

THE 

# REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

Issue 2 | 2022 | [www.gpv.is](http://www.gpv.is)



## The Personal Is Political

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

### Kælan Mikla

**Music:** The coolest goths are back and colder than ever

### Hvíla Sprungur

**Dance:** Photographer inspires choreographers

### Third Timer

**Books:** Hallgrímur Helgason breaks a literature record

### Ice Cave

**Travel:** We visit the newfound ice cave in Langjökull





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# First



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## The Power of Listening

**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 Grettiðsson**  
*Editor-in-chief*



**John Pearson**, the Grapevine's culture editor, is a Reykjavík resident with professional backgrounds in live music events, broadcasting, scuba diving, journalism, engineering and underwater photography. We suspect that he just likes to collect job titles. He is a big fan of puns, alliteration and lists that have three things in them.



**Art Bicnick**, 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 five-year-old dachshund mix with an IQ of a five-year-old human, Polly is Chief Morale Officer at the Grapevine, and a regular contributor to the Grapevine Newscast on YouTube. Woof!



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



**Helgi Harðarson** is well known as the brains and heart behind Grapevine's online store and newsletter. Fewer are aware that Helgi used 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 ads. 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 opining on Canadian politics (professionally), and bitching about Icelandic politics (for fun).



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

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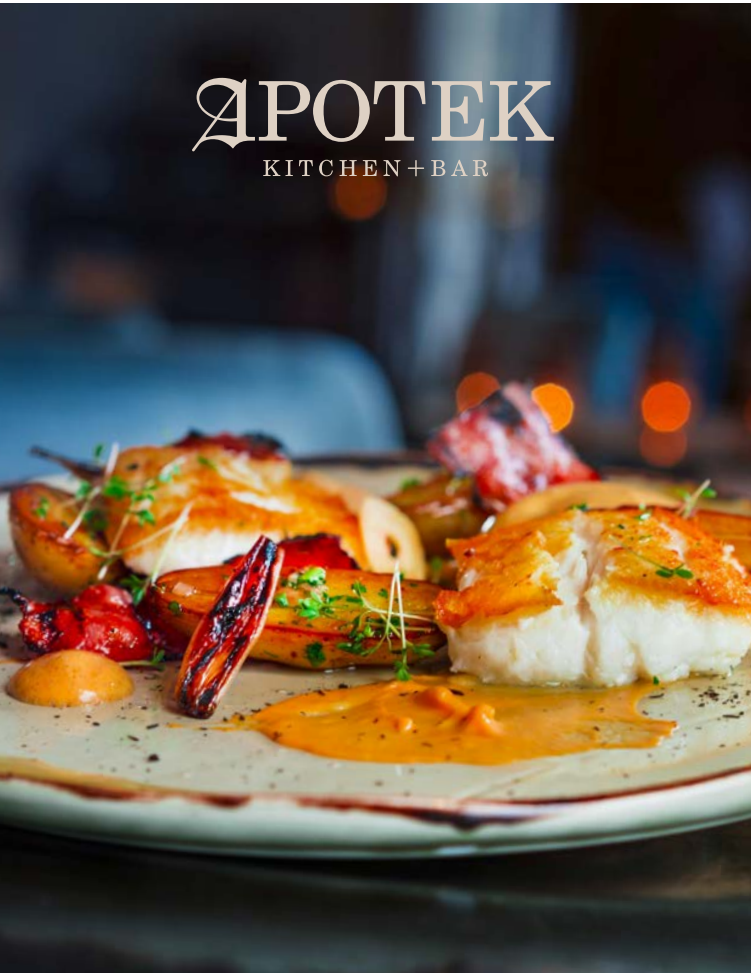


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## What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Headlines and bylines making waves

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos: **Art Bicnick** & **Anna Andersen**

**NEWS** Iceland's history as a Danish colony is back in the news, primarily because Pirate Party MP Björn Levi Gunnarsson 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—Iceland has been an independent republic since 1944, and its legislature 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 Danish in school to this day.

In less controversial news, the **story of a dog rescued from a mountainside after being missing for 20 days** has proven to be just the antidote for the torrent of bad news about the pandemic. Píla, the dog in question, went missing in the northwest town of Bolungarvík after she was fright-

ened off by fireworks on January 6th. Her owners were beside themselves with worry—that is, until the 26th, when someone believed they saw Píla far up on a mountain ridge. The rescue squad was deployed and brought Píla back to her owners, safe and sound and no worse for wear, despite her exposure to winter weather and gale-force winds.

**Pandemic restrictions were relaxed again.** We're now at the point where masks are required, there is some social distancing, quarantine has been mostly replaced with “if you think you got in contact with the virus, be careful around others” and public events are open with expanded atten-

dance capacity. These loosened regulations are apparently not loose enough for some people, as there have been regular outbreaks of small contingencies of **anti-vax, anti-mask and frankly anti-science** folks showing up in groups to complain about unspecified oppression and tyranny. The most cringe example of this was during the last weekend in January, when about **a dozen people dressed in black and wearing V for Vendetta masks** showed up at Kringlan. Police promptly ushered them out of the building, the irony of wearing masks to protests masks apparently lost on these folks.

Finally, Íslandsbanki is forecasting that **about a million tourists will visit Iceland in 2022**. A lot of this will depend on vaccination and Omicron rates in other countries, but as things stand now, the next few years should see tourism make a comeback as Iceland's primary financial engine. 🍷



Monarchists DNI



Published by  
Fröken ehf.  
Hafnarstræti 15,  
101 Reykjavík  
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[grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

Member of the  
Icelandic Travel  
Industry Association  
[www.saf.is](http://www.saf.is)

Printed by Landsprent  
ehf.

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month by Fröken Ltd.  
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One of SÁÁ's locations

# Shake-Up At Addiction Centre Following Scandal

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

**Words:** The now-former director of the National Center of Addiction Medicine (SÁÁ), Einar Hermannsson, resigned from his position late January after admitting he had responded to an ad and paid for the services of a sex worker.

**Photo:** ja.is

However, the sex worker in question reached out to Stundin to dispute Einar's story. Sharing screenshots of her message history with Einar, she stated that she did not advertise being

a sex worker, but had engaged in the practice through a dating site that anonymises users. Einar apparently learned of her through word of mouth, and contacted her through a page she created on Facebook.

## Whether the Directorate of Health knew

Most damning of all is that the woman in question told reporters she had

started sex work specifically to fund her drug addiction at the time, and would later become a client of SÁÁ. When she raised the issue with leadership at SÁÁ, where Einar was at the time a member of the board, no action was taken.

Stundin also reports that the Directorate of Health was made aware of the matter in 2020. The Directorate, in response to questions from Visir, said that they had no prior knowledge of this case, and were not contacted about it, neither formally nor informally.

## "A case of immorality"

Women's welfare association The Root released a statement on the matter yesterday, in which they condemned Einar's behaviour.

"Einar's violation against the woman 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," the statement reads in part. "In this group are many of the country's marginalised people, and it is a case of immorality that has certainly affected Einar's work as chairman, despite his statement to the contrary. In few jobs do ethics have more value than in jobs for people with substance abuse problems and marginalised people." For their part, the board of SÁÁ has condemned Einar's behaviour. Þóra Kristín Ásgeirsdóttir, currently the spokesperson for deCODE, is campaigning for the SÁÁ directorship.

## ASK AN Expert

Q: How Are Ice Caves Formed?

Words: Josie Anne / Joaquín M.C. Belart  
Photo: Guðni Hannesson



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. Grapevine journalists even had a chance to visit one themselves for this issue. But how are ice caves actually formed? We reached out to Joaquín Belart, a postdoctoral glaciology researcher and Coordinator at the National Land Survey of Iceland, to explain all.

Glaciers contain networks of subglacial rivers that merge and unify into a main river when exiting the glacier. Ice caves are most commonly formed at the edge of the glacier, where the subglacial rivers melt the ice as they carve their way out. Other ice caves can be formed as vertical tunnels (also called "moulin") near the glacier margin. Moulin are created when a river runs over the surface of the glacier, and eventually sculpts its way into the glacier, creating a series of galleries. The glacier rivers reduce their flow drastically during the winter, leaving these caves nearly empty of water and making them easier to access. The colder temperatures also make the ice stiffer, which makes the ice caves more stable and safer to visit during the winter.

Ice caves in Iceland often have a unique feature: they contain tephra, or volcanic ash layers visible within the ice. These are the result of the country's various volcanic eruptions, and mark the date that the ash originally fell on top of the glacier. So if you see a black line running along the wall of an ice cave, you are looking directly at a piece of volcanic history.

## LOST IN GOOGLE TRANSLATION

# 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 Kate a hot dog at Bæjarins Beztu and Ed Sheeran played a concert that a staggering 14% of the population attended. But of all of the superstar tourists that Iceland can boast of, there's only one who we seem to have driven to the brink of absolute madness.

