The Personal Is Political

Podcaster and activist Edíta Falak, on misogyny, sexual violence, and the failures of government

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Music: The coolest goths are back and colder than ever

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EDITORIAL

What is the definition of a revolution? It’s a concept we throw around haphazardly without much thought about what it actually means. The meaning of a revolution in the 20th century was simple when armed insurgents took power with violence. Or, if we want to be technical about it, a revolution is a forcible overthrow of a government or social order in favour of a new system.

We often use this word when talking about the #MeToo movement; perhaps as a means of qualifying it in our minds and better grasp it somehow. Edda Falak, who features on the cover of this issue, has put a lot of thought into people’s readiness to call #MeToo a revolution. “We’re always talking about a new ‘revolution’, that now there’s ‘another revolution’, but what I’m trying to point out is that this is a continuous movement, going on week after week, all year long.”

And she is dead right. Fighting for feminism, for a more equal society, is not a revolution, but an endless process. The only comparison I can conjure is the hippie generation fighting against the oppression of the conservative generation that was in power. They did this through culture and with emphasis on peace, much like the #MeToo movement.

All of this has led to a more just society. A better world. There is no one who doubts it except, perhaps, the old-fashioned conservatives. (Dare I say, fascists?)

Edda has few, if any, connections with the official feminist movement or political parties. She stood up because she saw injustice and decided to give other women—failed by the media, politicians and the justice system—a voice through her podcast, Eigin Konur.

The result has been impressive, to put it lightly. Edda says in her interview that politics are personal. This is a more meaningful sentence than one might think. A new generation is not settling for the technocracy of politics; they understand that politics involve everything from your basic human rights to how the police investigate sex crimes. And it takes more than a singular revolution to change everything.

Edda has shown the strength of one voice. But also, the strength in listening. Perhaps that’s the biggest lesson we can take from her. For once, just listen.

Valur Grettisson
Editor in chief

First

John Pearson, the Grapevine’s culture editor, is a Reykjavík resident with professional backgrounds in live music events, broadcasting, academia, journalism, engineering and underwater photography. He is a big fan of puns, alliteration and titles. He is currently on a mission to have a pint in every bar in 101.

McInerney, the Grapevine’s video magician and photographer, is himself unphotographable. This is due to the fact that he consists mainly of Stardust; a handy characteristic that enables him to float smoothly across rocky volcanic terrain, and through apparently solid objects.

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

Stina Aina Sælens is an arts reporter and writer born in Norway and raised in Scotland. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland and referred to moonlight as a model in his younger years. Today he uses his charm to write quizzes for our newsletter and find worthy stuff for our shop. He also occasionally sells art. Sorry girls, he’s taken.

Helgi Hardarson is well known as the brains and heart behind Grapevine’s online store and newsletter. He knows that Helgi has been using his charm to write quizzes for our newsletter and find worthy stuff for our shop. He also occasionally sells art. Sorry girls, he’s taken.

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

Shanaí Beasap is one of Iceland’s most knowledgeable foodies. She’s covered local restaurants for years and has also been involved in various food competitions in Iceland, such as Food & Fun and more. By day, she works as an architect at Es Studio.

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

Valur Grettisson is an award-winning journalist, author and playwright. He has been writing about Iceland’s music since 2009. He was also a theatre critic and one of the hosts of the cultural program, Spiðsvein. On his Facebook page he invites his fans to attend his shows.

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What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Headlines and bylines making waves

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine  Photos: Art Bionick & Anna Andersen

NEWS Iceland's history as a Danish colony is back in the news, primarily because Pirate Party MP Björn Levi Gunnares-son submitted a parliamentary proposal in late January calling for the Danish crown and royal insignia to be removed from the roof of Parliament. This would seem like a reasonable enough ask, as Iceland has been an independent republic since 1944, and its legislature prominently bears the mark of a former colonial overlord is probably not in keeping with a 21st century nation. However, this has created a backlash of sorts, with the Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland criticising the proposal on the grounds that it “erases history”, evoking such slippery slope arguments as fears that other Danish-related landmarks will be removed from town and chucked into the harbour. These fears are probably unfounded; Icelanders are keenly aware of the colonial era, and most Icelandic children are taught of this history prominently bearing the mark of a former colonial overlord is probably not in keeping with a 21st century nation. However, this has created a backlash of sorts, with the Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland criticising the proposal on the grounds that it “erases history”, evoking such slippery slope arguments as fears that other Danish-related landmarks will be removed from town and chucked into the harbour. These fears are probably unfounded; Icelanders are keenly aware of the colonial era, and most Icelandic children are taught of this history prominently bearing the mark of a former colonial overlord is probably not in keeping with a 21st century nation. 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The taste of Icelandic lamb is unrivaled. Our pure bred lambs graze free in the pristine wilderness of Iceland, eating luscious green grass, berries and wild herbs such as red clover, Arctic thyme, sedge, willow, thrift and angelica. The end result is a tender fine-textured meat that is both naturally rich in Omega-3 and iron and infused with the flavor of nature. Icelandic lamb is a taste experience beyond compare.

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Ice caves are a popular winter tourist attraction here in Iceland, with visitors travelling from far a wide to witness the other-worldly beauty of these incredible natural structures. "A case of immorality" is a gross abuse of power from the director of a social organisation that the government has trusted for about 40 years to attend to the bulk of health care services for people with addictions.

Famous Swamp Dwellers

Iceland has had its fair share of celebrity visitors over the years. Justin Bieber got his kit off in a glacial lagoon, Kim Kardashian ate a hot dog in a glacial lagoon, Kim K ate a hot dog in a glacial lagoon, Will Smith in a glacial lagoon, Will Smith got his kit off in a glacial lagoon, Will Smith is less a case of alien invasion, and more trying to fight them, and not an entire wetland. In reality ‘mýr’ is short for ‘mýrri, ’ which translates to swamp. In reality ‘mýr’ is short for ‘mýrri, ’ which translates to swamp.

Shake-Up At Addiction Centre Following Scandal

The old director is out, a new director is coming in

Will Smith was irradiated into the Icelandic swamp

Smashed Burgers

And... Nashville-Style Hot Chicken In Downtown Reykjavík
Njörður, The Husband With The Nice Feet

What’s the point of ruling the ocean if you can’t silence the seagulls?

The god of dullness

There aren’t many stories about Njörður. Truthfully, he seems to have been a remarkably dull character. That is, until the unbelievably cool Óðinn Skáli enters the scene. She lived in the mountains of Brynhímnur, the home of Jótnez. She travelled on skis and hunted animals with her bow. But then tragedy hit.

Prickly bastards

Skáli’s father, Þúsósi, was killed by the gods after Loki’s infamous heist of Óðinn, and Skáli was hell-bent on killing every last one of those pompous Æsir. When she marched into Valhalla, the Æsir saw that the only way to make peace with her (and live) was to pay her off, and one of her payouts was her choice of husband from among the Æsir. But, the gods being prickly little bastards, said that she could only choose her husband by looking at their feet.

Nice feet? Think again!

Skáli, for some reason, agreed to these weird terms and got busy examining the gods’ feet. One pair was particularly clean and nice, and Skáli assumed these must be the feet of the hottest god out there. Baldur. But, to her disappointment, the feet belong to Njörður. Of all of the goddamn gods?

Screaming seagulls and howling wolves

As you might expect, the marriage was extremely stormy, as Skáli couldn’t sleep in Njörður’s home, Nótatún, on account of the maddening noise from the ocean and the screaming seagulls, which the god of the ocean could not, for some reason, silence. Njörður then agreed to move to Brynhímnur, but he couldn’t sleep there because of the howling wolves in the mountains. They finally agreed to split their time at each place. They would spend nine nights at Nótatún and nine at Brynhímnur. Finally, Skáli was fed up with this fine-footed loser. She demanded a divorce and ended up marrying a man fitting to her bad-ass legend, the all-seeing god, Óðinn.
Podcaster and activist, Edda Falak, has given her platform to the voiceless, but she points out that the responsibility to chance society falls on the powerful; not survivors of sexual violence. Will politicians act?
"I don't want to put forward a one-sided opinion. I want to bring certain subjects to the surface, for society to talk about."

Long-time readers of the Grapevine may have noticed a series of stories over the past few years on prominent, often male, individuals being revealed to have crossed boundaries of consent with women, in particular, white women, in foreign environments. Each time this happens, the stories grab headlines for some days or weeks, sometimes prompting other survivors to come forward, either about the men in question or about other men and their transgressions. Each time this happens, numer- ous men and women (Grapev- ine is, admittedly, not an exception here), frame this as “another” wave of the #MeToo movement. It is with this in mind a systemic, ongo- ing problem of sexual violence—more often than not perpetrated by young men against young, marginalized women—as an anomaly. The sad truth is, these events are not the exception; they are the norm.

One person who knows this all too well is Edda Farkað, an Icelandic host who has found herself at the forefront of what is a continuous movement of marginalized people pushing against patriarchal systems. She is the host of a popular podcast called Eigin Konur (a play on the Icelandic word for “wives”, i.e. “eiginkonur”, which literally means “owned women”), and the interviews she has conducted have broken new ground, brought down CEOs, and sparked long-overdue discussions about social movements and gender violence.

Making use of a platform

"Before I started the podcast, I had

financed a course in Fin- ance and Strategic Management in Copen- hagen, and was competing in crossfit at this time," Edda recalls. "At the same time, I was very active on social media on specific matters where I was talking about things, usually about how women and female bodies are hypersexualised, how violence is connected to that. I was sharing photos and comments on my Instagram story showing how men usually talk to me, and how it is to be a woman in my world. Like finace and sports, talking about these things on social media. That ended up turning into the podcast ‘Wives’."

Rather than centering her own opinions, from the very beginning Edda sought to pass the mic to those whose voices often go unheard.

"I had built up a good group of follow- ers and a platform, and a lot of people had opinions on these matters and how they were covered, so I just decided that instead of all this echo- chambering around me all the time, to hear from others," she says. "Eigin Konur started in connection with people who were working in production, and I wanted to do this properly. I wanted to have real influence in creating change. Today, there is an advertising office helping me with all the graphics, video and sound and such."

Trans women and foreign women

Edda has observed with some frustra- tion how each revealed instance of powerful men abusing their positions is framed as a new wave in what she sees as a continuous, ongoing move- ment. This movement, she says, has material goals in mind.

"We’re always talking about a new revolution [in the #MeToo move- ment]; that now there’s another revolution, but what I’m trying to point out is that this is a continuous move- ment, going on week after week, all year long," she says. "This is a prob- lem. It shouldn’t have to be some kind of revolution. There are some people using this isn’t political. I think this is certainly is political. Because we need social changes to go to effect more than the discussions about the need for these changes. That’s something else I’m trying to draw attention to."

"Fighting back, for her, must involve numerous sectors of society, from the private to the public."

"We need to see changes such as large companies taking a public stance, such as what happened with Isýr, she says, referring to how shortly after an interview she did with Vítalía Laza- reva, who recounted her experiences of being sexually abused by a group of young men, Isýr’s CEO, Ari Edwald, was fired swiftly. "This is a wake in the wake of the interview. It’s also a social change for these companies to publicly condemn violence, but at the same time, we do need political changes."

