at Laugavegur 85 and be sure to check out their TikTok ogolugo101.
Bienvenido to the Costa de Westfjords. Swap sandals for hiking boots, bikinis for anoraks, and ice-cold sangria for a soft ochre, contrasting dramatically against the dark cliffs and deep turquoise Atlantic. After the highway’s unfalteringly drab colour palette of greys, greens, yellows and blacks, the idyllic scene almost seems artificial.

A “tropical” weekend getaway to the Westfjords

Words: Poppy Askham  Photos: Art Bicnick

Escape to the country

Gazing out of the office window on a drizzly Monday morning, I watch as tourists in ridiculously oversized pac-a-macs flee to safety of the nearest café. It’s early August, a period I would usually spend passed out on a Spanish beach, but for obvious reasons this year is a different story.

Throughout the week my vitamin D deprived brain is haunted by dreams of golden sands and azure seas and so at 9am on a Saturday morning, I drag the Grapevine’s resident photo wizard Art Bicnick on the ultimate summer road trip, a 6-hour drive to the wild, wild Westfjords, a mere 440 kilometres away.

First stop on the itinerary? Ice cream.

In one of the most remote regions in an already sparsely populated country, Erpsstaðir is a rare culinary oasis. Yes, it would’ve made more sense to enjoy an ice cream when we’d reached our coastal destination, but as I rapidly learn, in the Icelandic countryside, you get your food whenever you can. And when the ice cream is made onsite by a farmer named Einar using chubbarb, blueberries and meadowsweet from the surrounding hills, how can you refuse?

The clue’s in the name

Attempting not to spill ice cream in the rental car, we hit the road once more. Before long we reach a causeway across a moody blue fjord—we are now officially entering Iceland’s least-visited region, the Westfjords. From here the broad highways of the south are replaced with winding, gravel-covered roads and the further we travel, the worse the weather gets. As we near our final destination, the scenery is all but obscured from view by an impossibly thick fog, until we turn a bend in the road and the clouds suddenly miraculously part to reveal Rausbæandsur.

Unlike its more famous cousin Reynefjara, Rausbæandsur matured out of its emo phase. In a country famed for its black sands, Rausbæandsur is, as the name would suggest, a copper-toned outlier. Thanks to a relatively thin layer of pulverised scallop shells, the beach’s colouring morphs depending on light conditions. Today, under a strip of weak sun peaking out between ominous clouds, the sands are a soft ochre, contrasting dramatically against the dark cliffs and deep turquoise Atlantic. After the highway’s unfalteringly drab colour palette of greys, greens, yellows and blacks, the idyllic scene almost seems artificial.

A zeal for seals

Something about the Westfjords releases my inner child (though admittedly she’s never far from the surface), so when I read the word “seals” on a wildlife information board, I let out an involuntary squeal. I now have one mission in life and I politely inform my ever-patient travelling companion Art that we cannot leave Rausbæansur until I have seen a seal. Yes, I’ve spotted them swimming in the murky waters of Reykjavík’s harbour a hundred times, but this is different. I explain, becoming more impassioned by the minute.

Eventually he gives in and we set out across the sandbar towards the lair of the mighty mammals, some two kilometres away. Around twenty minutes into the trek, another childhood emotion resurfaces: a deep-seated fear of being stranded at sea spawned by an ill-fated family picnic. “Did you check the tide times?” I ask trying to keep the panic out of my voice. Art shrugs and continues to stroll along at a painfully slow speed; he clearly has never had his sandwich cruelly snatched away by a rogue wave.

The only distraction from my sense of impending doom is a fun little game I like to call “Is it a seal or is it a rock?” On the 50th round, the answer is finally the former. One of the dark mounds suddenly flops off a neighbouring sandbar and into the rapidly rising waters.

Before us are around 50 seals, more than my inner 7-year-old can handle and by far outnumbering the number of people we have seen since our arrival in the Westfjords. Quest complete, we turn back, but though we may have examined them, the seals are not finished with us. We are escorted back to the safety of dry land by an inquisitive convoy of glistening black heads bobbing in and out of the water.

Where the puffins at?