### Gettin' Jiggy Wit It

Enter Will Smith, or more accurately, this headline about him on the website of Icelandic newspaper Morgunblaðið. The article seems to claim that 'Big Willy' was so frustrated while filming his documentary 'Welcome To Earth' in Iceland that he went a bit feral, and ended up in an 'Icelandic swamp'. To make matters even more confusing, further into the column it's claimed that Mr. Smith actually published a video of himself 'fighting' the aforementioned swamp. All

of this raises a number of questions. Is the swamp sentient? Can it indeed be fought? Have we somehow witnessed a bizarre extraterrestrial interaction and are about to be neuralyzed by one of Agent J's Men In Black colleagues any sec-

### I, Translation Robot

Well, perhaps not. It turns out that this is less a case of alien invasion, and more some harmless robots messing up menial tasks for humans. Google translate took one look at the word 'mý', and decided that it was meant to say 'mýri', which translates to swamp. In reality 'mý' is short for 'mýflugur' -the annoying midge-like flies that are growing in numbers all over the country. While they do indeed congregate in marshy areas, it's good to know that Will was just trying to fight them, and not an entire wetland. JG

Travel | Domestic travel | mbl | 24.1.2022 | 20:00

## Will Smith irritated into the Icelandic swamp



Ferðalög | Ferðalög innanlands | mbl | 24.1.2022 | 20:00

## Will Smith pirraður út í íslenskt mý



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

HAFNARSTRÆTI  
101 REYKJAVÍK







# Njörður, The Husband With The Nice Feet

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

**Words:** Valur Grettisson  
**Image:** Wikimedia Commons

As odd as it may sound, unlike Greek mythology, Nordic mythology doesn’t have one single god representing the ocean. Rather, four figures are said to be gods or rulers of the ocean: Mímir, Ægir, Njörður and Nanna. Although Icelanders usually refer to Ægir when talking about the ocean, then he is not technically a god, but a giant. The only one that is actually a god/Æsir is Njörður (Nanna is also a goddess). Njörður is the god of wind and is responsible for one of the oldest sayings in Icelandic, “sá er galli á gjöf Njarðar” (the problem with Njörður’s gift). Nobody knows exactly what this means, but the best guess is it’s fish related because Njörður is also the god of wind. So, the problem with his gift is wind, and Icelanders hate the f#\$% wind.

**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 Jötunn Skaði enters the scene. She lived in the mountains of Þrymheimur, the home of Jötnar. She travelled on skis and hunted animals with her bow. But then tragedy hit.

**Prickly bastards**

Skaði’s father, Þjassi, was killed by the gods after Loki’s infamous heist of Iðunn, and Skaði was hell-bent on killing every last one of those pompous f\$%&ers of 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!

Skaði, for some reason, agreed to these weird terms and got busy examining the gods’ feet. One pair was particularly clean and nice, and Skaði 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 Skaði 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 Þrymheimur, 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 Þrymheimur. Finally, Skaði was fed up with this fine-footed loser. She demanded a divorce and ended up marrying a man fitting to her badass legend, the all-seeing god, Óðinn.

**Superpowers:**  
Controls the wind, has really nice feet.

**Weaknesses:**  
Can't sleep around howling wolves, can't silence the seagulls

**Modern Analogy:**  
The depressing film, Marriage Story

JUST SAYINGS

## Grass In Shoes? He's In Love With You



Catcher in the rye

Does the guy hitting on you have grass in his shoes? Odd, right? Rest assured, though, that he’s not utterly insane, but rather into you in a very old fashioned way. The saying ‘Að ganga á eftir einhverjum með grasið í skónum’ literally means, to walk after someone with your shoes filled with grass. And it means that the one that has the grass in its shoes is begging something of you or trying to win your heart. Now, it’s an unofficial secret that people actually did this some centuries ago, although no scholar really knows why. Some theories are that it was just a fashion at the time. Our theory is that it was to kill the smell of the sweaty feet. It doesn’t have to be complicated. Though describing rituals of the olden days, this saying is very common in modern Icelandic. VG

### NEW MUSIC PICKS



**Árný Margrét**  
“Akureyri”  
Acoustic guitar, voice, and the faintest of piano are the ingredients in this fragile number about the unravelling of love. Árný Margrét makes the bold choice of writing a song the chorus of which is almost indistinguishable from the verses, but the result is a poem set to the sparsest of music. It’s no surprise that the buzz around her is growing. ASF



**Salóme Katrín**  
“The Other Side”  
After an initial minute of plaintive guitar and fragile vocals, this track drops into a heavy rock explosion of joy, creating a juxtaposition that is liberating rather than jarring. This was apparently the intended effect, since Salóme Katrín describes the song as “a bedroom party, jumping on the bed singing into your hairbrush”. ASF



**Hugar**  
“Ævi”  
There’s no ‘new year, new me’ rhetoric from Hugar in this track from their latest album, ‘Rift’. Instead we gratefully receive five-and-a-half minutes of moody, atmospheric post-rock greatness. Lose yourself in the waves of sound, fantasising that you’re riding across the brutal Icelandic landscape on horseback. Or, in my case, imagining that I look super cool while doing my silly little yoga routine. JG

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Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine  
Photos: Ari Magg

# A Time To Listen

Podcaster and activist, Edda Falak, has given her platform to the voiceless, but she points out that the responsibility to change 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 powerful, Icelandic men being revealed to have crossed boundaries of consent with women, in particular, women who are younger and often of foreign origin. 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, numerous media outlets, (and the Grapevine is, admittedly, not an exception here), frame this as “another” wave of the #MeToo movement. The problem with this is it treats a systemic, ongoing problem of sexual violence—more often than not perpetrated by powerful men against younger, marginalised 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 Falak, an Icelandic woman who has found herself at the forefront of what is a continuous movement of marginalised people pushing back against patriarchal violence. 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 news, brought down CEOs, and sparked a long-overdue discussion of why sexual violence persists in the “feminist paradise” of Iceland, and what can be done to change it.

## Making use of a platform

“Before I started the podcast, I had newly finished coursework in Finance and Strategic Management in Copenhagen, 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 masculine worlds like finance and sports, talking about these things on social media. That ended up transforming into the podcast.”

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 followers 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 revolving around me all the time, to hear from others,” she says. “[Eigin Konur] started in connection with people who were working in production, and wanted to do this properly. I wanted to have a real influence in exacting change. Today, there's an advertising office helping me with all the graphics, video and sound and such.”

## The backlash, followed by listening

The beginnings of Eigin Konur were marked by a storm of responses—many of them positive, some of them negative, but all of them engaging with the content.

“I sort of jumped into the deep end talking about things that were causing a real buzz in society, like porn, OnlyFans, fatphobia and other things that people had strong opinions about and found uncomfortable to listen to,” Edda says. “So the first responses were very negative, but everyone was listening, everyone was watching, and everyone had an opinion. I worked on the things that I wanted to; 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. So while the response was at first negative, that changed rather quickly.”

Edda makes no claims to being an objective reporter on the subjects she covers, but at the same time, hearing from many different sides of an issue is deeply important to her.

“I definitely don't want to put forward a one-sided opinion, and be telling people what is 'right' and 'wrong,’” she emphasises. “It's built on the idea to discuss these subjects from the point of view of many different sides. That's the way it should be. That said, with every subject that I'm reporting on, I am obviously not neutral, rather I think these are things that matter to society. I also feel there is a social responsibility to listen to people who are speaking from their lived experience. That's what I think matters.”

## “Another revolution”

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

“We're always talking about a new 'revolution' [in the #MeToo movement], 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,” she says. “This is a prob-

lem. It shouldn't have to be some kind of revolution. There are some people saying 'this isn't political' but it most certainly is political. Because we need social changes to go into 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 Ísey,” she says, referring to how shortly after an interview she did with Vítalía Lazareva, who recounted harrowing details of being sexually abused by a group of men, Ísey's CEO, Ari Edwald, was fired swiftly. “Ari was fired 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—education in schools. The courts system isn't good enough, and we don't have recourse for survivors. The government isn't subsidising psychiatric services for survivors. We're lacking funding in recourse, both regarding perpetrators and survivors.”

## Trans women and foreign women

Edda is also, thankfully, very much aware of how some women—namely trans women, foreign women, and young women—are particularly vulnerable, experiencing intersections 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 see it abroad that 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.”

She adds: “When it comes to women of foreign origin, Icelandic men see themselves as above these women. Prejudice against women of foreign origin is based on them not being Icelandic; they don't have as much respect for those women. These are women who don't have as many connections in Icelandic society, don't know as many people, that no one will believe them because they're not Icelandic. All this.

Add to this being young. There's this outlook among young women that no one will believe you, you won't dare to talk about what happened to you, and if you do, no one will believe you. It's as if you don't matter as much.”

## The courts and the cops

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

“We're seeing more and more that women are standing together,” she says. “If there's a group of people standing together, it's a lot more difficult to oppose them. You're seeing the younger generation isn't letting the older generation get away with their shit. People aren't 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 they're not taking a stand, which exerts financial pressure on these companies.”

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 exists within the system,” she says. “It's often as if the court system is primarily dominated by white men who have maybe 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 the case is still dropped. 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 examine that. What is being asked? Why aren't they following up on these cases? What's in the interests of the police that prompts them to not examine this case, or that case? There's corruption and prejudice within the system, and we need to kick these people out.”