"We really need to improve how sexual assault cases are handled. We know it’s illegal to sexually assault someone, but there will always be people who do it anyway. Education needs to be prioritised in schools. The courts system isn’t good enough, and we don’t have recourse for survivors. The government is subsidising psychiatric services for survivors. We’re lacking funding in recourses, both regarding perpetrators and survivors."

The courts and the cops

"It’s often as if the court system is primarily seen as a way of dealing with these matters. That ended up being a woman in masculine worlds like the police. That’s how to deal with her."

"Another revolution"

Edda is also, thankfully, very much aware of how some women—namely, trans women, foreign women, and young women—are particularly vulnerable, experiencing intersec- tions of oppression that also make coming forward and recounting being abused all the more daunting.

"Out of prejudice against trans people, there’s this pervasive attitude that trans people subjected to sexual violence deserve it somehow," she says. "You see this kind of shame associated with being with a trans person, which can lead to this violence. And trans people are often scared to seek justice in the wake of it. It’s not talked about very much here, but you can wonder if the numbers are remarkably high, and while those numbers might not be officially as high in Iceland, they are; it’s just kept quiet. There is clearly not enough education going on in grade school. This is a specific prejudice against trans people."

"Another revolution"

Edda is encouraged to see the gras- roots organising, making their voices heard and having an impact on private companies.

"We’re seeing more and more that people are standing together," she says, "If there’s a group of people standing together, it’s a lot more diffi- cult to oppose them. You’re seeing the younger generation isn’t letting the older generation get away with their shit. People are just as afraid. If someone says you’re lying, you know there will be people who stand with you, which matters a lot. There are people encouraging others not to do business with a particular company or other because of their reputation."

"We’re seeing the financial pressure on these compa- nies. At the same time, she also believes that there needs to be fundamental sweeping changes made to Iceland’s courts and police."

The problems with the court system are all built on top of this prejudice which is also here," she says. "It’s often as if the court system is primarily dominated by white men who are not only already made up their minds, and have already decided not to believe survivors. You can have a case that has texts, screenshots, witnesses, all that. But they’re not even cases."

"We’re talking about powerful people making decisions based on their own prejudices."

Much the same issue is present in the police, she says. "When one is questioned, the questions that are being asked; we need to exam- ine that. What is being asked? Why aren’t they following up in these cases? This is in the interests of the police that prompts them to not examine a case, or that case." There’s corruption and prejudices within the system, and we need to kick these people out.

The state bears respon- sibility

Particularly frustrating to Edda is to see members of Parliament and Reykjavík City Council—the very people with the power to make the necessary changes—not back up their rhetoric or the campaign promises with real action.

"It is incredibly frustrating to see all these members of Parliament on social media saying ‘we support survivors, go after these people’, and in the end, it’s their problem. So we clearly need to put the pressure on. It shows
Stop voting for these people!

The cynical opportunism of politicians has used up all its charm, in Edda’s mind. The time for talk and hashtags is over; the time for action is long overdue.

“’I see, of course, that things are happening, but we still need changes amongst these powerful people who are in government. These are people who could make real changes. You’re seeing MPs saying things like ‘Wow, go you, you’re doing so well, we support you’ but this person may represent a party that’s in the government. ’

For one example, she refers again to her interview with Vitalia, who had named famed media personality Logi Bergmann amongst the men who crossed a line with her, and who later took to Facebook to deny the allegations against him.

“At the same time, we see for example Katrín Atladóttir, who is the Independence Party representative in Reykjavík City Council, ’supports the fight’ but still standing by a Facebook post from an alleged abuser,” she says.

Meanwhile, Reykjavík City has a direct line to allocating resources in the fight against sexual violence. So yeah, it’s a bit annoying to see people cheerleading ‘good for you’ but she’s someone who could actually make changes and yet obviously supports an accused abuser.

“This is worrying. So what does it mean to be cheerleading? They could actually do something, but they shift the responsibility onto us. I had to sit with Vitalia in an hour-long interview where she describes these disgusting events in painful detail before anything was said. She had already talked about this before, but no one listened. I have yet to see any changes that would be good for survivors.”

She adds: “It’s performative to see a party that has [making these changes] as part of its platform, yet they have shown that they have no regard for minority groups. So why should this be on their platform now?”

These parties are so entrenched in society that Edda is not especially optimistic that things will change any time soon, as that would require a large section of the population to actually vote them out.

“We also see political parties using #MeToo and all that in their campaigns to get themselves voted into government, and promise to pay down psychiatric services and speed up processing of sexual assault cases in the judicial system, and such,” she points out. “But when they’re voted into government, suddenly there’s no money to pay down psychiatric services, nothing is done. This is just performative. We’re seeing judges who are in these parties that have power, writing columns in newspapers that say ‘we don’t always need to believe survivors’. These are people who are still in government, and that’s cause for worry.”

A matter of life and death

At our interview’s close, Edda offers some thoughts for men reading this: what they could take away, and how they can help make the changes much needed in Icelandic society.

“It matters a lot to listen to people who are talking,” she says. “It’s sad to say, but this could be your mother, your cousin, your sister, or whoever. This is a matter of life and death for some people, to be listened to.”

For survivors, she emphasised that no one is under any obligation to go public with some of the most traumatic events of their lives. As always, since well before Egin Konur was launched, Edda Falak wants them to know that she stands with them.

“People need to stop voting for parties that are focusing on all kinds of things other than the people in this country,” she says. “We’ve never seen them put any reforms into how sexual assault cases are handled. That has never happened, we haven’t seen it, and that’s why I don’t have any hope that this will ever change. We need to see fools of parties talking about this daily; not just the week before election day.”

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“I want them to know that they are believed,” she says. “There’s a whole bunch of people out there who stand together. It’s not like it was. I so look up to people who are still with us today despite everything that’s happened to them. It’s so admirable, and it’s not a given. I think it’s also important to emphasise that no one is obligated to change their experience into some kind of empowering story to help others. Sometimes it’s really just a matter of living, eating, sleeping, surviving. Not everyone needs to go public. It can be really difficult. But it’s important to me that they know that they, too, are believed.”
Dancing Between The Cracks

Hvíla Sprungur explores the crevasses in our own personal glaciers

Words: John Pearson Photos: RAX

Iceland’s glaciers are a rich source of symbolism. We observe these majestic ice caps melt and recede as a stark reminder of the climate crisis. At the same time, they are some of the last areas of land largely untouched by human encroachment, representing a truly wild Iceland. And the glaciers can also act as a broader metaphor for our existence, their cracks and crevasses reminding us of the risks of being human.

"Hvíla Sprungur" is a new performance by the Iceland Dance Company that opens this month at Reykjavík’s Borgarleikhúsið. The title translates as ‘Rest Cracks’, but its given English title of ‘Crevasses’ points more accurately to the focus of choreographer Inga Maren Rúnarsdóttir’s work. The set, designed by Júlíanna Lára Steingrímudóttir, and the dancers’ costumes comprise photos by celebrated Icelandic wilderness photographer RAX (Ragnar Axelsson).

Two of the four performers—Ásgeir Helgi Magnússon and Emilía Benedikta Gísladóttir—shared their thoughts and experiences just before the premiere performance.

"It’s amazing to work with Inga Maren," says Ásgeir, when asked how the show was developing. "It’s so good to have somebody orchestrating who really knows what they want, but is open to suggestions.”

"It’s been a really fun process," Emilía says, "and so nice to be able to come to work during this strange COVID time. So it’s been a blessing to gather here, create something beautiful and have fun.”

Chilling imagery

The set is based on glacial imagery from photographer RAX. The scenery is the same design as the dancers’ costumes, which allows the performers to hide on stage. "It’s great for us, the old ones, to be with the young ones," Emilía laughs, referring to fellow dancers Erna Gunnarsdóttir and Sigurbær Andreas Sigurðsson. "They keep us on our toes!"

The music for ‘Hvíla Sprungur’ is an evolving piece based on the composition ‘Quadrantes’ by Óttar Sæmundsson and Stephan Stephensen, a former member of Gusgus. In fact, the project is also a four-way reunion for Inga, Stephan, Ásgeir and Emilía, who all worked together on the project ‘Journey’, a collaboration between Gusgus and the Iceland Dance Company back in 2015.

Emilía and Ásgeir are excited to bring ‘Hvíla Sprungur’ to the stage. ‘This piece is going to be very audience friendly. It’s really dancey, and it has beautiful music!’ says Emilía.

The icy stage set is powerfully striking. "Sometimes when we have the glacier around us, we feel really cold suddenly,” Emilía observes. “And often the people who are watching also feel cold!”

Old collaborators, new collaboration

The project is an opportunity for old friends Ásgeir and Emilía to work together again, for the first time in years, and to work with new friends. “It’s great for us, the old ones, to be with the young ones,” Emilía laughs, referring to fellow dancers Erna Gunnarsdóttir and Sigurbær Andreas Sigurðsson. “They keep us on our toes!”

So come and experience ‘Hvíla Sprungur’. Just bring a decent coat and some mittens.

Mind the gap

In this work, Inga Maren dives within herself to look at her personal weak points—her cracks and crevasses—and asks: what are the breaches in her own personal glacier into which she falls? And considering wider society, as it traverses the metaphorical glacier: how do we travel together in a way that enables us to pull each other up when we inevitably fall? And how do we avoid falling in the first place? These questions take on physical expression in ‘Hvíla Sprungur’.

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The music for ‘Hvíla Sprungur’ is an evolving piece based on the composition ‘Quadrantes’ by Óttar Sæmundsson and Stephan Stephensen, a former member of Gusgus. In fact, the project is also a four-way reunion for Inga, Stephan, Ásgeir and Emilía, who all worked together on the project ‘Journey’, a collaboration between Gusgus and the Iceland Dance Company back in 2015.

Emilía and Ásgeir are excited to bring ‘Hvíla Sprungur’ to the stage. ‘This piece is going to be very audience friendly. It’s really dancey, and it has beautiful music!’ says Emilía.

So come and experience ‘Hvíla Sprungur’. Just bring a decent coat and some mittens.

The icy stage set is powerfully striking. "Sometimes when we have the glacier around us, we feel really cold suddenly,” Emilía observes. “And often the people who are watching also feel cold!”

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Performances are at Borgarleikhúsið on February 4th, 10th and 18th at 20:00. Tickets cost 4,150 ISK and are available from Picka.

Iceland’s glaciers are a rich source of symbolism. We observe these majestic ice caps melt and recede as a stark reminder of the climate crisis. At the same time, they are some of the last areas of land largely untouched by human encroachment, representing a truly wild Iceland. And the glaciers can also act as a broader metaphor for our existence, their cracks and crevasses reminding us of the risks of being human.

"Hvíla Sprungur" is a new performance by the Iceland Dance Company that opens this month at Reykjavík’s Borgarleikhúsið. The title translates as ‘Rest Cracks’, but its given English title of ‘Crevasses’ points more accurately to the focus of choreographer Inga Maren Rúnarsdóttir’s work. The set, designed by Júlíanna Lára Steingrímudóttir, and the dancers’ costumes comprise photos by celebrated Icelandic wilderness photographer RAX (Ragnar Axelsson).

Two of the four performers—Ásgeir Helgi Magnússon and Emilía Benedikta Gísladóttir—shared their thoughts and experiences just before the premiere performance.

