STUMBLING UPON THE RIGHT SELF

GDRN has come a long way from pop performer to Netflix star. Now she’s up for her biggest challenge yet: what to do with her newfound inspiration.
The Poverty Trap

It has to be said. Iceland is a small country. Its population is at an approximate 370,000. Its location (although convenient for military strategy) is rugged and remote. It’s part of Europe, but not really. The weather is, well, the weather. And it’s not good. But Iceland is known worldwide for two things. (Three, if you count the infamous collapse of the entire banking system in 2008.) First, its breathtaking nature. And second, the culture.

Icelanders have an old tradition of literature and this has translated into a small island with an impressive record of producing art. For example, one in ten Icelanders has published a book. The most common Christmas gift in Iceland is not the newest iPhone, but a freshly printed novel. Our music has also managed to impact the global stage. Bóikok became a superstar in the 90s and Sigrur Ros dominated the indie scene in the 00s. Today we boast Of Monsters and Men, Káriólú and Ólafur Arnalds, and when it comes to classical music, we have superstars like Vikingur Helður, Anna Pöraðsdóttir and Daniel Bjarnason. And let’s not forget Hildur Guðnadóttir.

It’s safe to say that Iceland, although a small country, doesn’t really behave like one when it comes to culture. In that essence, we feel like an empire.

The world has noticed Iceland through our art, how it is influenced by our nature. This is an important interplay, that spurs a fascination with the country, encouraging people to visit our island and strengthen the culture further. In a country with a language that so few speak, it would otherwise be borderline impossible to maintain such a high cultural level.

New research conducted by the Icelandic Confederation of University Graduates (BHRM) strongly suggests that culture is in serious trouble. In this paper, it’s unveiled that cultural industry wages have decreased by 40% since 2008. That year, 7,000 people were working in the industry but that number has since contracted to around 5,000. In total, the salaries in the culture industry were 55 billion ISK; now, it’s closer to 35 billion.

The music industry is shrinking rapidly—a trend for which there are numerous complex explanations. But they are not the only ones. The cliché about the poor artist hasn’t been so evident in Iceland for years. The average pay for an artist, through the government stipend system, is around 450,000 ISK. General workers get 65,000 ISK. When we look at university-educated people, average salaries are even higher. And keep in mind most artists have university degrees.

What does this mean? It’s a dangerous path. Smart artistic people will probably not be interested in trapping themselves in poverty in the name of their craft, and therefore choose to engage in other sectors in the economy.

Fewer books will be published, fewer hands will be formed. And fewer people around the world will hear about the cultural strength of Iceland. This is an obvious loss for the economy. But it’s also a huge loss for Icelanders, who have built their own self-image on this strong cultural foundation.

Iceland will never become the centre of the earth when it comes to industry, whether that be our banking system or our fishing sector. But we can feel close to the centre of the world when it comes to our strong culture and heritage.

The new government (once it’s formed) has a complicated issue in front of them. If they do nothing, culture, like anything else, will dissipate into a shadow of itself. And politicians will quickly find out that speeches in their cocktail parties will not only be poorly written, but hollow with a lack of interest.

Valur Grettisson
Editor-in-chief
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Results in 15 minutes

Stop the presses, there are people with opinions!

What Are Icelanders Talking About?

The biggest news right now is concerning our general elections, which saw the ruling coalition of the Left-Green Movement, Independence Party and Progressive Party expand from 33 to 37 of Parliament’s 63 seats. However, this was largely due to the strong performance of the Progressive Party, who gained five seats, while the Independence Party held steady and the Left-Greens lost one. While these three parties are, at the time of this writing, in talks about whether and how to continue their partnership, the results have led to much speculation across the political spectrum. Icelanders on the right believe the Independence Party and the Progressives should pick another centre-right party to join them in government, while Icelanders on the left have been a bit more creative. Pirate MP Norbiður Sunna Ævarsdóttir has floated the suggestion that the Left-Greens and the Progressives could bring the Social Democrats into a new coalition that would have the support of the Pirates, resulting in a minority government with 33 seats. What will we end up getting might become evident by the time you’re reading this.

In other news, the national men’s football team continues to have a sexual assault problem. Most recently, team captain Aron Einar Gunnarsson has been implicated, as a survivor has come forward alleging Aron sexually assaulted them in 2010, which Aron categorically denies. The scandal has been worst of all for survivors, who point to the lack of sympathy and support they have received, as indicative of many people’s preferential feelings for the football team. The entire board of KSÍ, the national football association, has resigned in the midst of this scandal, while Vanda Sigurðardóttir has recently been elected to KSÍ’s directorship, a first for a woman.

Just as the volcanic eruption at Geldingadalur has begun to calm down a bit, new seismic activity has been recorded in Reykjavík. For a nation already weary from the eruption, there has been considerable worry that another volcano is on its way, but the jury is still out amongst scientists as to whether the earthquakes do in fact signal a new eruption or are just the result of magma connected to the current eruption. Either way, the news has certainly been exciting for those outside of Iceland, if the web traffic to our articles on this subject are any indication. As with all things seismic, it is impossible to predict what will come next. 

First
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All went smoothly when Iceland’s general elections were held on September 25th—that is, except for one voting district: the Northwest. Repeated mishandling of ballots there could lead to brand new elections being held in that district alone.

Too close to call

It all started on the morning after election day. It was initially reported that Iceland became the first European nation to elect a parliament with women comprising the majority of seats, taking 33 of the 63 available. Amongst those was Lena Ólafsdóttir of the Pirate Party, who was also the youngest member to be elected to Parliament in Icelandic history, and the first of Kurdish descent. However, the recount in the Northwest not only flipped the gender balance to 33 men and 30 women; Lenya Rún was bumped from her seat, replaced with Gísli Rafn Ólafsson of the same party.

It further came to light that, on election night, the ballots for the Northwest District were not sealed; instead, they were locked in a room. Icelandic voting laws dictate that ballots are supposed to be sealed after counting. Lawyer Katrin Oddsdóttir told reporters that this revelation undermines trust in the count as a whole.

The power of Instagram

Further complicating matters was when the daughter-in-law of the hotel manager of Hotel Borgarnes, where ballots for the Northwest District were counted over the weekend, posted—and later deleted—two photos to her Instagram showing a room full of ballots, some of them unsealed and in open boxes, with the caption “The count is over!”

This further undermined the integrity of the count, prompting the national election board to request data from all districts to prove that their counts were up to snuff. In the end, the board announced that the Northwest was the only district that could not prove they had counted in a satisfactory manner.

The ball in Parliament’s court

Kristín Edwald, the chair of Iceland’s national election board, referred to Article 46 of the constitution, which states: “The Parliament decides whether its Members are legally elected and also whether a Member has lost eligibility for election to Parliament.” Parliament has assembled a committee to examine the results, and to decide if the elections in the Northwest were valid, or if new elections there will be necessary.

Stay tuned!
Reetta Huhta

Get this baby tattooed on your forehead and go slay a dragon

Words: Roetta Huhta
Photo: Adobe Stock

Have you ever encountered a peculiar person who seems to live their life liberated from the boundaries of social norms? The kind of person who decides to take no notice of what’s considered normal in society and lives their own life to the fullest? Well, we have found just the right god to represent those people, and he’s none other than the ruler of Valhalla himself, Óðinn.

A one-eyed masochist

Óðinn is what one could call a wise fool, a character that might seem foolish at first but later comes to be seen as a holder of great wisdom. The appearance and acts of this bizarre god raise questions of his sanity. That cloak-wearing, long-bearded guy gouged out one of his eyes just to get a sip of Mimir’s well, and wounded himself from the world-tree Yggdrasil, to collect information, which they then share with him. And when he hung and wounded himself, he learned to create runic inscriptions.

So next time you come across a person who seems a bit weird, don’t underestimate them. They might be onto something.

In Iceland, it goes like this: Ab bera agíshjálmur yfir [einhvern]. This literally means, to wear the helm of terror (over someone). I know, the English translation is grammatically wrong, but then again, English is often too simple to capture the intricacies of the Icelandic language.

Now, the first question is obvious: what is ‘agíshjálmur’? The short answer is a magical rune. Agíshjálmur is the helm of awe or helm of terror, and Sigurðr Fákínþúði from the saga of Níðhiðr wore one on his forehead when he slayed the dragon. It is powerful protection for warriors that can be used for good or evil.

The saying, “Ab bera agíshjálmur yfir [einhvern]” means that you dominate someone or are by far better than your opponent. So, the next time you crush someone in League Of Legends you are wearing your helm of terror over them.

Just pack your own bottle the next time you go on an adventure. Also, why does everyone sacrifice themselves to himself by wounding themselves?!

Have you ever encountered a peculiar character that might seem foolish at first but later comes to be seen as a wise fool? In Icelandic, it goes like this: Að bera agíshjálmur yfir [einhvern]. This literally means, to wear the helm of terror (over someone). In English, it is often too simple to capture the intricacies of the Icelandic language.

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“Helm of terror”

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NEW MUSIC PICKS

Tunglleysa featuring Katrín Már Sigurðardóttir

This beautiful, ethereal slice of slinky trip-hop defines its own genre: musical meditation. As if that wasn’t enough, the duo herself is parachute jumping a track for Portushadow to perform in the imagination of David Lynch, and you might be getting close. Tunglleysa is a collaboration between Reykjavík musicians Hörður Atli Ólafsson and Pan Thorarinsen, with this track featuring Mammút’s Katrín Már Sigurðardóttir on vocals. It all boddes very well for the pair’s oddly-named tilled vinyl.

My Knee Against Kyriarchy

Kykliða í forðunni milliBXÍ the building.

Queer indie darling duo BXÍ have come through with a track that couldn’t be more dissimilar to the drub. Reykjavík bus station that’s named themselves after “My Knee Against Kyriarchy” is upbeat and impossible not to bop along with, making you wish you could sing along during the first play. This song is anything but an accident— it takes you on a journey, and that might be one thing they do actually have in common with BXÍ this building.