## The state bears responsibility

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 you,’” she says. “But it isn't our problem; it's their problem. So we clearly need to put the pressure on. It shows

# “It's often as if the court system is primarily dominated by white men who have maybe already made up their minds, and have already decided not to believe survivors”



who's really supporting survivors and who isn't.

"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 maybe represents a party that's in the government."

For one example, she refers again to her interview with Vítalía, 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.

## 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.

"We also see political parties using #MeToo and all that in their campaigns to get themselves voted into govern-

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 platforms 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.

"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

## 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 trau-

"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 Vítalía 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."

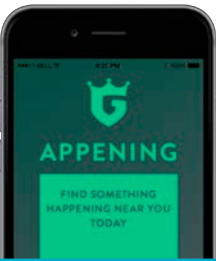
ment, and promise to pay down psychiatric services and speed up processing of sexual assault cases in the judicial system, and such," she points out. "But when they're voted into government, suddenly there's no money to pay down psychiatric services, nothing is done. This is just performative. We're 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."

Putting 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 loads of parties talking about this daily; not just the week before election day."

matic events of their lives. As always, since well before Eigin Konur was launched, Edda Falak wants them to know that she stands with them.

"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." ♥





## Sámi National Day Films

Film Screenings

February 6th - 16:00 to 20:00 - The Nordic House - Free (sign up online)

The Nordic House is celebrating Sámi National day on February 6th by screening a selection of films in collaboration with the International Sámi Film Institute. The afternoon will start with short films, followed by a screening of 'Eatnameamet—Our Silent Struggle', directed by indigenous filmmaker Siv West. The films shed light on the Sámi people's long fought battle against assimilation, colonisation and eradication. **JG**

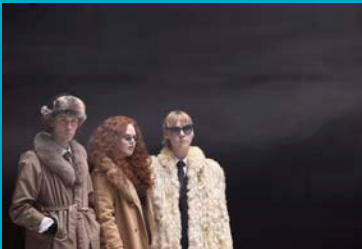


## Authentic Finnish Sauna

Finnish Culture Day

February 27th - 13:00 to 16:00 - Breiðholtið - Free Entry

Finns: we're not sure how to feel about them. Do we trust these guys with their weird vowels and unnecessary amount of trees? But there is one thing Finland definitely gets right, and that's sauna. Luckily for us the Finnish Embassy is celebrating 'Kalevala' - Finnish National Culture Day - by inviting us all to the pool to check out authentic Finnish sauna traditions. Expect birch twigs. **JG**



## Hyperpop Galore!

Inspector Spacetime With Young Nazareth

February 5th - 20:00 - Prikið - Free Entry

Live music is back, baby! And who better to celebrate its welcome return with than dancepop darlings (and Grapevine Music Award winners) Inspector Spacetime? The happy trio are basically party incarnate, and this concert is the ideal way to firmly shake off those January blues. Come along to Prikið on Saturday and we guarantee you'll dansa og bánsa with the best of them. Just make sure you get down early because it's going to be rammed. **JG**

## CULTURE NEWS



# 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 Steingrimsdóttir, and the dancers' costumes comprise photos by celebrated Icelandic wilderness photographer RAX, (Ragnar Axelsson).

Two of the four performers—Ásgeir Helgi Magnússon and Emília 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," Emília 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."

## 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'.

The dancers have also been making personal

connections with the core ideas of the piece, as Emília explains: "Every single one of us has been trying to dig into our own past a little bit and find our own stories, so we've been going through that as well. Sometimes the snow goes over the crevasse, so you don't see it. And also with ourselves, maybe we have a problem that we don't really show. But it's there."

Ásgeir sees the timing of this project as particularly significant. "I think that COVID has become, for many people, a bit of a revelation that they are stuck in a crevasse of some sort. You're forced to face your personal things because you can't really go on with life as usual."

## 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.

"I think that comes from Inga's own childhood, and the memories that she was working with," Ásgeir explains. "A need for self-protection. How can you blend into the background? Like the ptarmigan in the winter, turning white to blend in with the snow."

The icy stage set is powerfully striking. "Sometimes when we have the glacier around us, we feel really cold suddenly," Emília 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 Emília 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," Emília laughs, referring to fellow dancers Erna Gunnarsdóttir and Sigurður Andrean Sigurgeirsson. "They keep us on our toes!"

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

Emília 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 Emília.

So come and experience 'Hvíla Sprungur'. Just bring a decent coat and some mittens. **🧡**

*Performances are at Borgarleikhúsið on February 4th, 10th and 18th at 20:00. Tickets cost 4,450 ISK and are available from [tix.is](https://tix.is)*



A disappearing dancer





# The Cold Light Of Night

Kælan Mikla have a dark new universe to share

Words: **John Pearson** Photo: **Ása Dýradóttir** Album cover: **Förtifem / Merch Babe**

The mercurial Kælan Mikla defy description 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 simplistic. Not to mention somewhat reductive.

Besides, when we talk, Kælan Mikla—that is, Sólveig, Margrét and Laufey—laugh. In fact, they laugh quite a lot. Now that’s not very goth, 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 different 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 Barði Jóhannsson—the band spent 18 months in Barði’s studio, as opposed to recording in a garage as they did for the preceding record.

“We were working with Barði for one and a half years, really trying to make every sound perfect,” says Sólveig. “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 everything,” says Laufey.

That spirit of growth and experimentation shines through;

for example, the album’s tender closing track “Saman” 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 but deadly snow queen in Tove Jansson’s Moomin 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 lights.”

“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.”

**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 “Hvítir Sandar”, which was directed by Máni Sigfússon and won Video Of The Year at The Grapevine’s 2022 Music Awards. Kælan Mikla had first worked with Máni in 2015, 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,” Sólveig chimes in. “And opposites like black liquid and white sand. We just thought he would be perfect, and he was!”

**The importance of appearing**

Another crucial element of Kælan Mikla is the 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. “The music is made to be live. It’s not meant to be on records, you know?”

Sólveig 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 29 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 the album.’ You need to back it up; promote it, travel, meet people and perform it.”

“We did all those shitty basement shows for five people,” Margrét continues, harking 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 Sólveig 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 Turkish 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 Sólveig. “And next time we will pay him!” says Laufey.

Cue the Kælan Mikla laughter again. Now that’s not very goth, is it? 🐦

Pre-order the *Exquisite Deluxe Edition* of ‘Undir Köldum Norðurljósum’ on blue vinyl: [shop.grapevine.is](https://shop.grapevine.is)





# Farmers Market

ICELAND



OUR STORES IN REYKJAVÍK: FARMERS & FRIENDS



Laugavegur 37

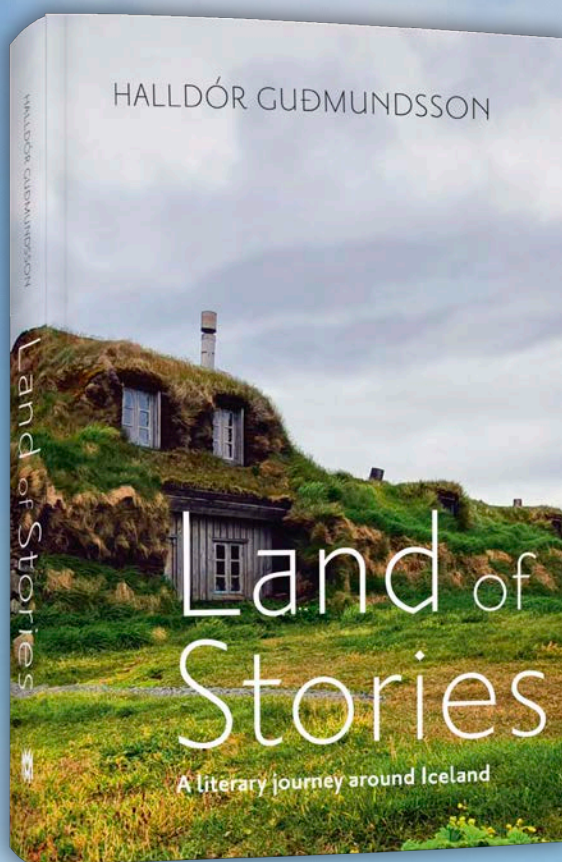


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# A LITERARY TOUR AROUND ICELAND



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## Best of Reykjavík

The Reykjavík Grapevine 14  
Issue 02—2022



Ligeglad - it's bracing stuff

## Best of Icelandic TV Shows

What to do in a storm and a pandemic? Watch the TV, you fool!

Words: [Valur Grettisson](#) Photos: [Stills from the shows](#)

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 quota 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. 🍷



February 4th — March 3rd

# In Your Pocket



Reykjavík Map      Places We Like      Best Of Reykjavík

## Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life



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

### 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 miscount 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?