"It’s amazing to work with Inga Maren," says Ásgeir, when asked how the show was developing. "It’s so good to have somebody orchestrating who really knows what they want, but is open to suggestions.”

"It’s been a really fun process," Emilía says, "and so nice to be able to come to work during this strange COVID time. So it’s been a blessing to gather here, create something beautiful and have fun.”

Chilling imagery

The set is based on glacial imagery from photographer RAX. The scenery is the same design as the dancers’ costumes, which allows the performers to hide on stage. "It’s great for us, the old ones, to be with the young ones,” Emilía laughs, referring to fellow dancers Erna Gunnarsdóttir and Sigurbær Andreas Sigurðsson. “They keep us on our toes!”

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very goth, is it? It's laugh quite a lot. Now that's not reductive.

Besides, when we talk, Kælan reductive. under the big black umbrella of themes could be huddled together.

The mercurial Kælan Mikla is not oppressive. The spirit of growth and experimentation shines through; for example, the album's tender closing track "Samán" is written in waltz time rather than a more common "rock" time signature. And generally, the band's refined production focus on this album shines through in enhanced sonic sophistication. The sound of 'Undir Köldum Norðurljósum' is a seductive whisper rather than a strident shout; its feel is expansive, not oppressive.

The importance of appearance
A strong and deliberate visual identity is a core part of Kælan Mikla, and music videos form an important part of their creative offering. Four tracks from 'Undir Köldum Norðurljósum’—almost half the tracks on the album—have had excellent videos created for them and, despite being made by four different directors, the band's visual concept runs as a solid thread through them all.

Perhaps most notable is the video for "Hvítr Sandar", which was directed by Márí Sigfússon and won Video Of The Year at The Grapevine's 2022 Music Awards. Kælan Mikla had first worked with Márí in 2017, when band and director were paired up to make a promo video for the Iceland Airwaves festival.

"We were trying to think of video artists, and then we remembered this thing that we made with him," says Laufey. "Yeah, because the lyrics in the song are a lot about texture and feelings and how it is to touch things," Solveig chimed in. "And opposites like black liquid and white sand. We just thought he would be perfect, and he was!"

The importance of appearance
Another crucial element of Kælan Mikla is their live show. The band augment their sound with costume, stage theatrics, video and even incense to hit the senses. "It is theatre; essentially Kælan Mikla is a live band," says Laufey. "It is theatre; essentially Kælan Mikla is a live band," says Laufey. "The music is made to be live. It's not meant to be on records, you know?"

Solveig nods in agreement. "It's such a journey. When we go on stage, we always plan the intro. We plan how it builds up and goes down, and it's like the songs are building a story that we are performing."

And we become hypnotised. We get so connected on stage, and we feel like we are conjuring the spirit that is Kælan Mikla. We become one unit when we are onstage," concludes Laufey.

Longing for a tour bus bunk
Naturally, like many musicians, the band feel thwarted by the ongoing pandemic disruption.

"We have a release tour in Europe," says Margrét. "I think it's 39 shows or something that is supposed to happen in April, but now we're just crossing fingers. When you release the album, you want to perform it. You can't just put an album online and be like, 'Hey, here's your album.' You need to back it up; promote it, travel, meet people and perform it!"

"We did all those shitty base- ment shows for five people," Margrét continues, harping back to the band's early days. "And now we play for like 2000 people!" interjects Laufey. "But we put in the work," Margrét says. "And now we can't do that work."

Farewell in Berlin
The band start recalling tales of their "shitty basement show" tours from back in the day, when they would traverse Europe's train network unaccompanied—carrying their instruments in tote bags—to play bookings secured by Solveig in a bout of pushy teenaged enthusiasm. Like the time Margrét stopped a man stealing her bass on a railway platform, only to lose her breakfast croissant to him instead. And the time a random lost Turk- ish guy, who spoke no Icelandic or English, decided to join Kælan Mikla as their bodyguard/porter in return for the band guiding him to Berlin.

"And when we got out of the train station, he just walked away," recalls Margrét. "After travelling with us for 24 hours, he just looked at us like 'Okay,' and walked away like he had done his job. And we still think about him today!"

"I just want to hire him again!" says Solveig. "And next time we will pay him!" says Laufey.

Cue the Kælan Mikla laughter again. "How's that not very got, is it?"

Words: John Pearson
Photo: Ása Djórdóttir
Album cover: Farfletim / Merch Babe

The Cold Light Of Night
Kælan Mikla have a dark new universe to share

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Issue 02— 2022

The mercurial Kælan Mikla defy descriptions in many ways. Although it might appear that many of the band's motifs and themes could be huddled together under the big black umbrella of "goth," that just seems too simplis- tic. Not to mention somewhat reductive.

Besides, when we talk, Kælan Mikla—that is, Solveig, Margrét and Laufey—laugh. In fact, they laugh quite a lot. Now that's not very got, is it?

Pigeonholes are for pigeons
"We have never put a label on ourselves," says vocalist Laufey. "And we think it's really difficult to do, because all of our albums are different and we never know what we're going to do next."

"Then when you release a differ- ent album, people are like, 'What? This is not what I signed up for!'" laughs bassist Margrét. "We always have the same essence even though we're using different genres. And truthfully, when people ask what kind of music we make, I have no idea."

"I think that our genre is Kælan Mikla" concludes Laufey.

Cold northern lights
Their most recent album, 'Undir Köldum Norðurljósum' ('Under The Cold Northern Lights'), continues Kælan Mikla's tradition of evolving that genre through each musical project. For this one—produced by Bard Bóðvarsson—the band spent 18 months in Bardí's studio, as opposed to recording in a garage as they did for the preceding record.

"We were working with Bard for one and a half years, really trying to make every sound perfect," says Solveig. "And it was really nice to try that out."

"It was the first time that we worked with a producer like that. And he was pushing us a lot to go all the way and you know, try every- thing," says Laufey.

That spirit of growth and experimentation shines through; for example, the album's tender closing track "Samán" is written in waltz time rather than a more common "rock" time signature. And generally, the band's refined production focus on this album shines through in enhanced sonic sophistication. The sound of 'Undir Köldum Norðurljósum' is a seductive whisper rather than a strident shout; its feel is expansive, not oppressive.

The Kælan Mikla universe
The band are named after the beautiful and deadly snow queen in Tove Jansson's Bloomin books, an idea around which the band have created their own universe; a fantasy version of Iceland where 'Undir Köldum Norðurljósum' takes place.

Laufey explains: "It is made up of stories that are kind of based on Icelandic folklore and nature. They're these little fairy tales that we made ourselves, and what they all have in common is that they happen in the universe of Kælan Mikla, under the cold northern light."

"When we talk about the spirit of Kælan Mikla, and the universe, we're talking about the three of us together," Margrét says. "We always feel like we conjure this femme fatale spirit, like together we are stronger. Together we have the alter ego of this femme fatale ice queen."

"I think that this is the most visual album we have ever released," says Laufey, "because a lot of it talks about the Kælan Mikla universe and shows people the environment that we imagine our music to happen in."

Pre-order the Exquisite Deluxe Edition of 'Undir Köldum Norðurljósum' on blue vinyl: shop.grapevine.is
It’s that time of the year when we hide under the blanket, eat candy and binge TV while listening to the wind shaking the foundation of our homes. Add a pandemic to this annual winter hibernation and you have the perfect environment for discovering some new Icelandic TV shows. So, here goes...

Næturvaktin

Many Icelanders believe that this is the best comedy of all time. And I tend to agree, although new shows are giving it a run for its money. Næturvaktin was directed by the great Ragnar Bragason and stars Jón Gnarr, who later became the punk mayor of Reykjavík. At the show’s core is the complicated and violent relationship between a gas station manager and his employees. The show has been remade in Norway, as Nattskiftet, but the original Næturvaktin (‘The Night Shift’, in English) has been shown across Europe.

Ligeglad

This might be a controversial pick, but it is one of the best comedies Icelanders have produced—I stand on that hill and I will die on it. Although the show is set not in Iceland but Denmark, the creators grasp the odd humour of Icelanders and the well-known concept of the Icelandic loser. The show borders on reality: for example, the characters have the actor’s name and Helgi Björnsson, the famous Icelandic pop star and actor, plays himself at the end of his career. (In fact, Helgi’s career has only blossomed during the pandemic.) These shows are a small gem in the TV history of Iceland.

Verbúðin

This show is, as I write this, showing on RÚV and it’s already being called one of the best TV shows ever made in Iceland. The reason is complicated. First, it’s about the Icelandic fishing quotas system. Sounds exciting, right? And second, it’s set in the 80s. To explain the first element, the quota system is a highly explosive political topic in Iceland going back decades. But don’t worry, you don’t need to understand the system to enjoy the show. It’s a story about people, their emotional lives, fucking and fighting and, in the end, how the hell Icelanders became so rich! Well, some of them, at least. The 80s throwback is also incredibly well executed, and Icelanders connect deeply with many of the cultural references in the show, making it worth watching for everyone seeking a better understanding of the Icelandic soul.

Venjulegt Fólk

Venjulegt Fólk is greatly undervalued, in our opinion. The show is one of few that made it to a fourth season and it has a surprisingly good combination of drama and comedy. It also has a stellar ensemble of actors to elevate it from being a bland melodrama. The series is, more or less, about regular people dealing with happiness, conflict and stress in modern times. Like that explains anything. It took me a moment to get on board, but when I finally got there, I just couldn’t stop watching these characters.
Lenya Rún Taha Karim

Lenya Rún is a Pirate Party politician. In September 2021 it was announced that she was to become the youngest ever member of Alþingi. However, due to the election misconduct chaos, she lost her seat in the subsequent reshuffle. Lenya instead entered parliament as a deputy MP in December. In addition to her parliamentary duties, she is also in her final year of law school. Rather than take even an imaginary break, Lenya’s perfect day embraces her various commitments.

Mornings with… Thanos?

That’s my cat! I normally wake to him purring in my face. I like to wake up early, around 7:45 a.m. On my perfect day I’d take a shower and have breakfast before heading off to class. To be honest, breakfast would just be a white Monster and a protein pancake. I like to keep it simple.

I’m at this point in my life where I want to learn as much as I can about law and then just graduate and use my degree as a lawyer or even as a lawmaker, so I’m really really eager to learn. On my perfect day I’d finish my classes at noon and head to Dagr for lunch. I’d get their ‘Poor Man’s Offer’—my go-to order is a cream cheese bagel with extra cheese, a cinnamon cruller and coffee.

Lunch and library

After lunch I’d stop by the library. There’s something really chill about going there on a perfect day because I used to do it as a kid. My mom took us every week as a Friday ritual. She would have us pick out as many books as we’d want and then take us to the bakery afterwards. That’s how I really got into reading. It’s a really fond childhood memory.

In the afternoon I would have a meeting, getting ready for my next sitting in Parliament. Then I would go for a run to Nauthólsvík. It’s important for me to be in nature, away from all the cars. On my perfect day, the weather would be sunny, with no wind at all.

After chill

That night I would meet my friends for a beer in a bar downtown. I like a low key place like Íslenski Barinn. After the bars close, we’d all go back to my house for… not an after party, but more like an after chill. I live with two of my best friends and the vibe in our apartment is usually really good. To be honest, the last few times when we’ve had a get together after the bars close, after a while I just go into my room while everyone’s still there and fall asleep. I am usually a fan of a really big night out, but it’s just been a few busy months.