Dansa Uppá Þaðinn

This beautiful, ethereal slice of slinky trip-hop defines its own genre: musical meditation. As if that wasn’t enough, the duo herself is parachute jumping a track for Portushadow to perform in the imagination of David Lynch, and you might be getting close. Tunglleysa is a collaboration between Reykjavík musicians Hörður Atli Ólafsson and Pan Thorarinsen, with this track featuring Mammút’s Katrín Már Sigurðardóttir on vocals. It all boddes very well for the pair’s oddly-named tilled vinyl.

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FROM ‘WHAT IF’ TO REALITY

With credits to her name in both music and television, GDRN talks storytelling, taking on her first acting role and creating music in these atypical times

Words: Desirai Thompson  Photos: Art Bionick

Telling your story takes courage. Telling someone else’s story takes empathy. Guðrún Ýr Eyfjörð Jóhannesdóttir, or GDRN as she’s known in front of the mic, is no stranger to either. First launching into the public eye as a refreshing young voice in Iceland’s pop scene, she’s now known around the world as Gríma from Netflix’s mind-bending, chill-inducing hit series Katla, AKA one of the most popular Icelandic shows in history. When the pandemic turned the world upside down, Guðrún turned it into an opportunity to better herself, her craft and hopefully—her community.

“I want to be like her”

Growing up in an interdisciplinary artistic family, Guðrún began playing music when she was just five years old. She picked up a violin for the first time and began classical lessons after seeing Sigrún Eðvaldsdóttir performing on television with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, telling her mother, “I want to be like her.” Shrugging off the suggestion to learn the piano instead, Guðrún uncovered a passion that would accent her life for years to come. Eventually, she picked up jazz singing and jazz piano, two passions that would come to help define her signature GDRN style.

Feeling adrift after high school, unsure of what step to take, Guðrún even considered studying medicine for a time. In the mid-2010’s, she decided to take a year off, begin working and keep herself open to possibility. It was during this time that fate revealed its plan for her.

“My two friends asked me if I wanted to check out some of their beats, ” she reminisced. “They were starting to produce music under the name Ra:tio and they were like, ‘Do you want to sing something over it?’ We just had so much fun. We released the song ‘Ein’ in 2017 and two days later Alda Music reached out and said, ‘We want to sign you.’ It all happened pretty quickly.”

The Beginning Of Something Big

Guðrún’s star has been on the rise ever since. Her debut album ‘Hvá Ef’ (‘What If’) dropped in August 2018, garnering all manner of nominations at the Icelandic Music Awards including wins for Pop Singer of the Year and Pop Album of the Year, while her single “Lætur mig” was awarded Pop Single of the Year and Music Video of the Year. “It was surreal,” she shares, “I didn’t realize that it could actually happen—to be a musician like this, but I’m so thankful for it. I just stumbled upon the right self in life.”

It was then, in February 2020—right on the heels of the release of her second album, the eponymously titled GDRN—that fate struck again. “It was like fifteen minutes before COVID,” Guðrún quips about the timing of her album release. With a jarring swiftness, her release concert and all upcom-
Making Music, Making Moves

Guðrún credits her smooth transition from music to television to her performance in the National Theatre of Iceland’s 2019 production of ‘Shakespeare in Love.’ Not only was the play’s director, Selma Björnsdóttir, also casting director for Katla—the experience itself introduced Guðrún to the acting world through music. “I was on the side playing violin the whole time and I would occasionally come out to sing,” she says. “I was really comfortable. I got to kind of dip my toes into this whole world without diving into it.”

One day Selma reached out about a Netflix show she was scouting for Baltasar Kormákur: “At first I thought, ‘I’m not an actress’ but then I realized I have nothing to lose. I will get the part, which I really want, it’s going to be incredible. If not, then it’s all the better. ‘It was pretty amazing because most of the things I’d learned through performing music, I’ve been performing music on stage since I was five years old. It’s really similar but at the same time, it’s really different—I realized I could use so many things I’d learned through performing music and apply them to acting.’

“Guðrún was so delighted to land the role of Gríma in the ashes landscape of Katla, interpreting emotions came as second nature. Guðrún shares. “The first day I was kind of stressed because I didn’t know if I was going to see the cameras and become all stiff. I was worried if it was going to work. Then, as soon as we started, I realised that it’s kind of the same as being on stage, performing music for a live crowd, because you’re just trying to get your emotions to the audience.”

“Goading Grief

So much of the series is centered on grief—not only personal grief, but the trauma of an entire community. Guðrún tasked such care to research the experiences of trauma and what it does to a person that she often had restless nights. “Goading Grief” is a live crowd, because you’re just trying to get your emotions to the audience.”

Guðrún credits having women and non-binary people in the music industry to show people who have dreams that this is possible, that you can step up, you want people to think, ‘If they can do it, I can do it.’

Covid And Community

Guðrún speaks with infectious positivity, it’s easy to forget that we’re in the midst of a pandemic—but she doesn’t shy away from talking about it. “Of course living through the pandemic is hard but I don’t think I would’ve had this growth as a person without this experience. I think a lot of people feel this way,” she muses. “Everyting stopped and we were kind of forced to look at our lives and reconsider things. A lot of people are always looking at the future, one step ahead of themselves, and Covid forced us all to live more in the moment.”

“People realised we need a change—for themselves and for their communities—and the time is now, you can’t wait for the future to happen. With movements like Black Lives Matter, we’re all realising we have to make changes now. So of course, Covid has been devastating but if you want to be super positive, you can take away so many good things from this time.”

Inspiration Abounds

“It’s been a bit hard trying to record another album. For the longest time, having written an album but being unable to perform it felt like I’d walked through a door but that door was still open behind me. I was so proud of this album, but I hadn’t closed the door on it yet,” she shares.

“I always want to try something new and expand myself as an artist. I don’t want to get stuck in one place just because it’s selling.”
On September 24th, after a year and a half of uncertainty, GDRN finally graced the stage of Háskólabíó, accompanied by a string quartet, to perform her largest and most anticipated concert to date.

“ar one and a half before, but when it came down to the day of the concert, I was done with that. The only thing I had left was to just have fun and perform this music.”

Anyone with their ear to the ground can tell you that there’s a noticeable tonal shift when GDRN comes up in conversation. Her enthusiasm radiates an energy that fills a room. It’s as if the whole country is rooting for this young artist—and she values every ounce of it. “There was not one thing I think that could’ve been better,” she shares with a laugh. “The day after I just felt such relief. The whole audience was so happy, and I was so happy about it.”

Now that she’s finally had the chance to perform her namesake album, Guðrún is ready to dive into new projects. “For a year and a half I’ve had my mind on this release concert and now I feel a bit like, ‘What am I going to do now?’ But I feel a lot of inspiration for new music.” With this long awaited milestone now a warm memory, Guðrún feels the experience has come full circle. “It think this was a barrier that I had to get through to be able to move on.”

She also hopes to continue acting, she shares, “I want to find more opportunities and exciting roles because I feel that my role in Katla actually made me a better musician. It’s just inspiring to be around such professionals who are so good at what they do.” She goes on, “I always want to try something new and expand myself as an artist. I don’t want to get stuck in one place just because it’s selling.”

“I wanted to create an atmosphere where you would listen to the song and see it in front of you.”

GDRN’s dreamy new single, “Næsta Líf” is out now. It might be wise to set a Google Alert for this artist now, because there’s no telling what her next endeavour may be.
Happening

CULTURE NEWS

The Whole Town’s A Stage

The A! Performance Festival Lights Up Akureyri

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photos: A! Festival

The Icelandic art scene is largely comprised of visual art; painting, sculpture and video that can, in theory at least, be preserved over long periods of time. Performance art is often overlooked. A medium that requires one to be physically present for it to be enjoyed, once it’s over, it’s over forever.

This is where Akureyri’s A! Performance Festival comes into play. This year will mark its seventh iteration, and extending over a period of just four days, so if you want to enjoy some of the incredible work on offer, do make sure you’re in town from October 7th through October 10th.

The town as performance

“I think we are the only festival that emphasizes solely performance art,” Guðrún Pórdóttir, the festival’s project manager, tells us. “It’s a four-day festival where the town itself turns into a performance.

“When it comes to art education, our schools are, unfortunately, deficient” Guðrún laments. “The quantity of art education that each child gets seems to depend on the principals and whether an arts-teacher is available in the area. This is, of course, a great concern since art education is an important factor in our children’s education.

“Artists in Iceland do not get much support from the government, so some get a relatively low stipend. Supporting local artists is therefore important, so the whole community will benefit. We should all be aware of this. It’s so important that small places like Akureyri nourish the assets that are local,” Guðrún emphasizes. “During the 18 years that I have lived in Akureyri, I have seen how local artists such as Anna Richardsdóttir, Kristján Ingi- línsson, Sigtryggur Berg Sigmars- son, Snaor Ásmundsson, Libía Castro & Olafur OlaFsson & Tófrateymi, Brak Jónsdóttir, Steinnunn Gunnlaugsdóttir, Elisabeth Ray- mond, Amber Smits, Nikis Niki Blomberg, Javier Barrozo and more.

Collaboration

“When we started, seven years ago, it was with Ragnheiður Skuladóttir, Þórunn Hallsson and myself,” Guðrún says. “So, it was kind of like Local, the annual festival in Reykjavik, and Akureyri joined forces. It has been evolving and changing ever since. The artists performing at Local came to Akureyri for more crowds and communities to enjoy the arts.”

That is certainly the case, as just a quick peek at the program will tell you. These joined forces include galleries, theatres, cultural centers and much more. But what will be in store for us?

“Well, the Constitution will be involved,” Guðrún says. “Which is important today after the recent scandal with counting of the votes from the parliamentary elections in Iceland. Javier Barrozo and Argentina, the indigenous peoples and I’m quite sure he will perform in that spirit.”

Nourishment for the mind

When asked what attendees can expect from the experience, Guðrún says, “They can expect nourishment for the mind, for the heart and for other core nodes, because for me, performance art combines all forms together; visual arts, dance, music, poetry and theater. It’s like poetry.”

Info. You can catch A! from October 7th through October 10th, with the full program available at http://www.listak.is/en/exhibitions/next-exhibitions/a-performance-festival and on their Facebook page.
In the first week of November, Reykjavík will be a lot quieter than it should be. Iceland Airwaves—arguably the nation’s highest-profile music festival—has again become a COVID casualty after promoter Sena Live declared the event impossible under current pandemic restrictions.