Thanos is 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 Deig 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: 575 0505  
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 - BARS & CLUBS

Under current pandemic restrictions bars can stay open until 21:00

### OPENING HOURS - SHOPS & BANKS

Most shops: Mon–Fri 10:00–18:00, Sat 10:00–16:00, Sun closed  
Banks: Mon–Fri 9:00–16:00

### SWIMMING POOLS

Sundhöllin on Barónsstigur is an outdoor swimming pool with hot tubs. For more pools visit [gpy.is/swim](http://gpy.is/swim)  
Open: Mon–Thu 6:30–22:00, Sat 8:00–16:00  
Sun 10:00–18:00

### PUBLIC TOILETS

Public toilets can be found at Hlemmur and in the round kiosks on Ingólfstorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavík Art Museum, on Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustígur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavík City Hall and the Reykjavík Library

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Most buses run every 20 to 30 minutes  
Fare: 490 ISK adults, 245 ISK children.  
Buses generally run 6:00–24:00 on weekdays and 7:00–04:30 on weekends. For more info visit [www.bus.is](http://www.bus.is)





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A hand holds a square glass filled with an amber-colored cocktail and ice cubes. The background is a blurred outdoor scene featuring a rainbow flag and a building with a red roof. A purple circle with a white letter 'A' is in the top left corner.

**A**

# STEREO

Cocktails  
Craft Beer  
Vermouth Menu



Wine bar  
& food

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# The Map

Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavik Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse, with selections from our Best-Of awards, vital info, downtown bus stops and a wider view of the city.

Dining

6. Snaps

Pórsögata 1

<h2>1. Blackbox Pizza</h2> <p>Borgartún 26</p>	<p>Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic. Be it lunch, date, night dinner, las...</p>
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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 all the parma ham goodness you could wish for. For those journeying outside the city, they've also got a location in Akureyri.

weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a boatload 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 textbook crême brûlée topped with an envious snap.

<b>2. Uppfinning</b>	<b>7. Hlemmur Mathöll</b>
Ingólfsstræti 2	Hlemmur

This isn't your mama's Kro. No, Chikin—Reykjavík's first dedicated hot chicken and bao joint—manages to be at once both totally sophisticated foodie cuisine and also food that'll definitely fill the hole in your soul you usually quench with a spicy Twister. So grab some chicken with pickled daikon, shiitake mushrooms, miso mayo and lots of other delicacies.

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

## 8. Dragon Dim Sum

### 3. Hosið

Hverfisgata 12

A newcomer on the block who has certainly made a big stir! Hosiló is a small spot—seating around 30 patrons at full capacity—that offers an eclectic rotating menu of local fresh food. The offerings feature meals from around the world, from French cuisine to Northern Africa goodness, and much more.

<b>4. Kaffi Laugalækur</b>	<b>9. Lamb Street Food</b>
Laugarnesvegur 74a	Grandagarður 7

For many a young parent, the cafe stop at the end of a long stroll is the proverbial pot of gold. Kaffi Lækur is especially popular with new parents, with a special kids' corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and pesto 'litle gula hænán' and the 'shawaramabake' are our top lunch picks. Also, if you're keto, don't miss 'em,

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

## 10. Laundromat

## 5. Brauð & Co

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Frakkastígur 16

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First off—don't miss Brauð & Co's pretzel croissants unless you really don't want to have a spiritual experience. We also swear by their “snuður”—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.

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,

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## 11. Nauthóll

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Nauthólsvegur 106

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**ish, Lani & Chic**

Just behind the University of Reykjavik overlooking the Nauthólsvík geothermal beach is Nauthóll, the definition of a hidden summertime gem. The restaurant is one of those places that downtown Reykjavik rats might call “too far away,” but with the advent 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.

# Drinking

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## 12. Prikið

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Bankastræti 12

Prikið 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

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Hverfisgata 12

If the cancellation of literally everything is damping your glamorous rock and roll style, Röntgen at Hverfisgata 12 will cure what ails you. This place—a relative newcomer—is already a stalwart in the bar scene, with a stellar atmosphere, great drinks and a lineup of the best DJs in Iceland. Just remember to raise a glass to the good doctor Wilhelm Röntgen (who discovered x-rays) while sipping your tipple.

## 14. Húrra

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Tryggvagata 22

Húrra is BACK! ARE YOU SERIOUS? YES, WE ARE! After a despairing absence from the local scene, the beloved favourite has returned with a vengeance. Seriously—in the few weeks they've been open, the bar/venue has already had shows from heavyweights like Skrattar, Skóffín and Mannveira. Stop by for vibes, alcohol and other fun things like that you know. Also, their bathroom renovation is pretty crazy.

## 15. Veður

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### Klapparstígur 33

This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that has grabbed the heart of the Grapevine, even though we are a magazine and not humans. If you feel fine relaxing and chatting, it's still a nice and sophisticated bar, but they've also got an edge. Sometimes they play punk music. \m/

## 16. Íslenski Barinn

Ingólfsstræti 1a

Of the many nation-themed drinking

establishments in Reykjavík, The Icelandic Bar is the only one that is also a restaurant. Go there at night and maybe you'll meet an elf or Björk or something—that's all people know about Iceland anyway.

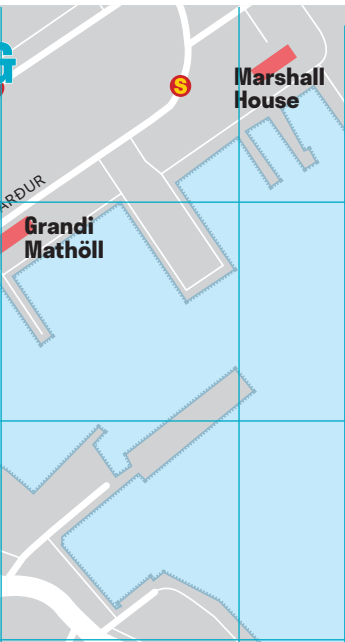
## 17. Mál og Menning

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Laugavegur 18b

Wait, a new bar/music venue? Yup! And you thought the pandemic had destroyed all culture in this town. But never fear—Bókabúðir Máls og Menningar is here. There's live music most nights, from DJs to jazz, and during the day, the legendary Bókin is operating from the basement. Seriously—we anticipate this place will be a game-changer in the local cultural scene. Takk fyrir.





New In Town ☆

TRANSYLVANIA

MENU

### Transylvania Coffee Store

Aðalstræti 9, 101 Reykjavík

Hanging out on the corner of Aðalstræti and Kirkjustræti, Transylvania Coffee Store is a welcome reprieve from the ubiquitous Te & Kaffi that resided there before. Offering a range of sandwiches, desserts and unique Romanian bruschettas, it's a handy addition to the range of lunchtime options available near Ingólfstorg. The decor is cosy without being twee and the service is quick and pleasant. We hear they have plans for a full-blown restaurant in the future too. **JG**

I

TRANSYLVANIA

### HEALTHY ROMANIAN FOOD AT

## FOOD AT

### OF REYKJAVÍK

AÐALSTRÆTI 9, 101 REYKJAVÍK

D

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Skólavörðustígur 15



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F

SMASHED BURGERS AND HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVIK

HAFNARSTRÆTI 101 REYKJAVÍK

STÉL

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 svítan

Austurstræti 12

The sun is finally out, which means it's time for your annual pilgrimage to Petersen svítan. 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. Íslenzka Húðflúrstofan

Ingólfsstræti 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 Habba (@habbanerotattoo). Not only are they gorgeously ornate in that straight-out-of-800-AD-way, but they might save you from spirits.

21. Nielsen Sérverzlun

Bankastræti 4

Way more than your average design store, Nielsen is filled to the brim with knick-knacks from all over, from gorgeous diaries to cosy 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. Fótógrafi

Skólavörðustígur 22

Fótógrafi 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 Reykjavík or

elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of touristy 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

Rauðarárstígur 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 expert 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. Húrra 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.

H

WASTELAND

SECOND HAND CLOTHING

Ingólfsstræti 5 101 Reykjavík

WASTELAND

SECOND HAND CLOTHING

Ingólfsstræti 5 101 Reykjavík





# The Quiet Men

Hugar unassumingly assume the title of “Iceland’s Most Unassuming Band”

Words:  
John Pearson  
  
Photo:  
Anna Maggý

Musical duo Hugar have been a creative partnership for 10 years now, a fact that seems to take both individuals in question—Bergur Þórisson 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 *Vínúðin* 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 Seltjarnarnes, 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 10 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 Kex. We had never thought of the album being performed live, but we got our friends to play; string quartet, full band with a drummer 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 ‘Varða’ 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 Vasulka 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 ‘Þjóðlög / Folk Songs’—was inspired by ‘Íslensk Þjóðlög’, 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 was no 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 reflects 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. 🍷

You can buy a vinyl copy of albums by Hugar at [shop.grapevine.is](https://shop.grapevine.is)

“We didn’t plan to make an album or anything, but it seemed OK so we gave it away for free”



Event Picks



★ Los Bomboneros

February 19th - 20:00 - Skuggabaldur - Free Entry

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 Bomboneros,

with their Central and South American-inspired songs (composed by band member Daniel Helgason), are the perfect antidote to your Boreal blues. The quartet perform on trombone, bass, violin, percussion, vocals and tres Cubano to bring a welcome equatorial warmth to the harsh Icelandic winter. With an album expected in the coming months, this is the perfect time to check out Los Bomboneros and get to know their sound, all in the cosy confines of Skuggabaldur. **JG**



★ Reykjavik Ramen Champion 2022

February 6th - 12:00 to 16:00 - Ramen Momo - 3,900 ISK

Ramen! You love it! But could you eat a whole kilogramme of it? Visit Ramen Momo on the 6th of February and order the 'Giant Ramen' to find out. The fastest eater at the end of the day will be crowned Reykjavik's Ramen Champion, and you'd better believe that's a title we want. **JG**



★ Valentine's Day Quiz

February 14th - 17:00 to 18:00 - Árbær Library - Free Admission

Lonely-hearted introverts! You already love the library, you love nerds, and we suspect you probably secretly love love. So why not take part in a romantic Valentine's quiz with total heartthrob quizmaster Guttormur Þorsteinsson? We predict Cupid will be working his magic amongst the bookshelves. **JG**



MUSIC NEWS

Beyond a doubt, Briet is the hardest working singer in Icelandic show biz. She broke into the music scene like a wrecking ball about two years ago, claiming the pop throne and becoming Reykjavik Grapevine's Artist of the year in 2020.