Vital Info

USEFUL NUMBERS

Emergency: 112
On-call doctors: 1770
Dental emergency: 675 0005
Taxi: Hreyfill: 588 5522 or BSR: 561 0000

POST OFFICE

The downtown post office is located at Hagatorg 1, and is open Mon–Fri, 09:00–17:00

PHARMACIES

Lyf og Heilsa, Fiskislóð 1, tel: 561 4600
Lyfja, Hafnarstræti 19, tel: 552 4045

OPENING HOURS - SHOPS & BANKS

Most shops: Mon–Fri 10:00–18:00, Sat 10:00–16:00, Sun closed
Branches: Mon–Fri 10:00–16:00

SWIMMING POOLS

Sundhöllin on Barónsstígur is an outdoor swimming pool with hot tubs.
For more pools visit gpv.is/swim
Open: Mon-Thu 6:30–22:00, Fri-Sat 6:30–16:00, Sun 10:00–18:00

PUBLIC TOILETS

Public toilets can be found at Hektor and in the round kiosks on Láfsótunum, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavik Art Museum, on Lækjargata and by Fráðirsins on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavik City Hall and the Reykjavik Library.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Most buses run every 20 to 30 minutes from 6:00–00:00. For more info visit www.bus.is

Words: Josie Gaitens
Photo: Art Bicnick
1. Blackbox Pizza
Borgarút 26
Blackbox is a solid competitor for best pizza pie in the city. Thin crust, inventive toppings, delivery—what else could you ask for? We’d particularly recommend the Parma Rucola, which serves up at the parma ham goodness you could wish for. For those journeying outside the city, they’ve got a location in Akureyri.

2. Chikin
Ingólfstraeti 2
This ain’t your mama’s KFC. No, Chikin—Rykiyvik’s first dedicated hot chicken and bao joint—manages to be at once both totally sophisticated food cuisine to Northern Africa goodness, and much more.

3. Hosiló
Braunastígur 16
3. Hosiló
Ingólfsstræti 2
For many a young parent, the cafe is a small spot—seating around 30, with a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain’t nothing to scoff at either.

4. Kaffi Laugaalekur
Laugavegur 74a
Kaffi Laugaalekur is especially popular with new parents, with special kids’ corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and mushroom elsal allaha man and the ‘shawaramabake’ are our top lunch picks. Also, if you’re keto, don’t miss ‘em.

5. Brauð & Go
Frakkastigur 16
First off—don’t miss Brauð & Go’s pretzel croissants unless you really don’t want to have a spiritual experience. By also savoring our “snúfur”—cinnamon bread rolls smothered with a sugary glaze. They take it a step further and stuff the classics with blueberries and whatnot, eliciting inappropriate satisfied moans. Get there early to snatch a warm one.

6. Snaps
Pórgata 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 boastload of memories. Steady standbys include the deeply savoury 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 tartletox créme brûlée topped with an amusou snap.

7. Hlemmur Matthias
Hlemmur
Once a bus station and now a bustling food hall—we love a repurposed space. Hlemmur Matthias 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
Bergstaðarstræti 4
For those of us longing for dim sum in Reykjavík, cravings have often had to be satisfied with daydreams of visits past to dim sum houses of Chinatowns abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum arrived with their fanes, 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 vexing. This ain’t your regular kebab spot.

10. Laundromat
Austurstræti 9
Have you ever wanted to have lunch and do your laundry in a public place? You’re in luck. The Laundromat Cafe on Austurstræti is open (again) for business. Whether you want brunch, a sandwich, or a burger, they have a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain’t nothing to scoff at either.

11. Nauthóll
Nauthólsvegur 106
Just behind the University of Reykjavík overlooking the city’s geothermal beach is Nauthóll, the definition of a hidden summertime gem. The restaurant is one of those places that downtown Reykjavík rats might call “too far away,” but with the prevalent of public scooters you can arrive there in style in but 15 minutes. Without hyperbole, there probably isn’t a better outdoor view in the city than this place—and their Scandinavian fare is good too.

12. Prikid
Bankastræti 12
Prikid is the bar version of the “I’m going to bed early tonight vs. me at 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
Hevígata 12
If the cancellation of literally everything is dampening your glamorous rock and roll style, Röntgen at Hevígata 12 will cure what ails you. This place—a relative newcomer—is already a stalwart of visits past to dim sum houses of Chinatowns abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum arrived with their fanes, 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.

17. Mál og Menning
Sólvallagata 1
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 Bskr or something—that’s all people know about Iceland anyway.

18. Álagard and
Starhagi
Reykjavík
Íslenski Barinn
Klapparstríð 33
Of the many nation-themed drinking
18. Dillon
Laugavegur 30
A mix between grunge and classy, Dillon Whiskey Bar dominates their little stretch of Laugavegur. Crammed most nights with rockers, metalheads, and tourists looking for a place to mumble AC/DC songs into their beer. Dillon boasts a wide selection of over 100 whiskies and hosts some of Iceland’s best hard rock bands on the weekends.

19. Petersen sútan
Austurstræti 12
The sun is finally out, which means it’s time for your annual pilgrimage to Petersen sútan. Never been? Well, make sure to bring your sunglasses because this place has one of the best views in Reykjavik and also very fashionable clientele. Look over the city and have a beer in almost entirely direct sunlight (!!!!!!!!).

Shopping

20. Íslenzkía Húðfílurfræðin
Ingólfstræti 3
This classic shop caters to all styles, with a roster of artists that serve up everything from realism to new-school and more. We’d particularly recommend the hand-poked pieces by Rabbja (shabba) (Rabbja): Not only are they gorgeously ornate in that straight-out-of-Dan-O-Days way, but they might saw you from spirits elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of tourist subjects.

21. Nielsen Sérvellir
Bakkastræti 4
Way more than your average design store, Nielsen is filled to the brim with knock-knacks from all over from gorgeous diaries to cozy towels and all the candles you could desire. Stop by, grab something for a gift and don’t forget a little something for yourself.

22. Fótofræði
Sólvavustígur 22
Fótofræði claims to have been one of the first photo galleries in town. While its interior is tiny, there’s a surprising number of photos to be found inside. The pictures on display are mainly shot in Reykjavik or elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of tourist subjects.

23. Stefánsbúð/p3
Laugavegur 7
Stefánsbúð showcases local designers and second-hand high-fashion finds (hello 1990’s Gucci) as well as accessories from quirky international brands. Fun and zany, you don’t know what you’re going to find but you know it’ll be exciting.

24. Lucky Records
Rauðhárstrægi 10
Lucky Records is probably the biggest record shop in Iceland, with shelves upon shelves of new and used vinyl and CDs on offer. If that’s not enough, they’re notorious for their export staff whose knowledge goes far beyond the latest Björk or Sigur Rós offerings. In fact, it’s best if you just let them take the lead.

25. Húra Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 18A
This minimalist streetwear / athleisure store serves up a mixed selection of classic items and trendy cuts. They were massively hyped when they opened a few years ago and have stayed hyped because they know what they are doing and are damn good at it.
Musical duo Hugar have been a creative partnership for six years now, a fact that seems to take both individuals in question—Bergur Pétursson and Pétur Jónsson—by surprise.

"Time flies! I’m quite shocked," says Pétur, when reminded. "Should we start to plan an anniversary party or something?"

Other artists might have already booked the venue, ordered a three-tier cake and hit Vínbúðin for a few cases of Moët. But that’s not the style of Iceland’s most unassuming band.

Looking back

Bergur and Pétur go back much further than those 10 years. Their musical education started at school in their hometown of Settjarnarnes, where Bergur took up the trombone and Pétur picked up a guitar. This brought them into contact with renowned musician Helgi Jónsson, who became trombone and guitar teacher to the two of them.

Back in 2014, as Hugar started to evolve into a pair of talented multi-instrumentalists, Helgi entrusted them with his studio while he went on holiday. They called their friend Ólafur Arnalds, who was drumming in hardcore bands at the time, and seized the opportunity to lay down their burgeoning musical ideas. But having eventually recorded enough for an album, the question was: "Erm... now what?"

"We didn’t plan to make an album or anything, but it seemed OK so we gave it away for free online," says Pétur.

"We had a download counter on the website," Bergur adds, "and we made a goal. If so people that we didn’t know downloaded it, we’d be super happy. It went into the hundreds of thousands."

Eight years on, the tracks comprising Hugar’s eponymously titled debut album have now received more than 48 million plays between them on Spotify alone.

Venturing forth

Hugar’s first tentative forays into the live arena took a while, and were few and far between. "When the album was a year old, we played our first show," Pétur recalls. "It was at Kes. We had never thought of the album being performed live, but we got our friends to play: string quartet, full band with a drum-mer and everything. It was a really fun experience, but that was our only show until we played another, two years later, in Poland."

When it came to recording their second album, Bergur and Pétur also chose their own relaxed timeframe and ‘Vatn’ eventually emerged in 2019, five years after its predecessor. But at least this time the album was planned; they even made it possible for people to pay for it, by signing to Sony Music Masterworks. That same year Hugar scored a film—’The Varulva Effect’—then two years later released a record inspired by Icelandic folk songs that had been rescued from obscurity.

Looking out for the old folk

That release—a five-track EP called ‘Fjörding / Folk Songs’—was inspired by Íslenk Pjöllfólg, an early 20th-century compendium of Icelandic folk music apparently financed by Danish brewer Carlsberg. "This guy just went to every farm and collected the songs for his book, and now you can find all these gems which are a part of our culture," explains Pétur. "Everything was just there for someone to find, and it has now been passed on to later generations."

"The book is basically just melodies with lyrics," adds Bergur. "So we made our own versions. You know, some people have the misconception that there wasn’t music here in Iceland because they didn’t have a lot of instruments. But there was definitely a lot of music happening; you can just feel it in this book."

"We tried to encapsulate the spirit of the lyrics sonically," Pétur says, "and we found that translated really well to what we do. So we are hoping to do more, because there are a lot of those songs."

North Atlantic Rift

But before turning their attention to any further cultural preservation projects, there was a new Hugar album to coax into existence. ‘Rift’, which came out in January 2022, is a remarkable work of fluid musicality: expansive, lush and mesmerising.

The title refers broadly to the concept of division, as Bergur explains: “In Iceland, you are on the meeting of these two tectonic plates which are growing apart. And you can definitely feel it in the volcanoes and the geysirs, and the greenhouses where they can grow bananas. Basically, the whole island comes from that motion; those eruptions that made a country. So the creation of a rift gives the opportunity for something new.”

Although Hugar decided on the album’s title and concept before the coronavirus arrived, ‘Rift’ unsurprisingly collects pandemic times. Pétur wonders where the chasms that have recently opened up in our social fabric will lead: “In terms of society, doesn’t every change follow a big disaster, or a big rift?”

Let’s hope that society holds together long enough for Hugar to continue—unassumingly—through at least one more decade. Then perhaps we can have another catch-up to see what they’ve been up to, and possibly even have that anniversary party. We’ll bring the cake.
What does Iceland sound like? Perhaps it’s an odd question to ask about a big chunk of rock in the North Atlantic. But if you’re in tune with the sound of nature—or the nature of sound—then perhaps you might be interested in some electrifying live music. Los Bombarones.