The cultural significance of this annual celebration of Icelandic music is undeniable. “Every- thing in the Icelandic music industry centres around Airwaves,” says Ísleifur Jóhannsson, the festival’s director. “All the new bands—and the established acts—have it in their calendar as the main event of the year.

“If you have new material you’ll release it just before the festival, and you’ll use your stage slot to premiere your new act. The eyes of the world are on Airwaves; it is the annual chance for Icelandic artists to show themselves on the global stage.

The financial impact of Airwaves is also profound. In addition to ticket sales, the concerts themselves, the event provides brisk business for the venues, suppliers and staff that make it happen. And then there’s the cash injection administered to the Icelandic tourist industry. In a normal November Reykjavík’s hotels, bars and restaurants teem with visitors of concert and festival organisation, with attendances of Airwaves, all determined to spend money at an otherwise quiet time of year.

“Airwaves creates income to the economy of around one billion Icelandic krónur,” Ísleifur points out. “And then there are the side-effects of around 5000 people flying to Iceland, talking on social media about how amazing it is, then going back and saying, ‘I’ve never been to a festival like this. Reykjavík is awesome and Iceland is incredible!’”

A year is a long time in a pandemic

Ísleifur has no doubt that cancelling the festival in 2020, although a bitter pill to swallow at the time, was the correct course of action. “The only thing to do in the beginning—before vaccines, and when we knew less about the virus—was to shut things down,” he says. “Everybody understood and respected the rules, and we were all working towards a common goal. And the government did a good job, particularly in supporting struggling businesses and individuals.”

But Ísleifur draws a distinction between Iceland’s pandemic situation in 2020 and the state of affairs this year, as Airwaves approached. The success of Iceland’s vaccination program presented an opportunity to move on from last year’s tight restrictions on public gatherings. And the experiences of concert and festival organisations elsewhere in the world have provided case studies to inform pandemic policy, and operational blueprints which could be followed.

However, three months out from the festival it was clear that Iceland’s gathering bans were not going anywhere. With only 200 people allowed to stand in a venue—and higher audience numbers constrained by measures like numbered seating, with everybody facing front—it became clear that it was going to be impossible to produce an event that would be recognisable as Airwaves.

Too little, too late

Given the apparent importance of Airwaves to the cultural and financial health of the nation, it might be expected that the government would be eager to help avert its cancellation. But Sigtryggur Baldursson, managing director of Iceland Music, “along with Sena and the music societies in Iceland, asking the government to seriously consider speed testing and vaccination proof as a way to make bigger events possible.”

“They took it very well, and wanted to ‘give it a serious look’ as they put it. But they came back with a proposal that still required numbered seats and that sort of stuff. That’s really what pulled it for Airwaves.”

Of course, Airwaves is far from the only Icelandic event to suffer cancellation at the hands of the pandemic. Póðshotlóð in the Westman Islands was pulled in July as a result of the gathering ban, around the same time as Reykjavík Pride was forced to abandon its usual parade. But these were decisions taken in midsummer, when the more worrying COVID-19 situation left less scope for creative approaches to planning public events.

Other music festivals—such as Reykjavík’s Extreme Chill, which was forced to cancel in 2020—are going ahead this year. However Extreme Chill curates a very particular vibe for its events, featuring small venues like Húrra and seated venues like Harpa’s Kjal- dalón, which work more easily within the pandemic restrictions. The problem is in staging large-scale shows where punters stand, drink beer, jump up and down and breathe all over each other; in other words, rock ‘n’ roll.

Too little, too late

The pandemic has silenced Iceland Airwaves for the second year running, leading to claims that the government isn’t listening to live music

Words: John Pearson  Photos: Art Benick
**Bodega**

Týsgata 9

If what you’re looking for is an experience drinking distinct wines otherwise nearly impossible to get ahold of in Iceland, Bodega, relative newcomer and sister bar to local treasure, Snaps, needs to be your first stop. There’s no better place to be on a sunny afternoon than sipping a natural wine in the square just outside the front door. But hey, if it’s rainy, the inside’s no slouch either. Serving you pure East-Village-meets-Les-Deux-Magots vibes, come here to get tantalised, transported and...maybe a little bit tipsy.

**Vínstúkan Tíu Sopar**

Laugavegur 27

Fancy a glass of wine after watching a show at the National Theater? You’re in luck, since one of the best places to quench your thirst is located just opposite the theater. Mikki Refur works both as a café and winebar, serving lunch and unprocessed, natural wines. The warmth of the interior feels like a much-needed cozy hug during the colder seasons here in the North. Pair the good vibes with a glass of funky orange, and let yourself become one with the mellow atmosphere.

**Port 9**

Veghúsastígur 9

When asked if there was a wine list to peruse, the bartender at Port 9 motioned to the wall of outward facing bottles behind them and said, “The wine list is what you see here”—at once catering to oenophiles who love to choose their glass based off the advice of a knowledgeable bartender AND wine newbs who just want what’s in that cool looking bottle. That’s how it’s done. This place feels accessible to those hoping to expand a burgeoning wine-interest while also making those already in the know feel right at home.

**Röntgen**

Hverfisgata 12

If rustic, tavern-like milieu is what you’re looking for in a wine bar, head straight to Röntgen. Alongside great cocktails and beers, the bar carries a hefty amount of wines to satisfy each palate, whether it’s red, white, pink, bubbly, or natural that you crave. Order a glass of whatever you fancy, take a seat in the comfy sofas by the windows, and enjoy the hazy atmosphere. If your stay extends longer than expected—which is likely to happen, just so you know—you’ll notice the music getting louder, and you might even find yourself on the dancefloor.

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**Sip, Sip, Hooray!**

The Grapevine’s tried and true picks of our favourite wine bars. Why, you ask? Well, wine not?

Words: The Grapevine Cork Crew  Photo: Art Bicnick
By Birgir Breiðfjarðarson

Perfect Day

Dance. jive & have the time of your life

Words: B. Huhta
Photo: B. Breiðfjarðarson

In Your Pocket

October 8th — November 4th

Reykjavik Map

Places We Like

Best Of Reykjavik

Hiking in the mountains of Ísafjörður

I would then be transported to sum-
mary Ísafjörður, my childhood home-
town. The weather would be perfect,
as it always is there—even when the
weather is horrible, it’s still perfect.
But on this day, it would be sunny
and not at all windy. I would drive to any
of the beautiful mountains and hike
alone while listening to music. Now,
It’s important that I’d be alone, so I
could go at my own pace and not
worry about walking too fast or too
slow.

After my daily exercises in the
mountains, I’d go home to my par-
ents, where my mom would have
made me some kakósúpa. It’s kind of
like hot chocolate, enjoyed with some
tvíbúkur, a type of biscotti. I know I
should have something healthy to
eat a a bit of banana and ice and ready for
juice would then be blended with a
strawberries and raspberries. The
juice made of apples, lemons, fresh

we would end by having a toast with
the choir’s own beer, Hinsegin Körinn.

Champagne and sveittaball

Dinner would be served in a world-
famous fish restaurant in Ísafjörður,
Tjörnúksás. I would fill the house with
all my friends, and we would eat well
while drinking champagne and gin and
tonics. After dinner we would	head to a sveittaball, a country dance
party, which would be held in a place
with a similar atmosphere to Kiki’s. I
wouldn’t dance, because I rarely do,
but I enjoy watching other people go
oary on the dancefloor.

Ending the day mesmerized by the
summer sun

When everyone would be exhausted
from dancing, we’d head to Fjar-
stræti and sit on the rocks facing
the fjord. Because it would be sum-
mer, the sun wouldn’t go all the way
down, and we would be able to see
it just above sea level, painting the
view with beautiful colours.

I would end the Perfect Day by
falling asleep at my parents’ house,
 knowing that I’d wake up to the smell
of my mom’s pancakes.

Vital Info

Useful Numbers

Emergency: 112
On-call doctors: 1770
Dental emergency: 675 0505
Tone: Reykjavík 568 5522
888 561 0000

Post Office

The downtown post office has moved to
Hagatorg 1, open Mon–Fri, 09:00–17:00.

Pharmacies

Lyfja, Hafnarstræti 19, tel: 552 4045
Lyf og heilsa, Fiskisló 1, tel: 561 4600

Swimming Pools

Sun closed. Banks: Mon–Fri 09-16

Most buses run every 20–30 minutes.
Fares: 490 ISK adults, 245 ISK children.
Buses run from 08–28:00, and 7–04:30 on

Public Toilets

Public toilets in the centre can be found
inside the green-poster covered towers
located at Hamra, Ingólfstorg, by
Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavik Art Mu-
seum, Lækjargata and by Eymundsson.

Public Transport

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Buses run from 08–28:00, and 7–04:30 on

Shop Grapevine Merch

Don’t Hesitate! Act Now!

Very Hot

Find the best.
Please review your

Porch Winebar
6. Snaps
Borgarstræti 1
Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic: Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a foodload of memories. Steady standbys include the deepsy juicy onion soup (with a union of its own we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that begs to be a meal on its own, and a tartshark crème brulée topped with an amnic soup.

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

8. Dragon Dim Sum
Borgstæðarstræti 4
For those of us longing for dim sum outside of Chinatown abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum had arrived with its fan. which is the perfect marriage between Icelandic ingredients and labouring of Asian dim sum passion. Don’t miss their bao or shao mai, and don’t worry, their carrot vegan dumplings are also sublime.

9. Lamb Street Food
Brandagarður 7
Pure Icelandic lamb with a middle eastern twist—that’s what you’ll get at this juicy local eatery where pure kebab is served up with no processed meat. For all you vegans though, never fear, the fresh made salads and hummus are equally wowing. This ain’t your regular kebab spot.

10. Laundromat
Austurstræti 8
If the cancellation of literally everything is dapping your glamorous rock and roll style, Röntgen at Hverfisgata 12 will cure what ails you. This place—a relative newcomer—is already a stalwart in the bar scene, with a stellar atmosphere, drinks and a lineup of the best DJs in Iceland. Just remember to raise a glass to the landlords, like Sigurður, Skófin and Manniver. Stop by for vibes, alcohol and other fun things like coffee. Bathroom renovation is pretty crazy.