Now, Briet has released a new song, Cold Feet. It's actually a three-year-old composition and, as she told Icelandic music site, Albumm.is, she had planned on releasing it sooner, but it was too tied to her broken heart. The song is only half of it because the video has received a lot of attention in Icelandic media. It shows Briet in a glass box in the middle of the Icelandic wilderness, as it slowly fills up with water. That's one way to deal with a broken heart, we guess. **VG**



Disappointingly, equine heavy breathing does not feature on the album

An Icelandic Noise

Kaška Paluch weaves together electronic dance music, the sounds of the wild and the soft strains of historic Icelandic folk

Words: John Pearson Video still: Magdalena Łukasiak

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 not.

Over the last two years, musician Kaška Paluch has created a remarkable project addressing that question from the perspective of the island's natural environments. But when she first asked herself the question five years ago, having just moved to Reykjavik from her Polish mountainside hometown of Zakopane, she had the sound of contemporary Icelandic music on her mind.

"My friends had been joking that I'd moved here to be closer to Björk, because I was a crazy fan," Kaška laughs. "When you're living in Poland and you're interested in Icelandic music—Björk, Sigur Rós, Gusgus—this is how Iceland sounds to you. But when you move here you realise that, musically, Iceland does not sound like this. Quite the opposite, actually. I haven't met an Icelander who listens to Björk."

Noise annoys

To uncover the sound of Iceland, Kaška 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'," she says. "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 mutha. 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. Kaška realised that perhaps her curiosity shouldn't be about the sound of Iceland, but about the noise of Iceland.

While working as a tour guide, she had a conversation with a customer whose sight was compromised, but who experienced nature through what she heard rather than

saw. Kaška 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 started."

Mapping noise

When Kaška found herself unemployed 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](http://www.noisefromiceland.com). And while each recording was already an 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' album was born, for which Kaška leaned on her experience as a dance music producer.

The resulting album is an engaging mélange of 14 tracks, half of which are pure ambient field recordings best experienced via a decent pair of headphones. Hurricanes whip around the listener, lava roars and bubbles in the ears, and the sounds of a glacier lagoon wash all around and over. 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," Kaška says. "Most of the time that you hear music composed to field recordings it's ambient, or some experimental electronica. And honestly, I tried 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

Kaška's musical education in Poland eventually led 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.

The organisation Íslenskur Músík Og Menningararfur, (Icelandic Music and Cultural Heritage), curates a collection of audio recordings, photos, films and texts representing a history of Icelandic culture. And it was there that Kaška found a recording from 1969, in which a woman by the name of Hildigunnur Valdimarsdóttir sings a folk tale called "Tunglið Glotti Gult Og Bleikt" ("The Moon Glows Yellow And Pink").

"There was such a nice energy coming from this recording, and I liked the lyrics," says Kaška. "But then I went deeper and found out about their meaning." The song depicts a woman called Geirlaug, sitting at night, sewing a sweater in the moonlight. She waits for her dead husband, Glúmur, to come and take her away with him.

"Then I was like, 'Yeah, that's the one!'" Kaška says. "It feels nice, we can dance to it, but it's a horror story." In Kaška's version of "The Moon Glows Yellow And Pink", Hildigunnur's original a cappella vocal is respectfully arranged over a subtle but uplifting house track. The whole concept is underpinned by a recording of an Icelandic storm, made by Kaška the day before she found the archived song.

Kaška plans to continue developing the Noise From Iceland project, creating music connected directly to the elements, to the land and to the people living on this big chunk of North Atlantic rock. **VG**



On to jazz wunderkind, Laufey Lin, who has been gaining huge international attention, culminating in a performance on Jimmy Kimmel Live! in January. Laufey released her album, Typical of Me, in 2021 and rose to fame on TikTok. Laufey has also played for us at The Reykjavik Grapevine, and you can find her on our YouTube channel. Kudos to Mr. Kimmel, who pronounced Laufey's name flawlessly. **VG**



Trolls—the sad ones hiding behind computer screens, not the cunning cannibals of Icelandic lore—raised the Eurovision hopes of Icelanders. It seemed like the one and only Will Ferrell asked on Twitter if he could compete for Iceland in Eurovision in 2022, a competition that Icelanders take unapologetically seriously.

Some Icelandic media fell for the trolling tweet, reporting on it like it had an actual basis in reality, only to be shamed when it was pointed out 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 busy singing Ja Ja Ding Dong to do any fact-checking...

If the offer had been real, Will Ferrell would have been to Iceland what Canadian superstar Celine Dion was for Switzerland when she won Eurovision for them in 1988. Not that we know anything about Eurovision. **VG**



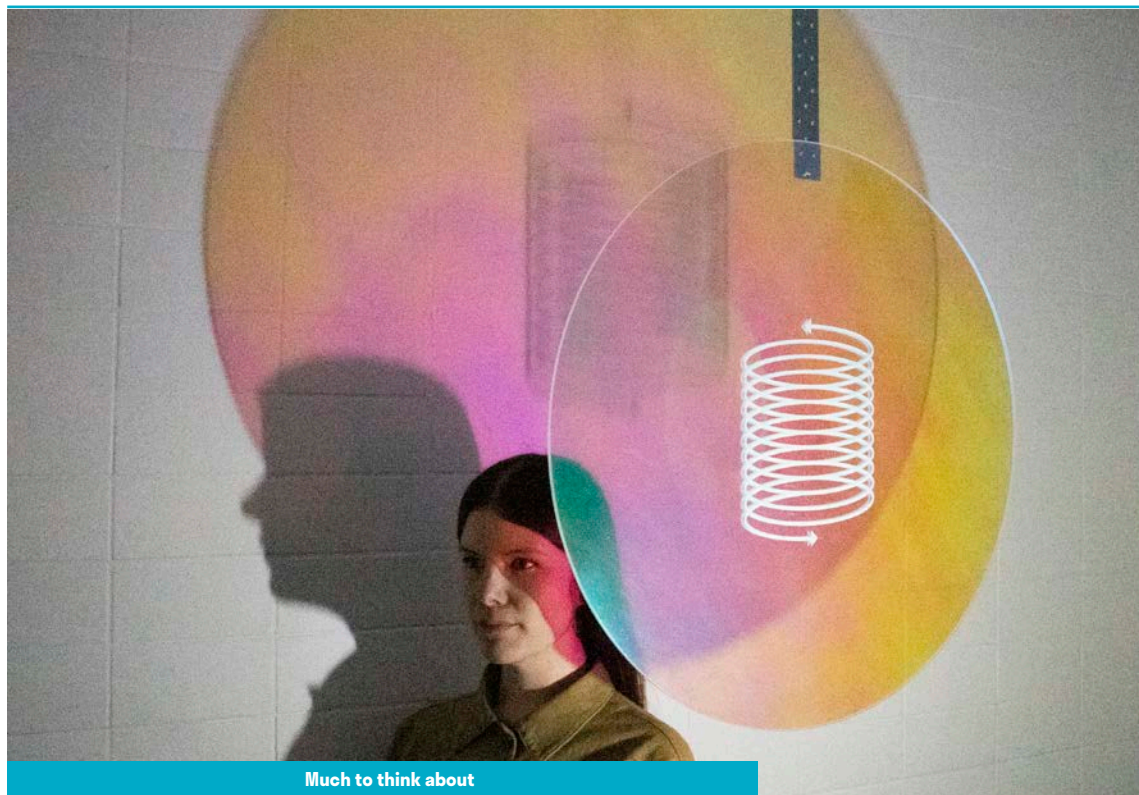
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Much to think about

## Power Suits & Orbital Paths

A group exhibition for our times

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** Photos: **Pórdís Erla & Art Bicnick**

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, Pórdís Erla Zoega, Magnús Helgason and Ingunn Fjóra Ingþórsdóttir—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 Lóaboratorium, 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.

"I don't know how, but somehow it fits with the rest of the exhibition," she says of 'Buxnadragt'. "It's curated brilliantly, because I don't belong, but I still belong. Story of my life, the weird one in the corner, like I always feel. It's kind of a sad silliness, the whole thing. There's something so sad and beautiful

about it, even if it has no words or humans, the movement and how it's related to humans. I don't understand how it works together, but it does. I think [museum director] Kristín Scheving must be some kind of a genius."