The moment we clamber back into the car, the rain resumes as if some good-natured evenly seal-loving god had held off the downpour on our behalf. The weather steadily deteriorates as we drive back over roads half-submerged in rusty-hued puddles towards our quite literal port in the storm: Höfn Breiðavík.

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, we venture back out into the rain towards the final stop of our adventure: Látrabjarg, the westernmost point in Iceland and, if you forget the Azores (which we do), the westernmost point in the whole of Europe.

A small squat lighthouse perches on the cliff, modestly marking the landmark, as the Atlantic stretches...
out before us all the way to Greenland. But the real attraction here is the 14 kilometres of 440 metre-high cliffs, home to Iceland’s biggest seabird colony. Guillemots, razorbills, skuas and kittiwakes dive in and out of sight over the cliff top, gliding effortlessly through the air as if to mock our beleaguered struggle against the wind and rain. I squint down at the segregated bands in the cliff and the nesting birds, trying to take in the magnificent sight and simultaneously prevent myself from being swept into the sea.

The sweet fishy odour of guano fills the air. It’s this natural fertiliser made up of years-worth of bird excrement that is responsible for the soft mossy grasslands that top the cliffs and give puffins the perfect habitat to hide from nosy tourists. And sure enough, the unofficial mascots of Iceland’s recent mass tourism boom are nowhere to be seen. It’s just as we feared, the puffins had left the cliffs for a day’s fishing before we had even stirred ourselves out of bed and any remaining birds are sticking wisely out of view.

Just as we resignedly turn back towards the car, we spot a flash of orange amongst the greys and blacks of the swooping gulls and fulmars. You guessed it, a puffin is triumphantly returning to its nest with a beak full of small silver fish. And suddenly we spot the nests strewn along the cliff edge and a handful of puffins peering good-humouredly out at us.

With the final item on our itinerary ticked off, we return to the car, ready for the 6-hour drive home, beach fix sorted for another year.

“Unlike its more famous cousin Reynisfjara, Raudisandur matured out of its emo phase.”

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Seal of approval (cringe)
Undercover Librarians

Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir

What happened to hardcore man bun-biceps? The Icelandic climate presumably came for them. Man-bunnies are notoriously sensitive and can’t handle the cold, especially when they get wet. Maybe some good souls took pity on them, brought them home and nurtured them back to health before adopting them and giving them a good home free of record players and cinema snobbery.

How much hair is an acceptable amount to be in a shower drain? I’m confused. None. Ew. Clean your bathroom, you animal. You’re not a possum! At least, I presume you’re not. We can never be sure about our readership though. Anyway, just get on it. And don’t worry, I hear cleaning the pipes can actually be quite fun.

While cleaning my place, I discovered a long-forgotten library book. I legit thought I had returned it. Do I pretend I never found it and move on with my life? Or do I send it back to the library anonymously? Should I even feel this much guilt about it? Well, I’m afraid you have no choice but to completely change your identity and leave the country. New name. New hair color. They’re on to you now. You can’t hope to escape them forever but you might be able to buy yourself some time. Don’t burn the book, but under no circumstances take it with you. Keep it secret. Keep it safe. Don’t talk to strangers. They might be undercover librarians.

Taurus, You Nasty Witch

Why is there a 15th season of ‘Supernatural’? The stars don’t even know...

Words: Popppy, Cate & Hannah, Professional Psychics

In Horror-Scopes, the Grapevine’s dedicated team of amateur astrologists give you their mystical insights on how to live a long and fulfilling life. Think of us as psychic grandmas. We love you.

Aries

Your best friend isn’t actually vegan. She’ll never admit to it, but the moment she puts her phone on ‘Do Not Disturb’ mode, she starts stuffing her face with Worcestershire sauce. Tomorrow night, at approximately 21:45, call her twice in a row to interrupt this slaughter-fest. She needs an intervention and God has called on you, your plant-based goddess.

Taurus

Taurus, you nasty bitch.

Gemini

Gemini, you’re losing it, so we’re going to vocalise your thoughts for you: It makes absolutely no sense that in ‘Harry Potter and the Goblet Of Fire’, Harry Crouch Jr.—disguised as Mad-Eye Moody—can see Harry while he’s under the invisibility cloak. Isn’t the cloak a mf deathly hallow designed to elude Death? Does Crouch have powers that Death does not???? Apparently!!! We’re upset too, so please use the upcoming weeks to start your campaign. We’re sure Reddit will be all about it.