15. Veður
Klapparstígur 33
This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that has grabbed the heart of the Grapevine, even though we are a magazine and not a bar. If you’re looking for the best bar and chatting, it’s still a nice and sophisticated bar, but they’ve also got a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain’t nothing to scoff at either.

11. Nauthöll
Bæjarlaug 106
Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic: Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a foodload of memories. Steady standbys include the deepsy juicy onion soup (with a union of its own we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that begs to be a meal on its own, and a tartshark crème brulée topped with an amnic soup.

12. Priki
Borgarstræti 12
Priki is the bar version of the “I’m going to bed early tonight vs. me at a 3 a.m.” meme. At 22:00 you’ll have a bunch of regulars relaxing at the bar, sipping brews, but arrive at 3:00 and it’s Project X. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. Hang out long enough and you’ll be sure to buddy up and find an afterparty.

13. Röntgen
Hverfisgata 12
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14. Húrða
Tryggvagata 22
Húrða is BACK ARE YOU SERIOUS? YES, WE ARE! After a despairing absence from the local scene, the beloved newcomer is already a stalwart in the bar scene, with a stellar atmosphere, drinks and a lineup of the best DJs in Iceland. Just remember to raise a glass to the landlords, like Sigurður, Skófin and Manniver. Stop by for vibes, alcohol and other fun things like coffee. Bathroom renovation is pretty crazy.

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16. Ásbarinn
Ingólfsstræti 1a
Of the many nation-themed drinking establishments in Reykjavík, the Icelandic Bar is the only one that is also a restaurant. So there at night and maybe you’ll meet an all or Björk or something—that’s all people know about Iceland anyway.

17. Mál og Menning
Laugavegur 18b
Wait, a new bar/music venue? Yup! And you thought the pandemic had destroyed all culture in this town. But never fear—Bökabíður Mál og Menningar is here. There’s live music most nights, from DJs to jazz, and during the day, the legendary Bókin is operating from the basement. Seriously—we anticipate this place will be a game-changer in the local cultural scene. Talk fyrtir.
The landscape of Icelandic rap has been ever-evolving since the first fully Icelandic language rap albums dropped in 2001. While English-language hip hop existed in Iceland before this point, the linguistic shift provided a crucial turning point which continues to influence the country's rap offerings today. The Grapevine spoke with Árni Páll Árnason, better known as the pre-eminent Icelandic rapper Herra Hnetusmjör, about his style, his history in the scene and his upcoming family-friendly show.

Reclaiming A Name For Himself

“I thought there was something sweet about using my old name,” Herra Hnetusmjör says with a laugh, referring to the sarcastic rap duo he was a part of at 11-years old. “We didn’t listen to any Icelandic rap at the time, I thought it was horrible. We only listened to what was going on in the United States.”

Nearly a decade and a half later, Herra Hnetusmjör’s name is omnipresent in Icelandic rap—a genre, he says, which had finally started coming into its own by the time he burst onto the scene in 2014. With names like Úlfur Úlfur, Gísl Pálmi and Emmáí Gaut on the tracks, “more and more people were doing cool, diverse shit,” he says. That same year, Herra Hnetusmjör released the single ‘Elías’ and he’s been maintaining his spot at the helm of Icelandic rap ever since.

Influence, Not Imitation

Known for pairing his swift, omnivorous flow with relatively light-hearted content and nearly unparalleled technical skill, Herra Hnetusmjör puts himself in a league of his own. “I’m that guy you call when you want to have a party,” he remarks. This is where his international influence from renowned artists like Rick Ross, Yo Gotti, 2 Chainz and T-Pain becomes apparent. “When I was younger, the hottest shit around was Snoop Degg and Akon,” he reminisces. “I think the music in 2008 was the best music that’s ever been made.”

For his part, Herra Hnetusmjör commands the mic without a wisp of hesitation. This level of melodic conviction can only be achieved by someone undoubtedly destined to fill the space they occupy. Evolving your style while remaining true to your distinct sound may seem like a challenge to some, but for Herra Hnetusmjör it’s what’s made him an unstoppable force—and elevated his name to a staple in Icelandic hip hop as much as its namesake spread is a staple in panties around the world. “In the past few years, rap has gravitated more towards pop and I think that’s cool. Some people say because I’m so popular now, I’m not a rapper anymore, but I really don’t care. I just do whatever I’m feeling at the time,” Herra Hnetusmjör says. “I just rap about my reality, I’ve never, ever rapped about being a gangster. I just rap about my city, Köpavogur, and the money I make from rapping. I try to keep it from being melodramatic.” He goes on, “I’m just a dad with another baby on the way.”

Approachable Entertainment

On October 30th, Herra Hnetusmjör is putting on a double-header concert at Haskólabíó. The opening concert at 17:00 will be accessible to the whole family. He shares, “I’ve gotten many, many e-mails from parents who want to bring their kids to my concerts and it hasn’t been available until now.” A more party-focused concert will take place at 20:00, perfect for the fans looking for the usual Herra Hnetusmjör live experience. “A lot of my concerts so far have been at Gamla Búi, which is a really nice place, but it’s a real party venue. It’s a mosh pit venue. So it’s perfect for 18 to 25-year-olds or so, but there’s a whole demographic beneath that and over that who don’t really want to go into a mosh pit and get beer thrown on them,” he chuckles. “I haven’t really given them an opportunity to come see me in a full concert before.”

Tickets for both of Herra Hnetusmjör’s performances at Haskólabíó on October 30th are available now at tix.is.

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
- White chocolate “Skyr” mousse with passion coulis

8,990 kr.

BOOK YOUR TABLE

TAPASBARINN

Vesturgata 3B | Tel: 551 2344 | tapas.is

18
Music

Music - years of numbing

Craving a festival after Extreme Chill Festival 2021

The international festival of child and youth literature takes place in the Nordic House this October. Icelandic and foreign authors, illustrators, and other experts will be present at different events, including readings, lectures and all sorts of workshops. This year’s theme will concentrate on environmental issues and uniting people with different backgrounds.

Together in the Moorland

Oct. 14th - 16th - Nordic House

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BOSM Introduction - Einbaðu - Passion Screening

Oct. 10th - 16:30 - Nordic House - 2.900 ISK

Curious to learn more about BOSM culture? Great! This event is for you. Being a part of the Reykjavík International Film Festival, the event starts with screenings of BOSM-related films. Afterwards, Reykjavík Róps will hold an introductory course in BOSM. Step outside your comfort zone and get ready to learn about this fascinating world!

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The Time Has Indeed Come: Sequences Is Back

The celebrated art festival returns

Andie Sophia Fontaine   ... k j a v í k
+354 41 1 6400  
Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir 
opus-
oups 
02. 10.2021–16.01.2022 
Catch it while you can

The Time Has Indeed Come: Sequences Is Back

The celebrated art festival returns

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine   
Photo: Sequences

Iceland has always had a vibrant art scene that spread far beyond the confines of the capital area. The variety is so great, in fact, that it can be difficult to sort through it all; to know who to see and experience, when and where. This underlines how incredibly important the job of the curator is, and it’s something Sequences curators Póruna Björnsdóttir and Pránn Hjálmarsson are keenly aware of.

“It really is a creative job,” Pránn says. “And it’s in so many aspects of ideas, because you just wander around with ideas, and then at a certain point you have to say ‘Okay, how can I make this happen,’ and then, ‘what does this idea need to be interesting? Or does it need to be in this sort of context?’” Póruna agrees, saying, “I mean, in terms of our connection with this, it has been quite creative, because we just started with a very intuitive conversation. We started to put together our ideas, and of course, names of artists that we found in harmony with what we were speaking about. And what we’re also maybe worked with in the past as artists.

“This festival and collaboration with the artists on these projects have been so diverse,” Póruna continues. “But then we’ve also been really involved with the development of ideas... So the whole range of the conversation has been really broad and it’s a lot of fun. And then in many, if not most instances, it becomes like a part of the creative process itself.”

Like sands through the hourglass

The tenth iteration of Sequences is titled ‘Time Has Come’, which refers to the ephemeral nature of the space the festival encompasses; for a brief, shining moment, it’s there, and in the next, it’s gone, leaving nothing behind but memories and impact it had on its participants.

“All the artists that take part in the festival, they kind of made a new sort of whole social setting, in a sense,” Póruna says. “So even though the platform is the same, it’s never the same. That’s what we’re kind of hinting at with the title, it becomes this sort of social space, and then it kind of evaporates.”

The variety of life

This year boasts quite the diverse cavalcade of artists and performers, with events happening in many parts of the country. There’s the legendary Elisabet Jökulsárdóttir, performing ‘Stories of Creation’ at the home of former Icelandic pres-

ident Vigdis Finnbogadóttir; the artists of colour collective Lucky 3 performing PUTI—which examines diaspora and racism; Ræktin, a workshop for children, and so much more.

“Yeah, like the gym,” Póruna says, referring to the literal translation of Ræktin. “I love the name of it, because it’s about how you have to rack up not just your muscles or your brain, but this whole inner world, to take care of it. That’s what I’m excited about, and see how it sort of can then blossom into society, in the minds of the people that come and have that dialogue.”

Beyond Reykjavík

“I think it’s really beautiful, personally, because I think it’s really important to showcase that there is an enormous amount of creativity, with the music, or the visual arts or installations that are happening all over the country, it’s very important to highlight them,” Pránn says.

He couldn’t be more correct. While many of these events happen in or around Reykjavík, there’s also something to see in Hveragerði, Faxaflói and beyond. Wherever they may be, there’s always a lot of creativity in Iceland.

“It springs from a group of visual artists who wanted to emphasise visual art,” Póruna says. “We want to honor this as well as the interdisciplinary aspect of artists who work within different fields and media. They might use drawing or painting, sculpture, installations, video, sound, words and text. So we’re also curating an energy you know, that’s the thing we’re also putting out there. People who strike our nerves. What we’ve been doing throughout has been curating wonderful exhibitions.”