### A comic on an island

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

Pórdís' 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."



"A pantsuit is hilarious and powerful at the same time."



Pórdís Zoega at work

Pórdís 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." 🐾

All of these exhibitions will be shown at LÁ Museum from February 5 until May 22.

29.01.–15.05.2022

**Birgir  
Andrésson**  
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Art Picks



★ **Snertitaug**

Until March 20th - Reykjavík Art Museum at Hafnarhús, Tryggvagata 17

Ásgerður Birna Björnsdóttir has created a remarkable body of work which the gallery website says “is best described as a photosensitive installation”. The focus is on the flow and transfer of energy, with light, electricity and particles the

main conveyors of power. The exhibition observes the relationship between nature and technology, between the analogue earth and the digital world that we have created. All is interconnected, and nothing happens without a cause. The name Snertitaug could be translated as “touching the nerve”; evoking a sense of action and reaction, of creating involuntary movement by inciting electrical impulses. Ásgerður graduated with a BA in art from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy 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 their first solo exhibition in a public museum. **JP**



★ **Straumnes**

Until May 1st - The National Museum of Iceland, Suðurgata 41

During the cold war the U.S. military operated a radar station at Straumnesfjall, a remote coastal location in the Westfjords. After the Americans left, the area was eventually cleaned up and left to regrow. Local photographer Marínó Thorlacius reflects the beauty of nature, captured among the residue of the abandoned military installation. **JP**



★ **Seigla**

Until March 1st - NORR11, Hverfisgata 18

Nylon tights are the primary medium and means of production in this exhibit by The Icelandic Love Corporation. The exhibition takes its title—which means “resilient”—from a particular piece which comprises stones placed in the feet of the aforementioned hosiery. Tights are also used to create interesting oil paint prints. **JP**



★ **518 Aukanætur**

Until March 12th - Gallery Port, Laugavegur 32

Eva Schram is a Reykjavík artist who works mainly in analogue photography, and darkroom processes. This exhibit, part of the Icelandic Photography Festival, is a reflection of the Icelandic wilderness. Her chosen medium is a type of obsolescent film that gives the subject landscapes a detached mystery, yet brings them closer to the viewer. **JP**

February 4th — March 3rd

Exhibitions

For complete listings and detailed information on venues, visit [grapevine.is/happening](https://grapevine.is/happening)

Send your listings to: [events@grapevine.is](mailto:events@grapevine.is)

Opening

**GALLERY FOLD**

**Mountain 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 returned frequently to Snæfellsjökull, drawn to the glacier-capped volcano as a source of inspiration. She reflects the Snæfellsnes area through a range of visual media, but in this exhibition, paintings and drawings predominate.

- Opens on February 7th
- Runs until February 19th

Ongoing

**GERDARSAFN KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM**

**Ad Infinitum**

Icelandic artists Elín Hansdóttir and Úlfur Hansson work in Berlin and New York respectively, but have come together to create this installation exploring the borders between the art that we see, and that which we hear. Elín’s approach is to create challenging immersive visuals, while Úlfur’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 USA, artist Santiago Mostyn grew up in Zimbabwe 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, legends and personal experience converge.

- Runs until March 27th

**HAFNARBORG CENTRE OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS**

**A Few Thoughts on Photography – Vol. III**

Photographer Hallgerður Hallgrímsdóttir explores how taking a photograph can seem so simple—“just the push of a button”—making the resulting image 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. A place where strangers cross paths and acquaintances meet, it is a source of wellbeing and a major part of everyday life for many. This exhibition traces the development of Icelandic bathing culture, showing how architects and designers, pool staff and the public have together shaped the story.

- Runs until September 25th

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND**

**Muggur**

Guðmundur Thorsteinsson led a full life, though it was cut short by tuberculosis. This exhibit presents a wide selection of his work, created under his artist name Muggur, including scenes from his global travels, images of a merciful Christ curing the sick, and Muggur’s fantasy worlds where princesses live in castles and trolls 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 Hallgrímskirkja, now contains close to 300 artworks. 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 Viking ruins meet digital technology—provides insight into Reykjavík’s farms at the time of the first settlers. Archaeological remains uncovered on site dating back to 871 AD surround you.

**HAFNARBORG CENTRE OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS**

**Long Are The Trials Of Men**

Porvaldur Þorsteinsson was a

highly prolific artist who made use of most artistic media over his career, including music and writing in the form of novels, plays and poetry. However this retrospective exhibit features the visual aspects to Þorvaldur’s creativity, focusing on the sculptures, installation pieces, paintings and video which bear testament to his diverse creativity.

- Runs until February 20th

**REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM**

**Óðinn Coast Guard Vessel**

Take a guided tour around this former guardian of Icelandic waters.

**Fish & Folk**

Name a better duo than fish and Iceland. You can’t. So come learn about the history of Icelandic fisheries from row boats to monstrous trawlers.

**Melckmeyt 1659**

Melckmeyt was a Dutch merchant ship that crashed near Flatey Island in 1659. Explore the wreck here, with two images of different origins against each other.

**REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÚS**

**Erró The Traveller**

Guðmundur Guðmundsson—ubiquitously known as Erró—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

**A Bra Ka Da Bra - 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 conjure up in children and young people.

- Runs until March 20th

**CULTURE HOUSE**

**Treasures Of A Nation**

The Culture House was built in 1909, and was the first purpose-built gallery in Iceland. Towering above the surrounding town at the time, it was a popular spot to take in the natural vistas which have inspired local artists for centuries. This exhibit brings together a selection of paintings from the National Gallery, all inspired by Iceland and created from the 19th century onwards.

- Runs until May 31st

**BERG CONTEMPORARY**

**About Time - Diary of Twenty Months**

Icelandic artist Einar Falur Ingólfsson is a former press snapper with Morgunblaðið, Iceland’s biggest daily newspaper. Now a creative photographer and writer, his creative 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

**GALLERÍ GROTTA**

**Upphaf**

Artists Jóhanna V. Þórhallsdóttir and Hrönn Björnsdóttir used to run Anarkía Art Gallery in Kópavogur together, but these days they focus more on creating and exhibiting their own work. This collection of expressionist 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 - KJARVALSSTAÐIR**

**Budding Earth**

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

- Runs until February 6th

**As Far As The Eye Can See**

Birgir Andrésson was a leading light in Icelandic art until his untimely death in 2007. Taking influence from all aspects of Icelandic life, legend and culture, he presented them in a unique and informed way, drawing admiration from both local and international art communities. This retrospective brings together more than a hundred of his works, including some from international and

private collections.

- Runs until May 15th

**HVERFISGALLERÍ**

**Recondstruction**

Following a devastating avalanche in Siglufjörður, artist Hrafnkell Sigurðsson 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 has been dismantled, categorized and analysed, art is the only way to reassemble it.

- Runs until February 12th

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND**

**Staged Moments**

This expansive exhibition extends across two halls of the National Gallery, and features some 41 photographic 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 less 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**

Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir lives and works in Reykjavík, studied art in New York and Los Angeles and focuses on video and performance art. To quote the gallery website: “Ásdís’ works explore the intersection of magical realism and the wonders of nature through distortion, transformation and ritual. They have a hint of poetic and impending turmoil.” If that piques your interest, come down to Nýló to see for yourself.

- Runs until March 6th

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART

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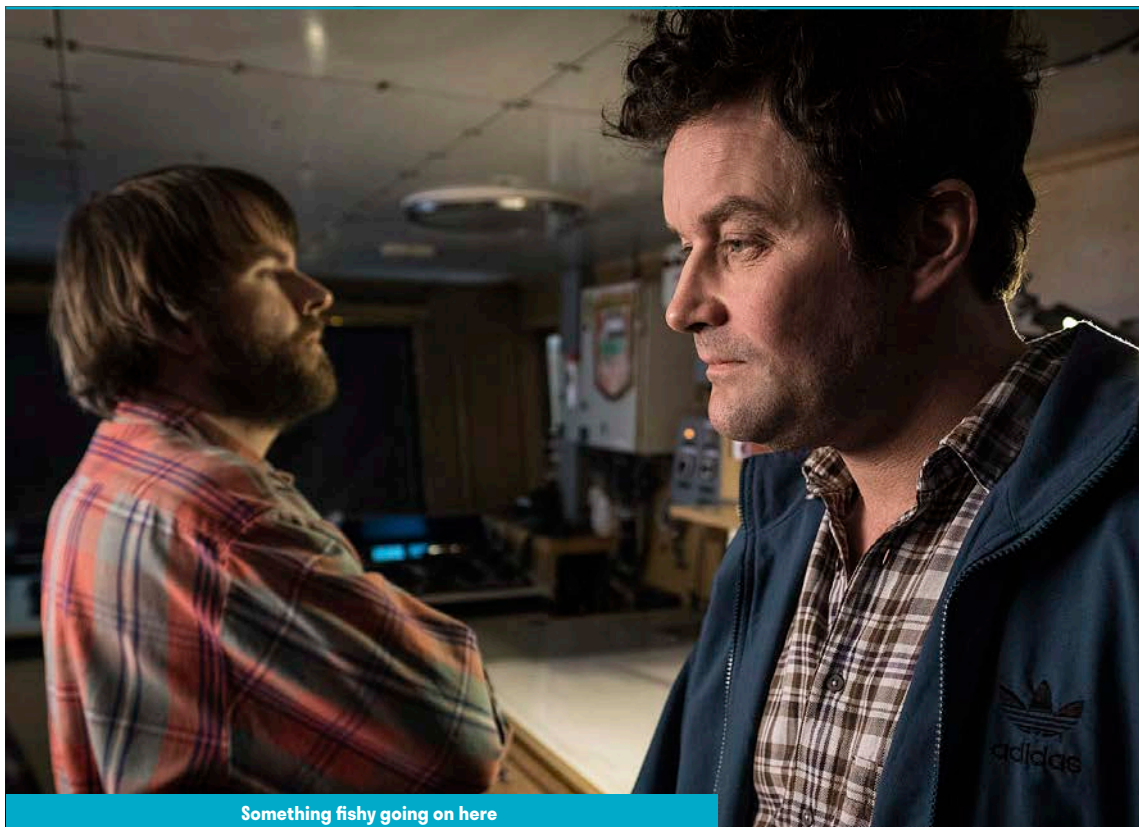
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# Television