As far as we’re concerned, the only way to survive these cold, dark February days is to bundle up, get to a bar and bear witness to some electrifying live music. Los Bombarones.

**An Icelandic Noise**

Kaïsa Palúch weaves together electronic dance music, the sounds of the wild and the soft strains of historic Icelandic folk.

Words: John Pearson Video still: Magdalena Luk{s}ia{d}a

**| Event Picks |**

**Noise annoy(s)**

To uncover the sound of Iceland, Kaïsa asked the sorts of people who might be expected to know: musicians, artists and filmmakers. And their responses were surprising. “The most common answer was ‘a noise,’” says Kaïsa. “That’s what Iceland sounds like to them—constant noise.”

Much of that noise is the incessant racket made by us humans, but that said, nature is rarely quiet. If the distinction between a sound and a noise is that one is easy on the ear and the other isn’t, then Mama Nature can be one noisy moth. A howling wind can jar the nerves. And even the steady roar of a waterfall—surely one of the earth’s most beautiful gifts—can become an imposition through its sheer persistence. Kaïsa realised that the book she was planning about the noise of Iceland would actually work better as a collection of audio recordings. “I decided I was going to record all the popular places in Iceland,” she says. “No photos, just sounds. And I assumed that I would be recording them with people, buses and everything. And then the pandemic happened, but for this I really needed that you could meditate to. And I’m not saying that’s never going to happen, but for this I really needed that Paul van Dyk kind of sound.”

**Mapping noise**

When Kaïsa found herself unem- ployed in the spring of 2020—and a relative silence fell on Iceland’s natural tourist spots—she set about visiting each one to make field recordings, which were eventually compiled in an interactive map at www.noisefromiceland.com.

And while each recording was already on art piece in its own right, some also seemed to volunteer themselves as source material for musical expansion. Thus the idea for the ‘Noise From Iceland’ project: to find a way to incorporate the Icelandic language into the music of the folk. And it was that interest that led to the latest development in the Noise From Iceland project: to find a way to incorporate the Icelandic language into the music of the folk.

The organisation Íslensk Musik og Fönnafararfræði (Icelandic Music and Cultural Heritage), curates a collection of audio recordings of Icelandic music. These are records of interviews, films and tutorials representing a history of Icelandic culture. And it was there that Kaïsa found a recording belonging to a folk tale called “Fungulrú Gliðt Gút Öl Ættuk” (“The Moon Glows Yellow And Pink”).

““There was such a nice energy coming from this recording, and I liked the lyrics,” says Kaïsa. “But then I went deeper and found out about their meaning.” The song depicts a woman called Geirulfljót sitting at night, sewing a sweater in the moonlight. She waits for her dead husband, Gímur, to come and take her away with him. When Kaïsa found herself unem- ployed in the spring of 2020—and a relative silence fell on Iceland’s natural tourist spots—she set about visiting each one to make field recordings, which were eventually compiled in an interactive map at www.noisefromiceland.com. And while each recording was already on art piece in its own right, some also seemed to volunteer themselves as source material for musical expansion. Thus the idea for the ‘Noise From Iceland’ project: to find a way to incorporate the Icelandic language into the music of the folk.

The resulting album is an engaging melange of 14 tracks, half of which are pure ambient field recordings best experienced via a decent pair of headphones. Hurri- canes whisper around the listener, lava roars and bubbles in the ears, and the sounds of a glacier lagom wash all around and ever. Then, in the other seven tracks, the sounds of nature are bolstered by solid yet spacious dance music, influenced heavily by late-nineties progressive house.

“I’m a huge fan of trance and techno,” Kaïsa says. “Most of the time that you put music composed to field recordings it’s ambient, or some experimental electronica. And honestly, I tried it to do that but I just needed a beat! It was interesting to see the reactions of people who were probably expecting music that you could meditate to. And I’m not saying that’s never going to happen, but for this I really needed that Paul van Dyk kind of sound.”

**Archive noise**

Kaïsa’s musical education in Poland essentially led her to degrees in musicology and ethnomusicology—the science of documenting and analysing the music of the folk. And it was that interest that led to the latest development in the Noise From Iceland project: to find a way to incorporate the Icelandic language into the music of the folk. And it was that interest that led to the latest development in the Noise From Iceland project: to find a way to incorporate the Icelandic language into the music of the folk.

The noise Kaïsa found a recording from 1969, pinned by a recording of an Icelandic troll, rather than Mr Ferrell. Hey, we guess.

Trolls—the sad ones hiding behind computer screens, not the running creminals of Icelandic folklore—raised the ire of Icelanders that it was the work of a rather well- known troll, rather than Mr Ferrell. Hey, Ferrell’s “Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga”, is a cult hit over here, the media were probably too embarrassed to mention this.

The offer had been real, Will Ferrell would have been to Iceland what Canadian superstar Celine Dion was to Switzerland when she won Eurovision for them in 1988. But that we know anything about Eurovision...

On to jazz wonderkind, Leaflín Lin, who has been gaining huge inter- national attention for her performance on Jimmy Kimmel Live! in January. Leaflín released her album “Mono, II” in 2021 and rose to fame on TikTok. Leaflín has also played for us at The Reykjavík Grapevine, and you can find her on our YouTube channel.

Kudos to Mr. Kimmel, who pronounced Leaflín’s version of “The Story of Fire Saga”, is a cult hit over here, the media were probably too embarrassed to mention this.
The LÁ Art Museum (Listasafn Árnesinga) is giving us yet another reason to visit Hveragerði with their exciting new exhibition. This group showing features four artists—Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir, Þórdís Erla Zoega, Magnús Helgason and Ingunn Fjóla Ingólfsdóttir—all with their own exhibitions in separate rooms. We spoke with two of the artists involved about what we can expect.

**That’s me in the corner**

“I’m in my room, with figurative crazy-colour things,” Lóa tells us of her showing, called ‘Buxnadragt’, or ‘Powersuit’ in English. “They’re like a fine art version of my comic work.” Here she refers to her comic series Lóaborátíum, a series of slice-of-life vignettes that are as charming as they are funny. Lóa, always the modest one, insists she is not the star of the show when compared to the other artists being featured.

“Buxnadragt bears much of the observational style as her comics, with inspiration drawn from Lóa’s youth. “The mood’s about the futility of dressing into power, when people try to get into a man’s suit, like in the 80s, but you’re still not in charge,” she tells us. “A pantsuit is hilarious but powerful at the same time. It’s more observational than a statement, really, of 20 fast illustrations of women in power suits. They have the mood of friends of my mother when I was a kid. They were all in charge of something; not on top, but trying.”

**The not-so-boring routine**

Þórdís’ exhibition, ‘Hringrás’ (‘Daily Routine’ in English), is a bit more abstract, but is most fully enjoyed with the participation of attendees.

“I am making an installation with acrylic glass circles, curtains and motors,” she tells us. “The circle has a special colour-shifting film, dichroic film, which creates a beautiful experience in the space. The installation is inspired by the orbital path of the Earth around the Sun and while it is spinning the day is either beginning or ending depending on where you are situated, creating the daily ‘boring’ routine of opening and closing curtains. It is an experience that is best to have in person, as with all of the exhibitions which are very playful.”

Þórdís expresses anticipation both for the exhibition itself, and how attendees will react.

“I enjoy creating a new experience for the viewer,” she says. “Every time I set up an exhibition it allows me to experiment with the materials I use in new ways and that is always exciting.”
April 24th — March 3rd

Exhibitions

For complete listings and detailed information on venues, visit grapevine.is/happening
Send your listings to: events@grapevine.is

Opening

GALLERY FOLD
Motion Picture—Dream of Forgotten Dreams
French artist Anne Herzog works in the media of painting, drawing, photography and film, as well as expressing her ideas through performance. For a couple of decades now she has continued to respond to her childhood memories, her experience of Þórshöfn, drawn to the glacier-capped volcano as a source of inspiration. This exhibition brings together the works in a unique area through a range of visual media, but in this exhibition, paintings and videos are prominent.

- Opens on February 17th
- Runs until February 18th

Ongoing

GARDARSA KÍPAVDURS ART MUSEUM
Ad Ínfinnitum
Icelandic artis Bláinn Hafstein and Ólafur Hákonarson worked in both Berlin and New York. Their unique art work has come together to create this installation exploring the borders between the art worlds of the two cities, and that which we hear Blaín’s approach is to create challenging immersive visuals, while Ólafur’s specialism in audio creation leads him to create sounds specific to the space.

- Runs until March 27th
- Past Perfect
Although he now lives in Sweden and was educated in the US, artist Santiago Montoya grew up in Zimba- bwe and Trinidad and Tobago. This exhibition of photography and video media explores that experience, employing footage of historical events, politicians and cultural figures. Past Perfect is a landscape where stories of colonialism, slavery, legacies and personal experience converge.

- Runs until March 27th

HAFNARFÓRB CULTURE CENTRE AND FIRE ARTS
A Few Thoughts on Photography — Vol. III
Photographer Hallgrímur Hall- grímsson explores how taking a photograph can seem simple—“just the push of a button” —making the resulting images almost an objet trouvé rather than a creation. But creative it is; mysterious and emotional, with aesthetics and instincts coming into play. And yet, at the same time, the process of photography is decidedly rooted in the scientific.

- Runs until March 2022

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART
Bathing Culture
The outdoor geothermal pool is the most interesting public sphere in Iceland. The pool is to strangers across paths and acquaintances, meeting, it is a source of wellbeing for major part of everyday life for many. This exhibition traces the development of Icelandic bathing culture, showing how architects and designers, pool staff and the public have together shaped the story.

- Runs until September 25th

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND
Gudmundur Thorsteinsson led a full life, though it was cut short by tuberculosis. This exhibition presents work from this work, created under his artist name Muggur, including scenes from his global travels, images of a merchant ship that ran aground during a storm, capturing the beauty of nature, and Muggur’s fantasy worlds where princesSES live in castles and trolaks lurk.

- Runs until February 13th

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

REYKJAVÍK CITY MUSEUM
Settlement Exhibition
This permanent exhibition — where Vikings meet digital technology — provides insight into Reykjavík’s farms at the time of the first settlement. Archaeological remains uncovered on site dating back to 871 AD surround you.

HAFNARFÓRB CULTURE CENTRE AND FIRE ARTS
Long Are The Trials Of Men
Icelandic artist Hallgrímsdóttir was a photographer and writer, his creative and nothing hap- pened without a cause. The name Iñar- narsafn is a translation of “touching the soul” and evokes a sense of action and reaction, of creating involu- tionary movement by inciting electrical impulses. Ásgerður graduated with a BA in art from the Gerrit Rietveld Academ in Amsterdam in 2016, and went on to exhibit her work in Iceland and abroad. This show is part of the museum’s D46 series, in which influential emerging artists are invited to hold a first solo ex- hibition in a public museum.

- Stræmslu
Until March 1st — Hverfisgata 18

Björn lights are the primary me- dium and means of presentation in this exhibition by The Icelandic Love Con- temporary Photographers, an exhibit- tion which is part of the aforementioned Hópsla. Lights are often very interesting of paint prints.

- Saída
Until March 1st — Börðóer 111

Hverfisgata 18

Birgir Andrésson was a leading light As Far As The Eye Can See
As a pioneer in Icelandic sculpture, and in this exhibition Carl presents the works of Ásmundur.