Elisions

N. DASH
K.R.M. MOONEY
B. INGRID OLSON
CARRIE YAMAOKA
9 September - 20 November 2021

02.10.2021–16.01.2022
Guðný Rós Ingimarsdóttir

opusoups

The Time Has Indeed Come: Sequences Is Back

The celebrated art festival returns

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine   
Photo: Sequences

The Eisen's will be held all over the country from October 15th through October 24th.

The full program can be found at https://sequences.is/program-2021

Beyond Reykjavik

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Art Picks

Augmented Reality Disorder

Weekends from Oct. 9th to Oct. 30th - Midpunkt, Hamrángvík 22

Since social media began taking over the world, the impact of our digital lives on our real lives has become a constant topic of discussion. In the recent hours-long blackout of Facebook and Instagram, just how intertwined these features are with our lives. This fact is lost on Hálín Bragason and Katarina Kristín, who curate this forthcoming exhibition, Augmented Reality Disorder, tackles that very dynamic.

A body segment-ed at the waist is omnipresent in the space as you follow the journey of this exhibition, demonstrating a person suspended between two worlds. Come by Midpunkt to connect, disconnect or forge your own path between the two. Whatever you choose, your mind will be opened to a new world. There’s just one question: How do you talk about one? DT

In Media Res

Until Nov. 6th - BIEER Contemporary, KLAGA

The artistic journey Hulda Stefánsvíð took was inspired by her book Time Map. She aimed to create an experience of her new exhibition. The exhibition has been, for better or worse, made all of us stand and reconsider time—more than ever before. For Hulda’s work, it’s no different. Pay a visit to BIEER Contemporary and press pause on your own timeline. DT

The Portrait Collection

Until January 2nd, 2022 - National Museum of Iceland, Skúlagarður 41, Up to 2.000 ISK

Composed largely of donations from private individuals, the National Gallery of Iceland is showcasing work that has been handled by humans through various media, by painting, photography, nedwork or sculpture—are you interested in seeing the oldest known Icelandic portrait? Stop by the gallery and see the tale of how our nation is composed. The Portrait Collection is all about the moments—ideals and ideas—and what our art heroes have already achieved. DT

Complete Spaces

Until Oct. 10th - Ásmundarsafn, Freytagarstaður 41

Artists Anna Hjörð Magnusdóttir and Ólafur Elíasson worked together on this project and incorporated various artists into this interactive exhibition. By employing mathematics, computing, and other computer programs, they’ve created a project for this celebration of the Icelandic experience. In this experience, art? Don’t mind if I do. DT

The Reykjavík Grapevine

Issue 10 — 2021

October 8th — November 8th

Art Listings

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

Send your listings to: events@grapevine.is

Opening

ICELANDIC ART CENTER

Time Has Come

The 10th Sequences art bien- nials returns, curated by Póruna Björnsdóttir and Práin Bjarnarson.

Creative energy abounds in dialogue between young and established artists specialising in various media. At times, this interchange between moment, experience, and place might outstrip the level of art itself. Take part in this multi-day interdisciplinary event showcasing 35 local and international artists.

- Opens on October 15th, 2021
- Runs until October 24th, 2021

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

Sunna Þrúður Sigurðardóttir: Fashion Designer in Focus

What you wear often reveals who you are. Sunna Þrúður Sigurðardóttir, under-studies the notion that fashion is a narrative that weaves the process of garment-making is evident in her own work and captivating creations. From the luxurious to the peculiar, Sunna’s experiments with it all.

- Opens on October 8th, 2021
- Runs until December 30th, 2021

FOLD GALLERY

Double Opening

Double Fold—auction house, and purveyor of fine art since 1930—presents a new exhibition featuring Hrafnhildur Inga Birgílsdóttir and Rísa Sigfúsdóttir. Hrafnhildur Inga is an oil-on-canvas artist who predominantly features water in her art, be that a river, a waterfall or any kind of rivulet inbetween. Rísa is a visual artist who often utilises the tension of differing textures in her sculptures and installations.

- Opens on October 30th, 2021
- Runs until November 19th, 2021

Ongoing

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND

On The North 'till 31.12.2021

Of The North 'till 31.12.2021 (Created) is from Steina Vasulka’s archive of video recordings of Icelandic nature, shot from an animal-robotic and microscopic viewpoints. So from microbes to crashing waves and melting ice, this is a visual documentation of the forma-tion and destruction of our planet.

- Runs until January 9th, 2022
- Hello Universe

It’s 2021, and we’re so over you; ove the entrance of Finnur Mólgó. The avant-garde art of Finnur—the first Icelandic artist to address the world, as well as around his native Iceland.

- Runs until October 31st, 2021
- NORDIC HOUSE

Entropy

Published by Imagination Books, Entropy is a written and visual experience. This new show, curated by the board of The Reykjavík Grapevine, is part of a new project showcasing the work of young artists. Entropy is inspired by the creative ideas and the people behind them.

- Runs until October 10th, 2021
- HÍVERTSDÓLLER

Below / Beyond

Laid out by conceptual and minimalist art of the 60’s and 70’s, Below / Beyond is a new exhibition at Híveraldur featuring works on paper and paintings on canvas. Laid out with the intent to tell a story untold, this project explores the inner worlds of these artists and their ideas.

- Runs until December 21st, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM

Hafnarhós: Icelandic Art in the 21st Century

This year Reykjavík Art Museum is focusing on the creative micro-environment, with an aim of displaying the growth of the Icelandic art scene. The whole of Hafnarhós is being used to exhibit new works by leading young artists.

- Runs until October 17th, 2021
- Subska Inga Ingimundardóttir: opus-copus

Suðubjørg lives and works in French-speaking Belgium. The word ‘opus’ denotes a piece of artwork, while ‘opus’ is for ‘opportunities’. Paired together, these words demonstrate that art can come from seemingly inconsequential things. Often employing sound, forgotten or formerly unused materials, Suðubjorg brings the essence of ‘opus-copus’ to life.

- Runs until January 12th, 2022

PENNANDALE

Enter
grooves

Run Werner Molins’ photographs of stand-alone homes and barns present a sense of both abandon-ment and strength.

- Runs until October 18th, 2021
- Echoes of the Blind

Margrét Sossa Björnsdóttir’s work largely features the human form, at once lively in content and subdued in style.

- Runs until October 23rd, 2021

HAFNARFÓRSÍÐA

Community of Sentient Beings

This year’s autumn exhibition at Hafnarfórsíða is called, ‘Community of Sentient Beings’, curated by Wóla Újaz-dowska and Hubert Grzymy. They have invited 60 young professionals to participate in this exhibition, with the aim of creating a space for multiple voices to come together, reflecting different ways of voicing, hearing and sensing. Makes sense, right?

- Runs until October 31st, 2021

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

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—

The Reykjavík Grapevine

Issue 10 — 2021

BEHIND 3H SCENES

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REYKJAVIK GRAPEVINE
Lamb: A Strange Tale of Nature And Nurture

Something weird has slithered from the shed into Icelandic cinemas

Words: John Pearson Photos: Film stills

The Icelandic environment and its folklore are inextricably intertwined. The island’s often bleak and treacherous landscape is the perfect backdrop against which the monstrous and fantastical can take form in human imaginations, and ‘Lamb’ is a worthy modern contributor to this tradition.

The narrative of the film revolves around María and Ingvar, a married couple whose sheep farm is the focus of their somewhat joyless existence. They have no children, and apparently find scant solace in their routine of tending the land and birthing lambs. However one such birth shocks the couple out of their torpor. The ill-formed new-born is nothing like either of them has seen before, and their initial reaction is one of horror and confusion. But this new life landing in their laps stimulates dormant nurturing instincts, and leads to the prospect of a new life for both of them.

This creature is no ordinary lamb, if indeed it is a lamb at all. Nevertheless, the opportunity to care for something that needs them is irresistible to the couple. They take the new arrival from its mother for bottle-feeding, and into their bedroom to occupy the crib of Ada—their dead daughter. And they give the new arrival a name too: Ada.

A fragile contentment

When Pétur, Ingvar’s brother, shows up uninvited at the farm it seems that his incursion into this bizarre domestic set-up might burst its bubble. Pétur is initially revolted by Ada, and by his family’s reaction to her arrival. “What the fuck is this?” he asks Ingvar. “Happiness,” comes the response. Pétur’s extended stay allows him to slowly enter the couple’s world of suspended reality. And in time, as unlikely as it seems, Pétur comes not only to accept Ada but to join María and Ingvar in nurturing her.

However nature doesn’t care about the feelings of humans, and the forces which fomented this strange but comfy scenario eventually initiate its horrific unraveling.

Strong start, slow burn

‘Lamb’ is a remarkable directorial debut for Icelander Valdimar Jóhannsson, and was lauded at the Cannes Film Festival this year. Valdimar also co-wrote the film, working with award-winning Icelandic novelist and poet Sjón.

Shot on an abandoned sheep farm in north Iceland, the film has a distinctly Nordic magical realism about it. The visual aesthetic is rich but cold, (blue-grey hues dominate throughout), and the pace of direction is slow; we watch María and Ingvar going about their business for the first ten minutes of the film before either of them speaks.

This slow, low-key feel extends to the gradual revelation of the main plot developments. When the bizarre nature of the newborn is revealed to the viewer, it is without fanfare and almost incidental. It’s as if the viewer is being invited to join in the suspension of reality adopted by the three human characters, and to accept that this is all quite normal.

‘Lamb’ deftly intertwines natural, supernatural and human elements into a coherent space in which the story can play. It’s a modern-day manifestation of the lore that folk have created since the beginning of time, in an attempt to make sense of their world.

But beneath the supernatural elements, ‘Lamb’ is also a very human tale. It examines the fraught insecurities of love, of the desire to create a protective bubble around the object of that love and to fiercely defend against anything which might intrude. And it reflects our shared experience of loss and longing; of needing to need, and be needed.

‘Lamb’ is on general cinematic release internationally from October 8th, using the name ‘Dýrið’ (‘The Beast’) in Iceland.
The Farm Of The Future

VAXA introduces a new way of farming

What do you see when envisioning a farm? A rustic house in the countryside, surrounded by tilled fields with healthy crops waving in a light breeze? While this romantic image might be preserved in the minds of many, the future of agriculture looks a lot different.