Something fishy going on here

## Catch Of The Day

Icelanders have fallen for Verðuðin 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 "Verðuðin", 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 Verðuðin – 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 Verðuðin (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 it's 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 Verðuðin, 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 are 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 Verðuðin so far and are eagerly hoping for more, there is hope:

"We always said we had enough ideas for two more seasons," Björn says candidly, before adding, with a laugh, "We have a few more decades to catch up with." 🐟



Aquaman, right?





“At the end of the day, innovation in traditional music is inherently anarchist”

# Traditional Values

Kvæðakórin are reimagining Icelandic folk music for a new generation

Words: Josie Gaitens  
Photos: Art Bicnick and Josie Gaitens

Linus Orri 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 ‘Kvæðakórin’, 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, Höfðaletur, an idiosyncratic variety of typography strongly associated with hand carving. Attracted by the similarities and equivalences of their artistic prac-

tice, 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.



“It’s a little complicated, because that one word means a few different things,” he admits. “To most people, Kvæði, without context, would just mean a poem. But it also means the way to sing the poem, the style that accom-

panies it.” 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 Kvæðakórin 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. To do so he conducted 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 practising the tradition as a group. And so what I think about when arranging is, ‘If this had been a strong, living tradition through modern times—through the development of rock music, electronic music, jazz—what would have happened to this tradition naturally?’ And I’m thinking about it in very literal terms, in regard to which intervals would be used in harmonising, for instance.”

It’s a radical approach, and one that risks raising a few eyebrows in traditional music circles. But Linus sees this attitude as a necessity for both 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 anarchist. In a year’s time I hope we have proven the concept.”



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## Track By Track

The Reykjavík Grapevine 24  
Issue 02—2022



If cats had eyebrows, this one's would be raised

## Postuline-hearts And Space-Bitches

Egill Logi Jónasson is the odd artist, Drengurinn Fengurinn

Words: [Einar Logi Jónasson](#) & [Valur Grettisson](#) Photo: [Einar Logi Jónasson](#)

### Info



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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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).

### 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.

### Hljá

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.

### Skjalatöskublúshús

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.

### 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.

### Vinna minna

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

### 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.

### Þú þurftir enga ástæðu

This is the grand finale of the album. It's about the sweet release of death. 🍷

Guess what? You can grab your copy of these album on [shop.grapevine.is](https://shop.grapevine.is)



Due to the effect of the pandemic on bar and restaurant operations, these happy hour details may change. Please check directly with the business before travelling.

A selection from

# Every Happy Hour

in 101 Reykjavík

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Beer 850 ISK,  
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**BASTARD BREW**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 600 ISK,  
Wine 750 ISK.

**BÍO PARADÍS**  
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 850 ISK,  
Wine 850 ISK.

**BREWDOG**  
Wed-Sun  
14:00 to 17:00.  
Beer 990 ISK,  
Wine 990 ISK.

**COOCCOO'S NEST**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 1000 ISK,  
Wine 1000 ISK.  
Includes an appetiser.

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

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

**FORRÉTTABARINN**  
Mon-Sun  
15:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 800 ISK,  
Wine 850 ISK.

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

**HRESSINGAR-SKÁLINN**  
Every day from 20:00 to 22:00.  
Beer 900 ISK,  
Wine 900 ISK.

**JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR**  
Weekdays  
16:00 onwards.  
Weekends  
12:00 to 16:00.  
Beer 750 ISK,  
Wine 900 ISK.

**JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR**  
Daily except Tue  
16:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 800 ISK,  
Wine 1000 ISK.

**KAFFIBARINN**  
Every day until 19:00.  
Beer 800 ISK,  
Wine 800 ISK.

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

**LAUNDROMAT**  
Every day from 20:00 to 22:00.  
Beer 650 ISK,  
Wine 1000 ISK.

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

**LUNA FLORENS**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 1000 ISK,  
Wine 1000 ISK.  
Includes your choice of free appetiser.

**MIAMI**  
Tue  
15:00 to 00:00.  
Wed to Sat  
15:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 750 ISK,  
Wine 990 ISK

**PETERSEN SVÍTAN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.  
Beer 800 ISK,  
Wine 1,000 ISK,  
Cocktails 1500 ISK

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

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

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

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

**SÆTA SVÍNID**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 790 ISK,  
Wine 890 ISK.

**SESSION CRAFT**  
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 790 ISK,  
Wine 900 ISK.

**SKÚLI CRAFT**  
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00.  
Beer 900 ISK,  
(four tap beers),  
Wine 900 ISK.

**SÓLON**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 800 ISK  
Wine 800 ISK.

**SPILOKAFFI**  
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00.  
Beer 750 ISK,

**STÚDENT-AKJALLARINN**  
Everyday from 16:00.  
Beer 650 ISK,  
Wine 850 ISK.

**SUSHI SOCIAL**  
Sun-Thu from 17:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 645 ISK,  
Wine 745 ISK.

**TAPAS BARINN**  
Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.  
Beer 645 ISK,  
Wine 745 ISK.

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

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

### FEATURED DRINKING HOLE

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AUSTURSTRÆTI 9

Need to clean your clothes but don't have a washing machine? Well firstly, grow up and buy one. But also, you're in luck! The Laundromat Cafe is smack 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. **VG**

# Cheap Food

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

### 1,000 ISK And Under

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<b>Dominos</b> All day Tuesday Medium sized pizza with three toppings	<b>Sólon</b> Monday - Friday 11:00 - 14:30 Soup of the day - 990 ISK
	<b>Tapas Barinn</b> Every day 17:00 - 18:00

Selected tapas half price	<b>Gló</b> All day, every day Bowl of the month - 1,290 ISK Vegan option
<b>Deig / Le Kock</b> Every day-All day Doughnut, coffee & bagel -1,000 ISK	<b>Shalimar</b> Monday - Friday 12:00 - 14:30 Curry - 1,290 ISK Vegan option
<b>1,500 ISK And Under</b>	<b>Sæta Svinið</b> Every day 15:00 - 18:00 Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK
<b>Hamborgara-búlla Tómasar</b> All day Tuesday Burger, french fries & soda - 1,390 ISK	

<b>Sólon</b> Monday - Friday 11:00 - 14:30 Ceasar salad - 1,490 ISK	<b>Sólon</b> Monday - Friday 11:00 - 14:30 Fish of the day - 1,990 ISK
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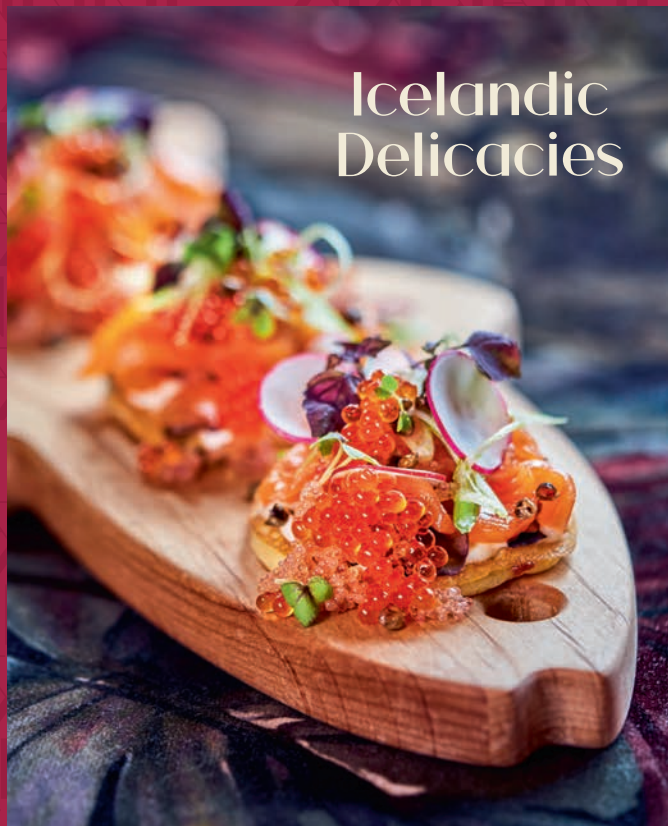


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## Books



Sixfold selfportrait with the ghost of Laxness, painted by Hallgrímur

# Torn Between Keith Haring And The Sagas

Hallgrímur Helgason goes over his career and views after breaking a record in literature, receiving the Icelandic Book Prize for fiction for the third time

Words: **Valur Grettisson** Painting: **Hallgrímur Helgason** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

Hallgrímur Helgason is something of a rebel when it comes to Icelandic fiction, and his weapons are pleasantly disarming: humour and entertainment. It took publishing four books for Hallgrímur to feel accepted into what we often refer to as the "culture elite", and he embraced low-brow culture in the noughties, only to witness it taking over completely.