- Reykjavík Art Museum — KJARVALSSTA
dal

Bathing Earth
Carl Boutard Ásmundur describes himself as a “traditional sculptor”, due to his focus on material and form. The late Ásmundur Swinson was a pioneer in Icelandic sculpture, and in this exhibition Carl presents selected works produced with those of Ásmundur.

- Runs until February 12th

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM — HAFNARFÓRB Erro The Traveller
Guðmundur Guðmundsson—ubiqui- tously known as Erro—has arguably the highest international profile of any Icelandic visual artist. His activities have taken him all around the world. This exhibition —selected from work that he has donated to the Reykjavík Art Museum— is curated around a travel theme.

- Runs until March 27th

ÁRBAER
And In This Exhibition
The Magic Of Contemporary Art
This exhibition aims to open the world of contemporary art up to a new generation. The titular magic word links magic and art in the wonder that both can combine in children and young people.

- Runs until March 20th

CULTURE HOUSE
Treasures Of F&B Nation
The Culture House was built in 1919, and was first purpose-built gal- lery in Iceland. Towering above the surrounding town at the time, it was a popular spot to take in the natural views which have inspired local art- ists for centuries. This exhibit brings together a selection of paintings from the National Gallery, all inspired by Iceland and created from 1970 onwards.

- Runs until May 31st

BIRKS CONTEMPORARY
About Time — Diary of Twenty Months
Icelandic artist Einar Falu Ingolfs- son’s artist book, About Time with Mongunblad, Iceland’s biggest daily newspaper. Flow a creative photographer and writer, his cre- ative weapon of choice is still his large format camera. This exhibition showcases a visual diary that he tended over twenty months, ending in the spring that the pandemic came to stay. This collection’s striking images were taken during Einar’s travels to Varanasi, Rome and Egypt. back when travel was “a thing”.

- Runs until February 26th

GALLERY DÝRRAupp
 fy Spåk artists Jóhanna V. Hallírmundsdóttir and Hrínn Björnsmóðir used to run Artanica Art on Kýpungavogur together, but these days they focus more on creating and exhibiting their own work. This collection of se- pressionist paintings are presented through a range of mixed media, and were all produced over the last couple of years.

- Runs until February 12th

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM—KJARVALSSTA
dal

Budding Earth
Carl Boutard Ásmundur describes himself as a “traditional sculptor”, due to his focus on material and form. The late Ásmundur Swinson was a pioneer in Icelandic sculpture, and in this exhibition Carl presents selected works produced with those of Ásmundur.

- Runs until February 12th

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM — HAFNARFÓRB Ólafur Elíasson
As Far As The Eye Can See
Birgir Andrésson was a leading light in Icelandic art until his untimely death in 2011. His influence remains visible from all aspects of Icelandic life, legend and culture, he presented them in a unique and informed way, draw- ing admiration from both local and international art communities. This retrospective brings together more than a hundred of his works, includ- ing some from international and private collections.

- Runs until May 15th

HVERFISGALLERI
Reconstruction
Following a devastating avalanche in Þórshöfn, artist Harfíggur Sigurðursson saw opportunity among the damage. Nature might smash lives, but perhaps it’s the role of art to put them back together. Perhaps once our reality becomes too identified, categorized and analysed, art is the only way to reassemble it.

- Runs until February 12th

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND
Iceland As You Like It
This expansive exhibition extends across two halls of the National Bal- letry, and features some 41 photo- graphic artists. The work on show spans the time between the 1970s and the present day, and focuses on demonstrating the diverse use of photography as a creative medium. The exhibition also reflects the positive attitudes to photography as a creative medium, based on the inherent nature of the process as one of mechanical reproduction.

- Runs until May 8th

THE LIVING ART MUSEUM
Conversation To The Self
And In This Exhibition
The Magic Of Contemporary Art
This exhibition aims to open the world of contemporary art up to a new generation. The titular magic word links magic and art in the wonder that both can combine in children and young people.

- Runs until March 20th

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART
GARDARÍÓS 1 — 210 GARðABÆS

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The Reykjavik Grapevine
Issue 02 — 2022

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Icelanders have fallen for Verbúðin hook, line and sinker. Words: Josie Gaitens Video stills: RÚV

In the post-terrestrial TV world, with myriad streaming options (does anyone else feel like they spend more time on the netflix homepage with decision anxiety than actually watching shows?), it takes something special to cut through to viewers. And sometimes it’s the most unsuspecting stories that end up generating the biggest following. Co-writer and creator of “Verbúðín”, Björn Hlynur Haraldsson, knows that acutely:

“Who would have thought that we would be so into a story about a chemistry teacher who was dying of cancer and wanted to make money for his family, or a major nuclear plant disaster in the Soviet Union?” he points out. And yet the premise of Verbúðin – in which Björn also plays one of the main characters – goes a step beyond both Breaking Bad and Chernobyl into even more unlikely territory. You see, it’s about fishing quotas.

Fact and fiction

Except of course, it’s not. It’s really about people, Iceland, small towns, big dreams, greed, loyalty, morality and how equally awful and amazing the 80s were. But fishing quotas form a backdrop to these very human narratives, and according to Björn, that’s for good reason. “I mean, it’s one of the big stories of this country,” Björn says, seriously. “We are always looking for stories like this, asking ourselves, ‘What should we be saying?’”

But delving into recent history, especially regarding political decisions that remain contentious to this day, also presents challenges. Björn is quick to remind us that Verbúðín (or Blackport, as it’s called in English) is “not a documentary.” Nevertheless, some critics have called out what they see as historical inaccuracies within the show. Björn however, takes this lightly: “Icelanders, we’re really hung up on facts; ‘this wasn’t here until 1984’ and so on. So we’re kind of teasing people by being a bit off sometimes. People have to put their focus on the main story, what this is all about, rather than ‘this car isn’t right!’ But it’s a very Icelandic thing,” he says, with a wry smile.

Acceptable in the 80s

One of the best things about the show, in fact, is its representation of the era. Regardless of whether or not every song played fits the timeline accurately, the overall look, sound and sensation is spot on. Björn explains that part of the reason he felt so connected to the idea of the show was because he himself was a teenager during the 80s, and he talks passionately about the experience of recreating this period for viewers: “When we were growing up, Reykjavík was more like a small town in the Soviet Union than anything else,” he says. “It all changed in the 80s. There was more freedom in media, everything was opening up to popular music and television and radio. I don’t want to call it a cultural revolution, but suddenly the American president was here. We could drink beer! And politically as well, with the privatisation of companies... It was just a really big decade.”

“We don’t want to preach.”

Of course it’s not just the pop culture of Iceland in the 80s that’s on display in Verbúðín, but also the politics. And this is an area where Björn and his co-creators made sure to tread carefully. “We never set out to say, ‘We are left-wing artists from the capital, look at how horrible these people who own all the quota.’” Björn explains. “Our intention is just to shine a light and say, ‘this is how this happened.’ We don’t want to preach.”

And finally, for those who have binged all of Verbúðín so far and are eagerly hoping for more, there is hope: “We always said we had enough ideas for two more seasons,” says candidly, before adding, with a laugh, “We have a few more decades to catch up with.”
"At the end of the day, innovation in traditional music is inherently anarchist"

Traditional Values

Kvæðakórinn are reimagining Icelandic folk music for a new generation

Linus Órrí describes himself as a reluctant conductor. He had been singing with and teaching traditional songs to friends for a long time, but when it was suggested that they turn what they were doing into a formal group, he initially resisted the idea.

"Eventually Elsa [Jónsdóttir, founding member] told me, ‘If you’re not going to be the conductor, I’m just going to find someone else to be the conductor.’ And then I was like, ‘Okay, fine. I’ll do it. I couldn’t bear the idea of someone else being the pioneer.’"

The group in question is Kvæðakórinn, a new collective predominantly composed of young artists, who gather to learn and perform traditional Icelandic Kvæði, a form of folk singing unique to the country. Alongside Linus, the founding members of the group are the aforementioned Elsa, and Björn Loki Björnsson, otherwise known as the artistic duo Krot & Krass. The pair became interested in learning Kvæði through their work with another traditional Icelandic art form, Húfðafélag, an idiosyncratic variety of typography strongly associated with hand carving. Attracted by the similarities and equivalences of their artistic practice, Linus, Loki and Elsa began to meet regularly to sing, encouraging other friends to join them.

Defining Tradition

Icelandic folk music is a somewhat confusing landscape. The word ‘Kvæði’ can refer to both the poetic and the singing or chanting traditions, built on a structure of very specific rules regarding metre, rhyme and alliteration. Even Linus struggles to give a specific definition when I ask him.

"Eventually Elsa [Jónsdóttir, founding member] told me, ‘If you’re not going to be the conductor, I’m just going to find someone else to be the conductor.’ And then I was like, ‘Okay, fine. I’ll do it. I couldn’t bear the idea of someone else being the pioneer.’"

Kvæði, and the similar tradition of rímur, are no longer a major part of Icelandic society. Bar a few examples that are taught in primary schools, the singing of Kvæði these days is generally confined to specialist groups, typically made up of older individuals, who seek to catalogue and preserve these artefacts of heritage. "Part of the reason why these words are unclear and awkward is because there has not been a strong tradition in modern times," Linus explains. This is something that he and the other members of Kvæðakórinn are hoping to change, but doing so involves breaking a few barriers on the way. This, it turns out, was the source of Linus’s reluctance.

"The Kvæði tradition is very much a solo tradition," he elaborates. "There are parts of it that are for group singing, but it’s a very small part—a handful of songs. If you were to get a group together to learn that part of the canon, you would run out of songs almost immediately."

An alternate reality

Instead Linus was forced to consider the practice from a completely different standpoint, in order to be able to arrange the poems and melodies in a way that made sense for group singing. "I had to conduct a kind of thought experiment, imagining a reality where Kvæði had been a mainstay of Icelandic culture in the last century. From there he tried to consider what the tradition would sound like now if it had existed alongside, and interacted with, other genres."

To be able to make this choir work I’ve had to come up with ways of progressing and protecting the act of Kvæði singing. "This form, the combination of this tradition and a choir-style group, doesn’t exist. So doing it definitely requires some innovation, which could be seen as breaking the rules." Linus tells me, clearly choosing his words carefully. But ultimately he is resolute, firmly casting off his prior reluctance. "At the end of the day, innovation in traditional music is inherently anarchistic. In a year’s time I hope we have proven the concept."

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Egill Logi Jónasson has been raising some eyebrows under his artist name, Drengurinn Fengurinn (the boy, the catch) fusing high art and indie aspirations. His album, “Geimtíkur dauðans” just came out and can be found on Spotify. He walked us through the offering track by track:

This album was made while I was on Christmas break from work. I wanted to make an album that was easy to perform live without a computer. So I minimised the studio wizardry. I made heavy use of the guitar I had recently built which is in a Sonic Youth-esque tuning because I want to be like Thurston Moore (who I find immensely cool).

The title of the album in English would be Space Bitches (as in female dogs) in Death, a reference to one of my favourite songs by the band S.H. Draumur.

1. Blikk
   This is the first song I wrote and recorded for the album. It was on my first day of Christmas break and spirits were high. It’s about a blinking satellite.