Vertical farming is a new, efficient way of growing crops. It uses soilless farming techniques and aims to optimize plant growth by controlling all the aspects of the process. The gist of vertical farming is that it enables farmers to grow more produce in smaller areas than regular farms, since the crops are grown in stacked layers rather than on expansive fields. It is a step towards a more sustainable future—and one that’s been taken VAXA.

Sci-fi setting in an industrial area

Located within a 30-minute drive from central Reykjavík, VAXA farm holds court in a grey industrial building next to Bauhaus. Looking at the building, it’s hard to imagine it houses one of Europe’s largest vertical farms. Nothing suggests that this place is home to an ample amount of greens.

When stepping inside the building, you can’t help thinking that the place must be a backdrop for a sci-fi movie. It feels like you’ve entered a space station orbiting the Earth.

Upon entering the growing room, visitors are equipped with lab coats and shoe covers. Hands are required to be sanitized before going into the area, and many doors need to be opened before reaching the destination.

That’s when that ingrained image of a farm goes through a complete metamorphosis: farming at VAXA is on a whole new level—quite literally. Growing the produce takes place indoors, without even the slightest sight of sunlight. The plants are grown on multiple floors, stacked one on top of the other. Each floor is divided into two levels: the upper one carries the greens and the lower is filled with water, which the plants then absorb. Sunlight is replaced with countless LED lights, while heat and humidity are adjusted with air conditioning, and dozens of fans mimic the wind. The process is meticulously controlled to create ideal conditions for the greens to grow.

The result is shelves overflowing with healthy heads of lettuce, baby leaves, herbs, and micro greens, all packed with flavour. VAXA produces only greens at the moment, though they have experimented with growing kohlrabi and parsnips as well. Each month, the farm cultivates a hefty amount of greens, which are sold to Icelandic restaurants, grocery stores, and individual customers who have signed up for a weekly farm box delivery.

Solutions For The Future

Walking between the flourishing shelves, Iris Ósk Valþórðsdóttir, the Chief Operating Officer of VAXA, describes the benefits of vertical farming. As the world’s population grows rapidly, field spaces will only decrease. Vertical farming makes it possible to grow considerable amounts of produce in smaller spaces. “This place is 600 square meters, but we’re actually growing on 1500 square meters, because we aren’t growing the plants on one level. It’s a no-brainer for areas that have limited amounts of land to utilize vertical farming,” she says, looking up at the high shelves filled with greens.

In addition to its space efficiency, this new way of farming is much friendlier to the environment than greenhouses and fields that are out in the open. The water that’s used to grow the plants in VAXA farm is reused by pumping it out to a container, cleaning it and then pumping it back inside the plant shelves. “That means we can grow a kilo of salad using only a liter of water,” Iris explains. In a traditional greenhouse, the amount of water required would be at least 15 times higher, not to mention the fields outside, where growing one kilo of greens requires an astonishing 250 liters of water. “A lot of the water goes to waste in the fields, when it’s absorbed by the soil,” she explains.

So why isn’t vertical farming more popular if it checks all the boxes from efficiency to eco friendliness? Iris thinks that one of the reasons might be that the method is quite far ahead of its time. “It’s been a bit of a struggle to fit into the system,” she recounts. Because VAXA isn’t a conventional greenhouse, securing government grants and down payments has been a challenge. “We can’t even get certified as organic, because we don’t do things by their standards, although it doesn’t get more organic than this,” she adds.

Visionaries Of Farming

Because VAXA believes in what they are doing, they continue their work—even if society is lagging behind. “We want to be cutting edge,” Iris remarks. She implies that VAXA has bigger plans as well: “This here is supposed to be a proven concept, just so we know that it works, in case we want to do it somewhere else.”

Though modest about it, VAXA is certainly bringing us closer to the future. “People think we work with sci-fi products, but at the end of the day, we’re just growing salad,” Iris laughs.
Eleqant By Quest
Think Phil Collins, minus the baldness
Words: Valur Grettisson/Quest  Photos: Provided by Quest

Info
To listen to Quest is a quest in itself. Their first album, "Eleqant" is humorous, allowing the band to be tacky at times, while something undeniably cool permeates their surroundings; some hipster vibe you can only find with someone that has achieved a zen-state of existence. Naturally, this involves a mullet and an ironic moustache, coupled with inventively playing with the standard pop format. We are hooked and we wanted to know more, so we asked Quest to take us through "Eleqant" track by track. Here's what Reykjavík's newest band has to say for themselves.

Stoneheart
We wanted to start the album with a sensual bang! Stoneheart is a power ballad about the force that is love. It starts with a recurring synth pad, orchestral guitar melody and some tight drums, slowly building to an epic outro. In the middle of all this you will find a soothing saxophone solo to ease you on your journey. "Don't let your heart turn into stone!"

Fanturinn
Fanturinn (e."The Brute"), we all know one, he is everywhere, he is in our worst enemies but also within us all. When he gets rewarded for selfish behaviour he embodies it to impress those around him, while neglecting compassion and respect. This was our first single, the first mix we got from Þórur Gunnar, who then mixed the whole shebang! The song is a shoulder-padded leather jacket, one size fits all.

Father Time
It’s another cold, dark winter morning for the hooligan but the anticipation gets him up. Factory, punch the clock, fight time, finish work, go to the pub, finish a beer, fight other hooligans, match on, times up. Again tomorrow. Silly, we know, but the song is quite simple. Synths, drums, guitar, some freezing harmonies and a very odd, clunky piano in the end. You might even start to sing along. P.S. Can you hear the Eurovision reference?

Stundarfri
This song has a special place in our hearts. It features Ingólfur Bjarni, a founding member of the band, and was written during a beautiful part of our band's life. The song is an upbeat pop song inspired by an early 80s theatre play about how technology is distancing us. A nostalgic perspective on modern problems.

Place in Heaven
Think Phil Collins meets Dr. Phil and they write a traditional gender-role focused love song. A haunting and pulsating guitar sets the theme of the song, like a broken heart. Layered by airy synths, powerful drums and dreamy lyrics. The song unfortunately has expired so we are no longer responsible for it. You can have it.

Síðasta lagði
Síðasta lagði (e. "The Last Song"). We take a lot of pride in our live shows and this song might be the most fun to perform. It has a one-take moog solo, congas, perks, groovy bass and smooth, punchy vocals served together in quality repetitions that continually build up for five epic minutes. The lyrics are about you, dear reader. We hope you decorate your life with yourself.

Lessons
Just when you thought Síðasta Lagði was the end, we surprise you with life's lessons; we can either learn them the hard way or dance them away. We only provide you with the options, not the answers. We are very happy that you have made your way through our album. We can only hope that you enjoyed and might consider subscribing, liking and biking and hiking, showering and eating healthy and laughing and dancing and adding us to your email list.

Enough about the music, can we talk about these shirts?
Here are some deals that’ll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

### 1,000 ISK And Under

**Hard Rock Café**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Boer 850 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

**BASTARD BREW**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Boer 500 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

**BRÍGÍV**
Every day from 11:00 to 20:00.
Boer 700 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

**BREWDOG**
Wed-Sun 16:00 to 17:00.
Boer 990 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

**CAFÉ BABALÚ**
Every day from 19:00 to 21:00.
Boer 690 ISK, Wine 795 ISK.

**DÍLOK**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Boer 600 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

**FJÁLLKÖNN**
Every day from 15:00 to 17:00.
Boer 890 ISK, Wine 910 ISK.

**FORRETTABARINN**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Boer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

**ÍSLENSKÍ BÁRRIN**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Boer 700 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

**IBA ZUMEN**
Every day from 8:00 to 10:00.
Coffee 400 ISK.

**JÚRGLÍS COCKTAIL BAR**
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00.
Boer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

**KAFFÍBARINN**
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00.
Boer 750 ISK, Wine (On Wed.) 800 ISK.

**KOFFÍHÉN**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Boer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

**KALDI**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
Boer 850 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.

**KEX HOSTEL**
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
Boer 700 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.

**LAURÍNÓN**
Every day from 20:00 to 22:00.
Boer 650 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK.

**LOFT**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Boer 750 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.

**MÁMS**
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
Boer 700 ISK, Wine 800 ISK, Cocktails 1,200 ISK.

**PÆRÍK**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
Boer 600 ISK.

**PUBLIC HOUSE**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Boer 890 ISK, Wine 890 ISK.

**REYKJAVÍK COFFEE ROASTER**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Boer 890 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

**PÆRÍK**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Boer 890 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

**KRAFTBAR**
Every day from 14:00 to 20:00.
Boer 800 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

### 1,500 ISK And Under

**HAMBORGARAR**
All day Tuesday.
Burger, french fries & soda - 1,390 ISK.

**TAPAS BÁRINN**
Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.
Selected tapas half price.

**DEEP / Le Foot**
Every day - All day.
Doughnut, coffee & bagel - 1,200 ISK.

**Sólon**
Monday - Friday 11:00 - 14:30.
Soup of the day - 990 ISK.

**Mats**
All day, every day.
Bowl of the month - 2,790 ISK.

**SHALMAR**
Monday - Friday 12:00 - 14:30.
Soup - 1,290 ISK.

**Sæta Svíni**
Every day from 15:00 - 18:00.
Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK.

### 2,000 ISK And Under

**BANANAS Collector**
Every day from 14:00 - 20:00.
Ceasar salad - 2,090 ISK.

**BÉL**
All day, every day.
Bowl of the month - 2,790 ISK.

**LE KOCK**
Every day from 14:00 - 20:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**Sólar**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**Veggi**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**SUSHI SOCIAL**
Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.
Boer 645 ISK, Wine 745 ISK.

### 5,000 ISK And Under

**MAGNÍSKÍ**
Monday - Friday 11:30 - 15:00.
Fisherman’s fish soup - 1,990 ISK.

**SKÚL**
Every day from 11:30 - 16:00.
Two-course lunch - 3,390 ISK.

**Café BABALÚ**
Every day from 11:00 - 14:30.
Green salad - 1,490 ISK.

**LEÓN**
Every day from 16:00 to 21:00.
211 Juice & sandwich - 1,095 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 11:00 - 14:00.
Burger & fries - 1,590 ISK.