Cancer

Cancel your wedding. He’s garbage. Keep the wedding dress though, it’ll come in handy for your upcoming ‘Runaway Bride’ LARPing session. You’ll be the belle of the field.

Leo

Do your laundry more regularly and maybe you’ll finally feel better about yourself. Make your bed, too. Clean sheets, clean mind and all that. While you’re at it, how about you finish that degree of yours before you start something new? Also, the plants on your window sill behind you are dying. Again. Get your life together, dude.

Virgo

Eat beans, like just fuck loads of beans. We once read that a can of beans a day will make you live til you’re 105 or something—it’s advice we live by and you should too. Wooo beans!!

Libra

That skin isn’t gonna stay smooth forever so for the love of God, MOISTURISE.

Scorpio

Let me be real with you Scorpions. A lot of things in this life don’t make sense. Supernatural is on its 15th season, some people drink water-based hot chocolate and Arkansas is pronounced like that. It’s a mad scary world and sometimes all you can do is take a nap. Let me get you a blanket.

Sagittarius

Telling you this with love, but your banana bread recipe sucks. For your next tea party maybe opt for an EasyMix pack of brownies.

Capricorn

Buy a TV. We don’t know why, but we anticipate you’ll be spending a lot more time in your house soon. Why? Parasitic worms.

Aquarius

This is an intervention. Playing Taylor Swift’s ‘folklore’ on repeat is not an adequate substitute for a personality, or therapy for that matter too. But we ain’t gonna lie—it’s fucking fantastic. (“Bettys” - ')'!!)

Pisces

You know when your mum told you that that girl—the really pretty and popular one who never invited you to her parties—was just jealous of you? Yeah, she was lying. That boy who was constantly throwing pencils at your head in class, guess what? No, he didn’t fancy you. Sorry to break it to you, your mum is a big fat liar. Time to grow up Pisces.
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THE LAVA TUNNEL
Disney Minus

Words: Nico Borbely

With the new ‘Mulan’ to hit Disney Plus in lieu of theatres on September 4th, and a live-action ‘Hercules’ recently announced, now’s the perfect time to reflect on the veritable Pandora’s box of live-action Disney remakes that have hit the screen in recent years. Though this phenomenon has its origin in the 1994 blockbuster ‘Rudyard Kipling’s The Jungle Book’ starring Jason Scott Lee, it didn’t start to really take off to the extent that we see now until 2015’s ‘Cinderella.’ Remakes have been churned out at increasingly swift rates, coming to a head in 2019 with the release of four such remakes—’Dumbo,’ ‘Aladdin,’ ‘The Lion King,’ ‘Lady and the Tramp,’ and ‘Maleficent: Mistress of Evil,’ a follow-up to 2014’s ‘Maleficent.’

But hot take: stop.

Disney movies are well-known not only for their beautiful animation, satisfying stories, and, of course, the childhood memories they have the power to invoke, but for the ways in which they combine old stories and new artistic mediums in innovative and imaginative ways. Which the remakes are not. They are at best okay, and more commonly contrived and unoriginal, deliberately tampering with the very elements that made the originals so wonderful. YouTuber and cinema critic Lindsay Ellis put it quite aptly in her refreshingly frank and illuminating review of 2017’s ‘Beauty and the Beast’ remake, a comprehensive example of this trend. The film, as she emphasises and I agree with, is offensively useless in its existence in that filmmakers added seemingly calculated responses to pedantic, logic-obsessed viewers smugly pointing out plot holes in the original (“the whole castle was cursed because of the actions of a bratty ten-year-old?? THAT’S NOT LOGICAL!!!”), but also kept elements from the original. Inevitably this clash damaged much of the intended morals of the story.

More attention should be given to developing and releasing new, original content, rather than constantly, cheaply rebranding old favorites to try to capitalize on childhood nostalgia. Let’s hope that we get to see more such original content like the upcoming flicks ‘Soul,’ ‘Raya and the Last Dragon,’ ‘Encanto,’ and ‘Luca,’ rather than more of these pretty messes of nothing.