2. Apamaðurinn
   It’s the beginning of the Monkey Man saga. The Monkey Man is half-man, half-monkey and kills people because he’s no good. I did some excellent bongo drum playing on this track.

3. Hún á góðan bíl
   It’s about a woman who has a nice car. I recently learned how to drive but I’m not very good at it and I prefer being a passenger. The car in question is very spacious which is nice for me because I’m rather tall (like Thurston Moore).

4. Postulínsbadboy
   This track is about a bad boy who is protecting his heart from breaking because it’s made of porcelain and porcelain is prone to breakage.

5. Hlýja
   My father taught me not to leave the doors open for long because then the radiators would go haywire. This song’s title means “Warmth” and is about that.

6. Skjalatoskublúshús
   I once went to a blues concert and all the lyrics were about packing a suitcase and leaving and then there were some guitar solos.

7. Bar Avion
   The title is a homage to this song “Par Avion” by FM Belfast. I just recently discovered how amazing this band is. I never really could listen to them because I was a very angsty teenager and their happy and joyful approach to life made my angst unbearable.

8. Vinna minna
   I think people work too much, especially me. Less work equals less unhappiness.

9. Apamaðurinn II
   Is a continuation of the Monkey Man saga. I don’t want to go too deep into it because it would spoil the plot.

10. Þú þurftir enga ástæðu
    This is the grand finale of the album. It’s about the sweet release of death.

If cats had eyebrows, this one’s would be raised.
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  - Fish of the day: 1,990 ISK
- **Cafe Set**
  - Every day: 11:00 - 14:30
  - Two-course lunch: 2,290 ISK
- **Sólon**
  - Monday - Friday: 11:00 - 14:30
  - Fisherman’s fish: 3,590 ISK

**1,500 ISK And Under**

- **Hambugersbíó**
  - Every day: 11:00 - 14:30
  - Fish & chips: 1,790 ISK
- **Jokulsaron**
  - Every day: 11:00 - 14:30
  - Chicken & chips: 2,290 ISK
- **Maxim’s**
  - Every day: 11:00 - 14:30
  - Two-course lunch: 1,990 ISK
- **Sam**
  - Every day: 11:00 - 14:30
  - Chicken & chips: 1,790 ISK
- **Sóló Bar**
  - Every day: 11:00 - 14:00
  - Fish & chips: 1,790 ISK

**2,000 ISK And Under**

- **Stefán**
  - Every day: 11:00 - 14:30
  - Two-course lunch: 2,990 ISK

**Cheap Food**

- **Birki**
  - All day, every day
  - Bread & cheese: 1,000 ISK
- **Gló**
  - All day, every day
  - Bowl of the month: 1,290 ISK
  - Vegan option: 1,090 ISK
- **Shalmar**
  - Monday - Friday: 12:00 - 14:30
  - Curry: 1,190 ISK
  - Vegan option: 1,090 ISK
- **Sams**
  - Every day: 15:00 - 18:00
  - Chicken wings: 1,190 ISK

**FEATURED DRINKING HOLE**

**The Laundromat Café**

20:00 - 22:00 EVERY DAY

BEER 690
WINE 1,000
AUGUST 2022

Need to clean your clothes, but don’t have a washing machine? We’ll help you out. Start with a wash, then get your drinks and buy one. But also, you’re in luck! The Laundromat Café is in the middle of downtown, and offers everything from laundry machines to tasty food to cheap beer. Even better, their happy hour takes place at a time when you actually want to get drunk, i.e. between 20:00 and 22:00. Which, coincidentally, is exactly the amount of time it takes to wash your clothes and get slightly tipsy. Then you only have to have four more beers while waiting out the dryer cycle.

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**The Reykjavík Grapevine**

**Issue 02 – 2022**

**IF YOU’RE LOOKING FOR THE REAL REYKJAVÍK**

From urban chic to simple & snug, each hotel offers something a little different.

**A selection from Every Happy Hour in 101 Reykjavík**

**Get the complete Happy Hour listings!**

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

**Icelandic Delicacies**

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

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

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

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

**SKYR ETON MESS CHEESECAKE**
White chocolate “Skyr” mousse, meringue, raspberries, cucumber, rucola, smoked cheese, fries

**Happy Hour 15-17 every day**

FJALLKONAN WELCOMES YOU!
Iceland; a burdensome hurdle for the coming generations.

“It could be a little embarrassing, people were either writing ‘in Laxness’s shadow’ or despising him like Guðbergur Bergsson did. For me, both stances were wrong,” Hallgrímur admits. “Like some overtly stupid troll child, I went straight for the holiest shrine. My first published text was a lampoon version of 19th Century Jónas Hallgrímsson’s ‘Ferðalok’, considered to be the most beautiful poem written in Icelandic. And this also got approved! This time around approval came from the most serious poet in the country, Sigfús Daðason, which meant a lot to me, of course. So I was off to a good start, but what followed were 15 years of wandering outside the literary establishment until I felt accepted. But all this time I was totally drunk with the language, the Sagas, Jónas Hallgrímsson, Laxness… Icelandic was like a shrine. My first published text was a lampoon version of 19th Century Jónas Hallgrímsson’s ‘Ferðalok’, considered to be the most beautiful poem written in Icelandic. And this also got approved! This time around approval came from the most serious poet in the country, Sigfús Daðason, which meant a lot to me, of course. So I was off to a good start, but what followed were 15 years of wandering outside the literary establishment until I felt accepted. But all this time I was totally drunk with the language, the Sagas, Jónas Hallgrímsson, Laxness… Icelandic was like a shrine. My first published text was a lampoon version of 19th Century Jónas Hallgrímsson’s ‘Ferðalok’, considered to be the most beautiful poem written in Icelandic. And this also got approved! This time around approval came from the most serious poet in the country, Sigfús Daðason, which meant a lot to me, of course. So I was off to a good start, but what followed were 15 years of wandering outside the literary establishment until I felt accepted. But all this time I was totally drunk with the language, the Sagas, Jónas Hallgrímsson, Laxness… Icelandic was like a shrine.

Rough journey

The road to becoming a professional author was not a smooth one for Hallgrímur. It wasn’t until after he published his fourth novel that he became an accepted figure, and tapped into the Icelandic writers’ subsidy system. He felt like his books didn’t fit into the general vibe when it came to Icelandic fiction. It’s hard to realise why today, but his playful and often humorously careless writing was provocative within the traditional literary atmosphere of the time. But, as is often the case when it comes to Iceland, Hallgrímur’s recognition ultimately came from abroad. He was nominated for the Nordic Council Prize for his widely known book, no Reykjavík, a hilariously playful fusion of Hamlet and a side plot of a French movie, Hallgrímur saw once. The novel captures the unique atmosphere of Reykjavik’s famous central district, too. It felt like a call to arms for a new generation. Finally, a voice that young people could relate to, and—perhaps more importantly—a voice that broke something important within the holiness of Icelandic literature.

Modern settings

knocking on the door

But what’s next for this heavily awarded author who has captivated the hearts of Icelandic readers? Hallgrímur obviously needs to finish his Sixty Kilo books, but then what?

“Well, truth to be told, the present is calling to me. It’s such a wild time and there is a modern fiction knocking on the door, a story that might happen in Reykjavik. I’m still waiting to get to the age of writing these small meaningful novels like a proper elite member of Icelandic culture, but I’m just not there yet. First, I have to finish the story of ‘Segulfrúður’ [The world of the Sixty Kilo books].”

He adds that he sometimes feels like he’s losing touch with the modern world. “It feels like a complicated reality that people are facing today, and then add TikTok and Snapchat to it. I’m just trying to keep up with the times before it’s too late,” he says.

“Since I finished recording the “Sixti kíló af kjaftshöggum” audiobook, I have been busy painting. I’m working on a series of self-portraits, if you can say so, for they are not traditional portraits of the artist’s face, but rather his manifold character. I break myself up and paint all the elements I can find in my soul, using improvisation and working totally subconsciously, unprepared that is.

“I’m very excited about this idea. Most of the works are titled ‘Sixfjöld Self-portraits’, sometimes even ‘Sevenfold’. They show six or seven different figures, all parts of myself, my soul as a rock band: One might be a flashy guy fishing for attention, another the introvert reading guy, yet another a girl in a fancy dress, or a grinning gossipsmonger, a clownish két or a frustrated painter gnashing his teeth.

“I put all those paintings on Instagram, on my visual artist account, @hallgrimur.artist, and lately some of them have gone viral in the USA, much to my surprise, like the one with ‘The Ghost of Laxness’. So maybe it means that I have finally managed to bridge the canyon that opened up for me in New York City back in the 80s!”

There is a bit of truth in that, but at the same time, Hallgrímur has proven many times to be a writer that doesn’t always follow the traditional path. And there is nothing traditional about these modern times.

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Gunnar Karl Gíslason knows a thing or two about running restaurants amidst upheavals. Chef-owner of Iceland’s only Michelin-starred restaurant Dill, the force behind New York’s now-closed Agern, which garnered a coveted three-star rating by New York Times, and the author of “North: The New Northern Cuisine of Iceland”, Gunnar has lived many lives by restaurant standards and continues to forge paths anew.

I spoke to Gunnar in November 2019 as he was reopening Dill or Dill 3.0 as I called it then. He’d moved back to Reykjavik after a successful stint in New York, Dill had moved locations, revamped its menu and wine programme — no traditional wine pairing was in place. Little did we know that we would be thrown into a pandemic that would change everything just a month later, and which we are still reeling from.

I’m not freaking out, but…

One wouldn’t guess what a rough ride the pandemic has charted for the restaurant industry going by Gunnar’s sunny disposition. The man always seems cheerful and his soft-spoken demeanour belies his stature both physically and professionally. It’s late December when we meet for a drink and he smiles, “It seems like tourists are still coming, our bookings for January are good, so I am not freaking out.”

That ominous parting came true a few weeks later with Iceland rising Omicron numbers setting new case records almost every day. January has felt like a whole year already and restrictions are now being lifted and life is resuming some normalcy.

I sat down for a long-overdue chat with Gunnar. Dill has ridden that pandemic wave with elan, retained its Michelin star, the chef has been quite the attraction at Sweden’s Stars du Nord food festival and he has plenty of projects, culinary and otherwise, lined up for the year.