**SHALMAR**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 11:00 - 14:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**GLOSTOFAN**
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00.
Boer 750 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**RÓNTEN**
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00.
Boer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK.

**SÁTÁ SVÍNU**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
Boer 850 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

**SESSION CRAFT BAR**
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.
Boer 750 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

**SKÓLÍ CRAFT BAR**
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.
Boer 900 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

**SPÆRÍSKÍ BÁRRIN**
Every day from 14:00 to 20:00.
Boer 800 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

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Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**SHALMAR**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

**SOL**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.

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Burger & fries - 1,790 ISK.
It has to be said before we continue; Galdraskræða, or Sorcerer’s Screed, is a dangerous book and should be handled with caution and respect. This is an odd tome, its first version was handwritten and published in 1940. It contains powerful magical runes, magic letters and black and white magic that could easily be misused by dishonest characters. With these runes, one can protect themselves, curse a neighbour, sway people’s hearts to fall in love or protect one’s mental health. But it also contains the secrets of waking up the dead, forcing people to steal and there is even a rune to make ensure a legal case is won. Should you continue reading, let it be known you have been warned.

Strange man, dark history
The author of Sorcerer’s Screed was a strange man with a deep interest in the dark history of Icelanders and sorcery. His name was Jochum Magnús Eggertsson but wrote the book under the name Skuggi (Shadow, in English)—an alias he used often when investigating mysticism. He was born in 1896 and died in 1966. No stranger to the written word, Jochum was the nephew of one of Iceland’s greatest poets, Matthías Jochumsson, who penned the Icelandic national anthem. Jochum had controversial ideas about Icelanders and sorcery. His name was a strange man with a deep philosophy—a coddle in the year 1054, according to Jochum’s theories. Kolskeggur was killed as well. But with time, his name changed, and it became Kólski, which simply means the devil. The books of the Krýsar were banned or forbidden and said to be evil books about black and white magic. Kolskeggur’s grave is said to be in Krýsará, but a priest decided to build a chapel on in. To top it all, the scholar Ari “Fróði” Sæmundsson was said to have erased all evidence of Krýsará’s existence from history.

Erased from history
The story goes that the Icelandic chieftains felt the Krýsará were too powerful, and so they decided to wipe out the clan. And so they did in the year 1054, according to Jochum’s theories. Kolskeggur was killed as well. But with time, his name changed, and it became Kólski, which simply means the devil. The books of the Krýsará were banned or forbidden and said to be evil books about black and white magic. Kolskeggur’s grave is said to be in Krýsará, but a priest decided to build a chapel on it. To top it all, the scholar Ari “Fróði” Sæmundsson was said to have erased all evidence of Krýsará’s existence from history.

Now, this matters, because Jochum’s Sorcerer’s Screed is said to be based on ideas of sorcery practiced in Iceland at the time of the settlement. Although, all of the runes Jochum found were compiled from well-known ancient manuscripts that one can find in our national library, some might be from the mysterious Golden Script, Gullskinna—if it really existed at all.

First version handwritten
The first version of the book was handwritten—everything from the runes to the magic letters—by Jochum himself. Some of the scripts he used originated in the Westfjords, where Jochum was born. Icelanders burned quite a few warlocks, but only one witch, in the late 16th century Westfjords. Iceland was different from most European countries when it came to burning witches, since we only burned one woman of the 25 people that were executed for sorcery.

Reshaped and republished
The Sorcerer’s Screed was out of print for decades before young students at the Iceland University of the Arts decided to reshaped and republish the book in association with the Icelandic Magic Company (Lesstofan). They republished it, drawing the runes in better quality.

In this book, one can find hundreds of runes and magic letters. Now, before you go buying this book with grand plans of winning all your legal cases or catching thieves—or simply waking up the dead—keep in mind, all of this is considered quite dangerous. But if you need a protective tattoo, we recommend the Greater Shield Of Terror. It can’t hurt. Literally.

"The story goes that the Icelandic chieftains felt the Krýsará were too powerful, and so they decided to wipe out the clan."
Matter movement began last year, “Especially after the Black Lives this one.”

Name meant to represent the diver- Íslenska mannflóran, a radio show ty,” Chanel shares in our interview. Backgrounds, and race is not neces- sary to represent the diver-sity of people. “It’s common knowledge that non-profit organization focused on centering the voices of foreign women in Iceland. Since its found- ing in 2018, the pair have joined Chanel’s personal experience as a woman of mixed heritage with Elínborg’s academic background in human rights and democratisation as the basis of their work. “It’s common knowledge that people have all sorts of different backgrounds, and race is not neces- sarily connected to national identi- ty.” Chanel shares in our interview. Isolenska manfrann, a radio show she produced for RUV about mul-ticulturalism in Iceland—with a name meant to represent the divers-ity of people—“became a catalyst for a lot of other projects, including this one.”

“Especially after the Black Lives Matter movement began last year, people really want to learn and understand what prejudice looks like in Icelandic society,” Chanel explains. “The population is be- coming so much more diverse, so this is something a lot of people are asking for.”

**Human rights, health and Her Voice**

Her Voice 2021 took place at Bor- gafjörður Eystri on October 2nd. Af- ter First Lady Elina Reid delivered the opening remarks, women of diverse backgrounds shared the stage to offer insight into how the Icelandic healthcare system works—or doesn’t work—for wom- en of foreign origin. “I felt it necessary to have a hu- man rights perspective,” Elínborg said. “I took a course in interna- tional women’s health and human rights, which helped inspire the theme for our conference this year. Of course, the Covid situation made the issue even more timely.”

Unique obstacles in accessing healthcare exist for women of for- eign origin living in this country. “One of the major struggles these women face is due to the language barrier and the interpretations services they receive,” Elínborg ex- plained. “Some women will go to the doctor with a family friend and the doctor will speak to the fam- ily member but not straight to the patient. So of course it can feel as if the doctor isn’t listening to them.” This can cause added uncertainty during times which may already be frightening for patients. “They’re treating you,” Shantaye Brown, author and deputy member on the board of W.O.M.E.N. shared in a panel on this topic, “You should know what’s going on. You should have that peace of mind. Nobody else.”

**Forward movement**

Participants of Her Voice 2021 dem- onstrated the urgent need for im- proved and diversified language services as well as widespread cul- tural sensitivity training across Icelandic healthcare services. At the same time, the call for women who are impacted by these issues to be brought into meaningful po- sitions where they’re able to exact change was omnipresent.

“We need to empower people of diverse backgrounds to decision-making positions.” said Nichole Leigh Mosty, the US-born director of the Multicultural Center. “We need to see people of foreign origin in high seats on electoral lists in local politics. We need to see them pushed up in government agen- cies. [...] We need to have space to be agents of change.”

“There was no tragedy that happened to me.” Jade Alejandra, founder of The Sila II Act shared regarding an experience in Iceland’s healthcare as a person of multi-cultural heritage. “The tragedy was that it didn’t need to happen. We live in such a privileged country.”

Support the mission of Her Voice by becoming a member for the 2021-2022 operating year at https://hennarrodd.is/membership.

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**Organisation**

Chanel Björk Sturludóttir and Elín- burg Kolbeinsdóttir are the found- ers of Her Voice (Hennar Rödd), a non-profit organization focused on centering the voices of foreign women in Iceland. Since its found- ing in 2018, the pair have joined Chanel’s personal experience as a woman of mixed heritage with Elínborg’s academic background in human rights and democratisation as the basis of their work. “It’s common knowledge that people have all sorts of different backgrounds, and race is not neces- sarily connected to national identi- ty.” Chanel shares in our interview. Isolenska manfrann, a radio show she produced for RUV about mul-ticulturalism in Iceland—with a name meant to represent the divers-ity of people—“became a catalyst for a lot of other projects, including this one.”

“Especially after the Black Lives Matter movement began last year, people really want to learn and understand what prejudice looks like in Icelandic society,” Chanel explains. “The population is be- coming so much more diverse, so this is something a lot of people are asking for.”

**Must try dishes**

**LAMB & FLATBREAD**
Stew cooked lamb, traditional Icelandic flatbread from the Westfjords, carrot puree, pickled red onions, horse-radish sauce

**ARCTIC CHARR & BLINI**
Lightly cured arctic char, chickpea blini, horseradish sauce, roe, crispy keftis, 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

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**Happy Hour 15-17 every day**

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.

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**FJALLKONAN WELCOMES YOU!**
Hafnarstræti 1–3 • Tel. +354 555 0950 • fjallkonan.is

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**Fjallkonan Krá & Kræisingar**
Casual and cozy atmosphere yet still fun and festive. Stop by for snacks & drinks, lunch or dinner.

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**Raising Her Voice**
Highlighting the struggle of women of foreign origin in the Icelandic healthcare system

**Words:** Desireal Thompson **Photo:** Art Bieniek
A Promising Food Gem in Selfoss

The Mjólkurbúið Mathöll is a new food court in Selfoss with some serious potential.

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine, Shruthi Basappa, Valur Grettisson
Photos: Art Bicnick

South Iceland is experiencing a renaissance of sorts, and nowhere is that more evident than at Mjólkurbúið Mathöll in Selfoss. The spacious setting is home to a wide array of food courts, some of which were very pleasantly surprising. We had a wonderful time stuffing ourselves silly as we sampled literally every food booth there. Here are our verdicts:

**El Gordito**

Valur: What exactly is the definition of a taco? Because you're quite confused when eating at El Gordito, which seems to think that a taco is a blank canvas for anything with a taco shell wrapped around it. It's not that simple, of course. The food was fine, but you could barely taste the meat. Overall, way too much happening here, and too little of it is taco-related.

Andie: I was a little bit skeptical about the idea of seared broccoli as a substitute for meat on a taco, but it actually worked. Their take on what constitutes a taco stretches the definition to the very limit; by this standard, a hot dog is arguably a taco. It was tasty, though, just not entirely sure if they ought to be called tacos. "Open wraps", perhaps?

**Romano**

Valur: I was not overtaken by the pasta dishes, but they had a warm homey feeling. The pasta felt a little dry and chunky and it was mediocre at best. That said, it felt like a convenient fast food, and in some ways, honest as such.

Andie: Whenever I am served pasta, I always cite my Italian ancestry to give my opinions an air of authority. There's no need to do that this time, though. The pasta shells were perfectly cooked, and the marinara was the right mix of savoury, sweet and spicy. The alfredo was creamy without being cloying, and included some chunks of smoked pork that complimented the spectrum of tastes well.

**Shruthi**

I commend the confidence of stretching culinary nomenclatures (I don't). And El Gordito runs amok with their 'tacos'. That said, the corn tortillas themselves are tasty, even if they're let down by their fillings. I thought the fried broccoli was nice (so happy to not see the ubiquitous cauliflower). I'm still baffled by their choice of mayo instead of salsa, and crushed chilli wasabi nuts from the snack aisle.

**Flatey Total**

Valur: I expected nothing less than excellence here, and of course, Flatey delivered. I loved the pizza with sweet potatoes and dates. Inventive and delicious.

Andie: So I had to try the pizza that boasted hummus in lieu of cheese with sweet potatoes and dates. It turns out that when you cook hummus, the taste of it all but disappears. Either that or it didn't have much taste to begin with. That said, the sweet potatoes and dates went very well together. Definitely some-
I’ve had. Samúelsson’s target audience was hands down one of the best over-the-top sandwiches I’ve had. I was chuffed when I read their menu. But I was skeptical when I saw potatoes and hummus on pizza. I was impressed. There were yeasty bottoms, but kudos to them for making sweet and overcooked in the same slice, which is a sign that the crust is evenly cooked. The young pizzaiolo however, would do well to rotate the pie regularly so that the crust is evenly cooked. The crust is perfect.

Young Samúelsson was one of my favourites; they hit all the notes and the Best Burger category clean. I love their chicken salad. Very good with restraint, but overall this was a surprise treat.

The Reykjavík Grapevine
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Samúelsson Matbar

Valur: I was quite taken by Samúelsson. The veal was perfect and a great pogen option. The meat was tender and tasty, something that you don’t often find in Iceland. The fish was the star, though. Perfect meal, perfect fish, everything was perfect here.

Samúelsson was one of my favours; they hit all the notes and did so impressively. I wasn’t a fan of the truffle fries, though. They didn’t do impressively. I wasn’t a fan of the truffle fries, though. They didn’t do impressively.

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Travelling through the Westfjords can be a tricky business. The roads conform to the curves of the endless fjords, paved roads alternate with gravel ones, and most of the time there’s no fence securing the car from drifting out of the road. The journey from Reykjavík to the Westfjords takes a good five hours, and since the internet connection cuts in and out, you’re forced to entertain yourself by taking in the sweeping roadside views, which Grapevine suggests even if your connection is working just fine.

The car weaves up and down the narrow mountain roads bisecting the rural landscape. Gravel rattles against the bottom of the vehicle while light rain washes the windows. Just when you think you’ve become blunted to the bare yet captivating scenery, the mountains yield, unveiling a spectacular view of a village resting in the valley’s embrace. There lies the destination, Bíldudalur.

Bíldudalur is a small fishing village, located right next to the Arnarfjörður fjord, and home to only 238 people. The atmosphere of the town is almost tangible: the few tourist attractions are all closed for the season, stores require customers to call the owner to open the door if they’re in need of visiting the shop, and the side walks and roads are devoid of people, even though it’s election day.

The shore of sea monsters

Although the tourist attractions in Bíldudalur—such as the Old Blacksmith’s Workshop and Bíldudalskirkja—are open only during the summertime, the Icelandic Sea Monster Museum opens its doors for special visits. The museum has amassed monster stories from all around Iceland and presents them to the visitors in multiple ways. Compact placards about sea monsters and their behaviour are presented throughout the museum, and visitors can listen to the stories of these cryptic creatures from an old radio. Skeptics will be converted through screening documentaries in which people who have encountered these monsters explain what it’s like to meet them eye-to-eye.

It’s no wonder that the museum is in Bíldudalur, since many of the stories have occurred near Arnarfjörður. Many of the people living on the shores of Arnarfjörður have a story to tell about sea monsters. While it is intriguing to hear the folk tales, you can’t help but wonder if it’s the dreaminess of the small towns that makes the mind create these visions.

Leaving the museum, you stroll down the shoreside and come across a small-scale breakwater, which tempts you to step aside from the pavement to explore the rocky ground more closely. You head to the end of the breakwater, skipping from one rock to another. Birds hiding in the crevasses flutter in flight as the turquoise swell beats against the boulders—or who knows, maybe they saw a monster swimming towards them.

Warming up in Reykjafjarðarlaug

It’s easy to lose track of time when the serenity and sounds of the churning sea take over. After breathing in the ambience of the village by wandering around the seaside and the streets accompanied by colorful buildings, it’s time to head to Reykjafjarðarlaug hot pools. Located within a 20-minute drive of Bíldudalur, the geothermal pools—one dug into the hot spring, the other built further away—rest in the midst of the surrounding mountains and fjord.

As the wind tries to carry you into the sea, second thoughts about dipping into the pools might enter your mind. Running from the changing rooms to the first pool, you try not to slip on the muddy pathway, and when you enter the pool, the water feels almost burning. But in a matter of seconds the temperature starts to soothe your wind-shaken body. The walls of the pool are given a beautiful green color by plantains and moss, and though the walls are muddy, the bottom of the pool stays clean. You feel confident that you’ll never want to leave this haven.

You relax there until it’s time to move on to a cooler pool, which is built right next to the changing area. This pool is much bigger, allowing sporty bathers to swim a few laps. Its water is much cooler and, unlike the first pool, it’s not ideal for lounging. You fight the urge to move back to the warmer pool, and instead get dressed as quickly as possible. You blast the heaters in the car and feel the euphoric warmth taking over your body. Feeling refreshed, you head on with your journey in the Westfjords.
Horoscope

Oh, Snap! Marvelous Zodiac Pairings
I can do this all day.

Words: Desirä Alt

What tells you more about a person: their Zodiac sign or which Avengers they most identify with? It’s always better to be overinformed, so Grapevine got busy pairing the star signs with characters from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. So... before we get started, does anyone want to get out?

Aries
You’re the intergalactic cowboy of the Zodiac, Star-Lord. When you’re not on the run from space bandits or hopping along to eigthties hits, you’re punching the purple out of genocidal war-verse. So...before we get started, does anyone want to get out?

Taurus
Known for being stable, patient and uncompromising, Taurus, you’re Cap all the way. I mean, you had to wait decades to reunite with the woman of your dreams. We stan age-and era-defying love.

Cancer
A sign of extremes, you’re the perfect Zodiac symbol for Bruce Banner and Hulk. What’s your origin story, Cancer? Were you outbuh for your favorite childhood Furby on eBay and never quite get over it?

Leo
Sorry it took half a sec to put the attention back on you, Leo. Gregarious is to a fault and unwaveringly convinced that you’re the main character of, well, every-thing, you’re clearly Ironman. Your creativity is second to none and we applaud you for that but WOW do we wish you could shut up about your newest passion project.

Virgo
You? Analytical? Well of course; Vision, you’re a freakin’ robot.

Libra
Ah, the symbolic scales demonstrating Cliff Barton’s desire to balance his dedication to his family and his loyalty to the Avengers. Does he strike this equilibrium perfectly? Of course not. The only thing Hawkeye can strike perfectly is a bullsleye and that’s more than we can say for you.

Scorpio
You’re a true friend to the ones closest to you but we’ve also heard you have a bit of a violent streak. Whether you’re more Winter Soldier or Black Widow, we can’t say—or we’re afraid to.

Capricorn
No one can spin a yarn quite like a Sag. There’s also no one more determined to be the center of attention. That’s why you’re the Nordic saga-based hero, Thor. Few other star signs, or Avengers for that matter, are so concerned with understanding the meaning of life and their purpose in it. So go ahead, crack open that ale and tell a tale or two.

Gemini
You’re the empath of the Zodiac, therefore you’re the empath of the Guardians. Live your life by Mantis’ mantra, “Kick names, take ass.”

Libra
You’re practical, you’re disciplined, you’re condescending. You’re Dr. Strange and that’s all we have to say about that, Cap. No, not that Cap.

Aquarius
Progressive and humanitarian. It’s hard to imagine two words to better describe Aquarius or Black Panther. We’ll leave it at that. Wakanda Forever.

Pisces
The only sign so weighed down by your emotions that you would construct a whole new reality just to escape them. Dust off that 50’s era A-line dress and practice saying “yes, dear” with such sugary sweetness it makes your eyes water because you’re living Wandavision, honey.

Sagittarius
It’s hard to imagine two words to better describe Aquarius or Black Panther. We’ll leave it at that. Wakanda Forever.

CITY SHOT

What is the rush hour so dreadful in Reykjavík?

Why is the rush hour so dreadful in Reykjavík?

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The cleanest country on earth

Answers to the confused Finns visiting Iceland

Why don’t Finns use bidet showers?

Some Finnish friends of mine have noticed that Icelandic bathrooms don’t include a bidet shower. And no, they’re not talking about the bulky and inconvenient porcelain bidets, or the crazy Japanese toilets that are designed to clean the critical areas after taking a dump. No, said Finns are talking about the good old “bum guns”, the small shower heads found beside many Finnish toilets.

My simple answer to their question is that Icelanders don’t need bidet showers in order to be clean. After all, this country is as clean as it gets. Think about it! The water running down the rivers and from the taps is some of the cleanest worldwide. The air that Icelanders breathe is fresh and crisp, nothing like the polluted air in the world’s largest cities. On top of that, Iceland has an abundance of clean energy to work with.

It goes without saying that when you utilize the purest commodities in the world, it is absolutely unnecessary to use a bidet shower after taking a number two. When your body is surrounded and saturated by cleanliness, nothing that comes out of it will be able to mess things up.

Why is the rush hour so dreadful in Reykjavík?

The same Finnish friends were flab-bergasted by the daily traffic jams in Reykjavík. I’ll make it simple, you have money. You buy a car. You sit happily in the traffic and laugh at people waiting for a bus outside in horrible weather. You feel superior. That’s it.
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