January was fine

While we wait for our Campari sodas at our mutual favourite spot, La Primavera, Gunnar muses about...
the year that was. “It is hard for anyone to be living like this,” he says softly, “when you don’t know how the next week will be if there will be even harsher restrictions. Even less seating? It was bad for me as a business owner but it’s hard for my staff too. I mean, they don’t know what’s coming either. ”

But January did turn out to be alright, thanks to the return of the tourists and relaxed restrictions. There are already predictions that Iceland will see at least a million visitors this year—welcome news for everyone in the travel and hospitality sector. The aftermath of a global pandemic, however, are more than a ripple, with deep undercurrents. I ask the chef how they adapted over the course of the year. “Menu wise, we had to make it shorter as the opening hours were shorter, ” he pauses as he recollects. “Then you have to make it cheaper as well. At the same time, you cannot work on new plates and be experimenting as you’d like. ”

“It’s not always exciting,” he admits. “Because you want to be working on new things, exploring. ”

Sustainability

While Dill has always been ahead of its time in terms of sustainability, the pandemic seems to have unleashed a whole new set of challenges. “The thing that nobody thinks about is that to be less wasteful costs a lot, ” Gunnar discloses. “It’s easier to throw something in the bin, but to make something out of it costs more. Not just to pick it, process it, ferment it, etc, that’s not it though. You need someone to do something with that, there is creativity there, value there. To turn waste into something useful isn’t straightforward. ”

A creative year

A kitchen that doesn’t throw away any scraps — the intensely heady broth at Dill made from kitchen scraps is proof of the depth of flavour that abounds in the bits and bobs. “We’ve even sold soups to other restaurants! ” Gunnar laughs. “Also, things like pickles, and other things, we’ve managed to sell or give to other places. ”

Even the front of house waste is on the back of Gunnar’s mind. Having collected two years worth of candle stubs from the dining room, he took them to the Fischersund duo who will now reuse them with oils and extracts to make signature candles for the restaurant. The chef is also a consulting chef for The Edition Reykjavik, a project that was in the pipelines for almost a decade, now coming to fruition. Besides the culinary jaunts, a TV show with his friend Dóri DNA where they travel across Iceland is slated for an early summer release on RÚV. “I am really looking forward to it, ” Gunnar grins. As I walk away, I find myself touched by his optimism and enthusiasm in these normal-not-normal times and find that joy is always waiting to be found in that next bite.
Travel

Cathedral Of Ice

Langjökull’s newest natural glacial cave

Words & Photos: John Pearson

Tour duration from Reykjavík: 12 hours
Car provided by: gocarrental.is
Tour provided by: amazingtours.is

Support the Grapevine! Tour provided by: Phone camera to visit our view this QR code in your phone camera to visit our tour booking site.

Joyfully trudging onwards

You’ll probably never need to consider quite how heavy a snowmobile is until you roll one over on a glacier, and have to right it yourself. (About 200kg, since you ask.)

My “incident” happened at a snail’s pace as I—a complete newbie to driving one of these powerful beasts—tried to make a tight turn on a slight incline, and failed to lean up-slope as I had been instructed by glacier guide Stefán. The beast toppled, slowly and elegantly, and I simply hopped off it unharmed.

My biggest concern was that my Grapevine colleagues, who had stopped a few hundred metres behind, had spotted my faux pas. They had, of course, and Stefán had clearly seen this kind of customer clumsiness before, too. As he rode back to check in with me and continue leading our group across the Langjökull glacier, he put my ham-fisted handling to shame by deliberately leaning his own beast over my ham-fisted handling to shame by deliberately leaning his own beast over the hard work of each individual. But the landscape took my mind off the exertion, and my breath away.

Into the white

Our destination was the Amazing Crystal Ice Cave, a huge chasm that appeared on the east side of the glacier last year. It was discovered last September by Stefán and a cave-hunting team put together by Amazing Tours and Sleipnir Tours, who scour Langjökull every autumn for these naturally-forming wonders. Jón Kristján Jónsson, boss of Amazing Tours and a glacier professional with decades of experience, says that—with the main chamber at about 32m high and 10m wide—it’s the biggest ice cave he has ever seen.

To check it out, Team Grapevine received a briefing on how to handle our snowmobiles, pulled on the crampons provided and started the short hike to the ice cave. Although beautiful, the freshly fallen powder made the going tough, and I was glad to stop every once in a while to admire the cascading ice spikes of small frozen water flows. The cave entrance was marked by a whirring generator to power the lights inside, and as I descended the roughly-hewn ice steps, the majesty of the space below became apparent.

The cave has a balcony from which you can view its full extent, but the best experience is to be had by climbing to the lower level. There are ropes installed in the ice wall, and expert guides who position themselves under you and tell you where to put your feet as you go up or down. However, this activity is not for the faint-hearted, nor anyone with mobility issues. It’s also not something that you can assume will be included in a tour; the guides on site will assess the suitability of lower-level access for each individual.

After a tricky climb down the ice wall I carefully traversed the sloping lower floor, where glacial water flowed to make the slippery surface just that little bit more hazardous. Then another strenuous, sweaty ice wall climb back up took me to a platform where nature had thoughtfully sculpted some seats of solid ice, offering rest to those who had made the effort.

Eventually, as we slowly crossed the lower floor again to leave the cave, I stopped and gazed up into the glittering ceiling of translucent whites and blues. I was in awe of this incredible natural phenomenon, and relieved not something that you can assume will be included in a tour; the guides on site will assess the suitability of lower-level access for each individual.

Going deep

The nature has sculpted a stunning cathedral of ice within the glacier. The frozen water extends above, below and all around, reflecting and refracting the floodlights and revealing a multitude of hues of blue. It’s surprisingly warm inside the cave. The temperature hovers steadily near freezing regardless of the outside temperature, and after the journey’s exertions in windy sub-zero temperatures I needed to shed some layers once inside.

Private tours are carefully scheduled between the larger groups, allowing for a more relaxed time within the cave. We spent more than an hour there, as did one adventurous American couple who were keen to get married—wedding dress, tuxedo and all—in the most stunning ecclesiastical space you can imagine that isn’t actually a church.

“The frozen water extends above, below and all around, reflecting and refracting the floodlights and revealing a multitude of hues of blue.”

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Eventually, as we slowly crossed the lower floor again to leave the cave, I stopped and gazed up into the glittering ceiling of translucent whites and blues. I was in awe of this incredible natural phenomenon, and relieved that I had managed the trip without once slipping and falling on my arse. Even if I had rolled a snowmobile.
Welcome, lovers! It’s February, aka lurrrrve month, and your favourite Grapevine mystics have dutifully donned our cupid costumes in order to romantically shoot you with arrows of adoration! Also, real arrows? Sorry, that probably hurt a lot. Anyway, while you wait for the ambulance to arrive, take the time to read on and discover which horoscope hottie you should try your luck with once you’re bandaged up.

**Aries**

If you honestly believe that you should pursue a romantic relationship with a co-worker, ask yourself this: are you ready to see this person every single working day, eight hours a day, when you’re at your most stressed and miserable? Not? Then maybe don’t pursue it. Or quit your job and then ask them out.

**Taurus**

Your approach to love-making has been described as being like ‘a bull in a china shop’, but luckily your partner is also a cow and adores breaking shit, so have at it, Taurus.

**Gemini**

A word to the wise: no matter how lonely you are, it’s always going to be better than installing Grindr. This app will not only exacerbate your loneliness, it will make you run to the nearest monastery and take a lifelong vow of celibacy, silence and vegetarianism.

**Cancer**

Bars have finally reopened and you’re making the most of it. Okay, so perhaps you’re a little too merry. After roaring at the DJ for not playing Careless Whisper on repeat, you escape to the bathroom for a tactical chunder. From the stall you escape to the bathroom for vomiting your phone number onto the partition. Your phone lights up immediately. Love at first puke.

**Leo**

Is it really a polyamory if you don’t use a spreadsheet to manage your free time?

**Virgo**

The most depressing thing about watching Veribbhin is confronting the fact that even people in the Westfjords are having more sex than you.

**Libra**

Are they flirting with you? Or are you just so used to any kind of positive feedback that even the most innocuous compliment seems like a romantic come-on?

**Scorpio**

We looked up the word ‘love’ in your dictionary and it wasn’t there because you’d torn the page out and eaten it and were subsequently laughing manically. What the fuck, Scorpio.

**Sagittarius**

Sapphic love is 90% arguing about who’s going to buy the other one dinner. The other 10% is eating snacks and watching Adventure Time together in bed.

**Capricorn**

Damn, Capricorn, have you been working out? Working out how to process your complex childhood trauma and operate in society as a fully functional adult, that is. Because if you haven’t, you really should.

**Aquarius**

This is your year to replace that dating app profile photo of you holding a fish, hitting the medal you got for finishing a marathon, or holding up the Leaning Tower of Pisa with… literally anything else. Holy crap, no wonder you’re single.

**Pisces**

There’s plenty more fish in the sea, and unfortunately you’re one of them. Get back in the water, loser.

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**HORROR-SCOPES**

Valentine’s Day

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine & Josie Galtens

**Aries**

Heard about some cowboys lassoing down their calves? Well, I’m telling you that’s not how you get a horse. You have to sit on it. Don’t try to get yourself out of this mess by throwing it at the wall. It will just get wallowed on again.

**Taurus**

It’s not my fault you’re an octopus. I was just trying to get you a cuddly toy and you just kept growing. If you’re not careful, you’ll find yourself in the same mess we’re all in right now. You’re going to need some help with that.

**Cancer**

You’re only interested in people who understand your unique penguin-language. That’s why you’re always fighting with the penguin force field. It’s going to get worse. So no hard feelings.

**Leo**

Is the monarchy worth it? I mean, yes. But just imagine if they could have been a colony under Danish rule. But truth is, we’re not so fond of Iceland’s time as a very strong relationship with Denmark and the other Nordic countries. But we don’t hate Danes. In fact, we have a very strong relationship with Denmark and the other Nordic countries. But we are not so fond of Iceland’s time as a colony under Danish rule. But truth is that the monarchy could have been worse. So no hard feelings.

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**COUNTRY SHOT** by John Pearson

Midwinter sun on Seltjarnarnes

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**HORNÍÐ Restaurant + Pizzeria**

Hornið opened in 1979 was the first restaurant of its kind in Iceland, a restaurant with a true Italian atmosphere. Hornið is known for good food made out of fresh raw materials, good pizzas baked in front of the guests, good coffee and comfortable service.

Lunch offers every day.
Open every day from 11:00 to 23:30
For reservations call 551-3340

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**WELL YOU ASKED**

**Cursing and the Goddamn Danes**

Words: Valur Brettisson

**Why do you swear on your YouTube channel? Can you please stop it? My kids are watching!**

Best, Arthur

Fuck you very much for the question Arthur. I appreciate the opportunity to explain myself. I’m guessing you’re American because no other country in the western world really gives a shit about swearing. So, stop that imperialist bullshit of forcing your ethics upon other cultures.

Icelanders curse pretty casually all the time, and it’s not considered. For example, we don’t ban cursing on TV or put those odd parental advisory stickers on our hip-hop albums. As children, we learn that swear words are just that: words. So they’re not really that excited, just another tool for expressing themselves. We also just teach our kids what’s appropriate when it comes to cursing. You know, parenting. It might be different in the US, but I doubt it. There is one country in Europe that shares the US view when it comes to swearing, and it’s Russia. They have banned all swearing in arts, films and TV. And they are totalitarians. So, good luck on that path.

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**Why do you hate the goddamn Danes?**

Best, Kate

We don’t hate Danes. In fact, we have a very strong relationship with Denmark and the other Nordic countries. But we are not so fond of Iceland’s time as a colony under Danish rule. But truth is that the monarchy could have been worse. So no hard feelings.

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**EXPLORE UNSEEN ICELAND**

ON THE ULTIMATE FLYING RIDE

**FlyOver ICELAND**

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Issue 02 — 2022
“We didn’t plan to make an album, but it seemed OK so we gave it away for free.”
Hugar recall the days before they realised that their music was good enough to sell. p18

“It was interesting to see the reactions of people who were expecting music to meditate to.”
Kasia Paluch blends progressive house, the sounds of nature and Icelandic folk. p19

“The courts are dominated by men who have already made up their minds not to believe survivors.”
Edda Falak discusses misogyny, hypocrisy and the inherent injustices of Icelandic justice. p8