Nonetheless, Hallgrímur has left an impression on Icelandic literary history, having become the first author to be awarded the Icelandic Book Prize for fiction three times—his "Sextíu kíló af kjaftshöggum" (roughly translated to 'Sixty Kilos Of Knockouts') sealing the hat trick. It's a fitting win, seeing as the first book in the 'Sixty-kilo' series took the prize in 2018.

The Grapevine caught up with Hallgrímur to check in after his latest win.

### Everything can happen, I guess

Our first question is painfully basic, but we have to start somewhere: How does Hallgrímur feel about winning the Icelandic Book Prize for the third time?

"It was, kind of, just incredible," Hallgrímur answers. "I figured I had some chance, but still, when I heard that I won, it just felt unbelievable."

He points out that it's only three years since he last won the award for "Sextíu kíló af sólshín" (Sixty Kilos Of Sunshine). "I remember that this happened in the U.K. when Hillary Mantel got

the Booker Prize twice for her series about Thomas Cromwell [The Wolf Hall series]," he recalls. "When she wrote the third book, she jokingly announced that she would be disappointed if that book wouldn't win also. And that became the case, it wasn't even nominated," Hallgrímur says. "So, everything can happen I guess."

### Striving to become a visual artist

When Hallgrímur was a young man, his mind wasn't set on literature, but visual arts—another field that he has also done very well in. He was finding a foothold in the U.S. and had even had his work exhibited in galleries. His future seemed bright in the world of visual arts.

"But then I got sent the republished Icelandic Sagas, just before getting a flu," he says. "I spent a week in bed with them and fell completely in love. Suddenly I found myself totally torn between Keith Haring and the Sagas! I mean, it was quite a rift, or rather a whole 'canyon' that opened up there. It was not like simply being torn between painting and writing, because on one side of this canyon was New York in the 80s, with its exciting art scene, street art, and rap and hip hop in its infancy. On the other side stood this old archaic literature and the whole of the Icelandic language, with all its rules of rhyme and alliteration. I was so smitten by that reading of the Sagas that my letters back home were all written in that old Norse style. My mother

took one of them to her friend, an old Saga professor at the University, who 'approved' of it. You can say that I have spent my whole life trying to bridge this 'canyon' within myself."

### Bigger than God

The literary landscape that Hallgrímur found himself in as a young author was dominated by the crushing heritage of Iceland's most prolific writers of the 20th century, from Þórbergur Þórðarson and Gunnar Gunnarsson to Halldór Laxness—our only Nobel Prize winner in literature. They set a gilded bar for literature in





Iceland; a burdensome hurdle for the coming generations.

“It could be a little encumbering, 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 siren, I was drawn to it.”

### 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, 101 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 Reykjavík’s famous central district, 101. 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 read-

ers? 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 Reykjavík. 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 ‘Segulfjörður’ [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 ‘Sextíu 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 ‘Sixfold 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 gossipmonger, a clownish kite 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. 🍷

You can find a longer interview with Hallgrímur on our homepage [grapevine.is](https://grapevine.is)



This man has worn the same hat for 20 years

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## Food



In a reflective moment

## In conversation with Gunnar Karl

Pulling back the curtain on the joys and trials of running a fine dining restaurant during the pandemic

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

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," he confesses. "But if things were to get worse, I'd freak 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

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to help businesses tide over this uncertain time by offering financial aid.

### Creativity in the time of Covid

Fine dining, like all cooking, is an intimate expression of labour expressed as flavour and composition; a fleeting, ephemeral moment that is only as good as a crafted morsel, vanquished to memory once the meal comes to an end. A disease then that threatens to rob you of your sense of taste and smell, and therefore your livelihood and passion, couldn't be easy for chefs.

But creativity and running a business, a Michelin-starred restaurant no less, is a daunting affair. "To be creative is to have the luxury of staff and time," Gunnar sums up eloquently. One tends to take things for granted he says, and when you realise that, it changes things.

He is careful not to box periods into a normal, not-normal time zone. Instead, the focus seems to be about gratitude and opportunity. "When things were rough, we went back to basics, to things we knew how to do and do well," he explains. "When you don't have the staff, 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 out of 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.

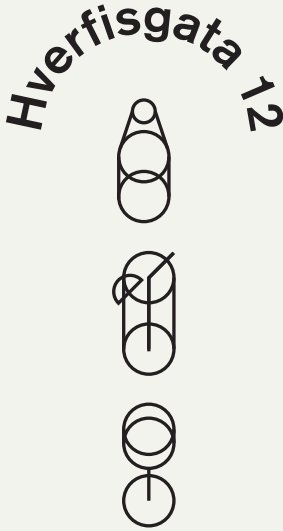
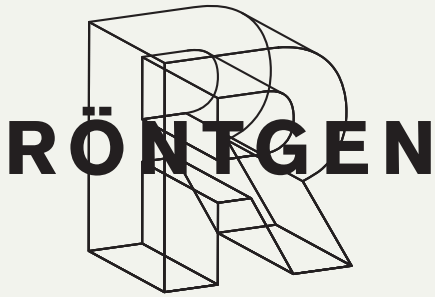
The chef is also a consulting chef for The Edition Reykjavik, a project that was in the pipelines for almost a decade, now coming to fruition.

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. 🍷

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 change the amount of staff you have. So it's like, the income is going down but the costs are staying the same," he says wryly.

Echoing the angst of many restaurateurs, big and small, who've had to soldier on without much aid, there have been loud discussions asking the government to step in like they did two years ago,



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# Travel

## Cathedral Of Ice

Langjökull’s newest natural glacial cave

Words & Photos: John Pearson



**Tour duration from Reykjavik:**  
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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 240kg, 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 upslope 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 on one ski: the snowmobile equivalent of pulling a wheelie. Show off.



In the shadows of giants

### 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 Kristinn Jónsson, boss of Amazing Tours and a glacier professional with decades of experience, says that—with the main chamber at about 12m high and 10m wide—it’s the biggest ice cave he has ever seen.

To check it out, Team Grapevine drove the two hours from Reykjavik to the Amazing Tours base at Skjól, just south of the glacier. There we transferred to Sleipnir’s impressive monster bus—a vehicle equipped with eight giant wheels to roll effortlessly over crevasses that would swallow anything smaller— for a comfortable 30km ride to the glacier camp.

On arrival we donned fluorescent overalls and motorbike helmets, received a briefing on how to handle our snowmobiles and were led off by Stefán, camel-train style. And that’s where the hard work began. Driving a snowmobile is great fun, but they don’t come with power steering and the 12km ride to the cave became something of an upper-body workout. But the landscape took my mind off the exertion, and my breath away. The white-on-white of fresh snow on

glacial ice created a surreal monochrome vista, punctuated only by the colourful overalls of my fellow travellers and the bright red of their vehicles.

### Inside the ice

After 30 minutes we parked the snowmobiles, pulled on the crampons provided and started the short hike though metre-deep snow. 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.

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 regard-

less 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 used the opportunity to get married—wedding dress, tuxedo

and all—in the most stunning ecclesiastical space you can imagine that isn’t actually a church.

### Going deep

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 have made the effort.

Eventually, as we slowly crossed the lower floor again to leave the cave, I stopped and gazed up into the glinting 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. 🍷

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



Joyfully trudging onwards



# Valentine’s Day

Words: **Andie Sophia Fontaine** & **Josie Gaitens**

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? No? 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 next door, you hear the dulcet tones of someone also spewing their ringer with healthy vigour. Your heart skips a beat as you carefully

vomit your phone number onto some toilet paper to slide under the partition. Your phone lights up immediately. Love at first puke. Avoid: the colour yellow, AT ALL COSTS.

Leo



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

Virgo



The most depressing thing about watching Verubúðin is confronting the fact that even people in the Westfjords are having more sex than you. Swipe right on: Libra, Leo and Lonely Single Mothers.

Libra



Are they flirting with you? Or are you just so not used to any kind of positive feedback that even the most innocuous compliment seems like a romantic come-on? Love yourself, Libra. You’re an absolute catch. The people that matter will see that.

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 subse-

quently laughing maniacally. 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. Ideal date: Taurus, but only on Wednesdays.

Aquarius



This is your year to replace that dating app profile photo of you holding a fish, biting 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. 🐟

## WELL, YOU ASKED



## Cursing and the Goddamn Danes

Words: **Valur Grettisson**

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

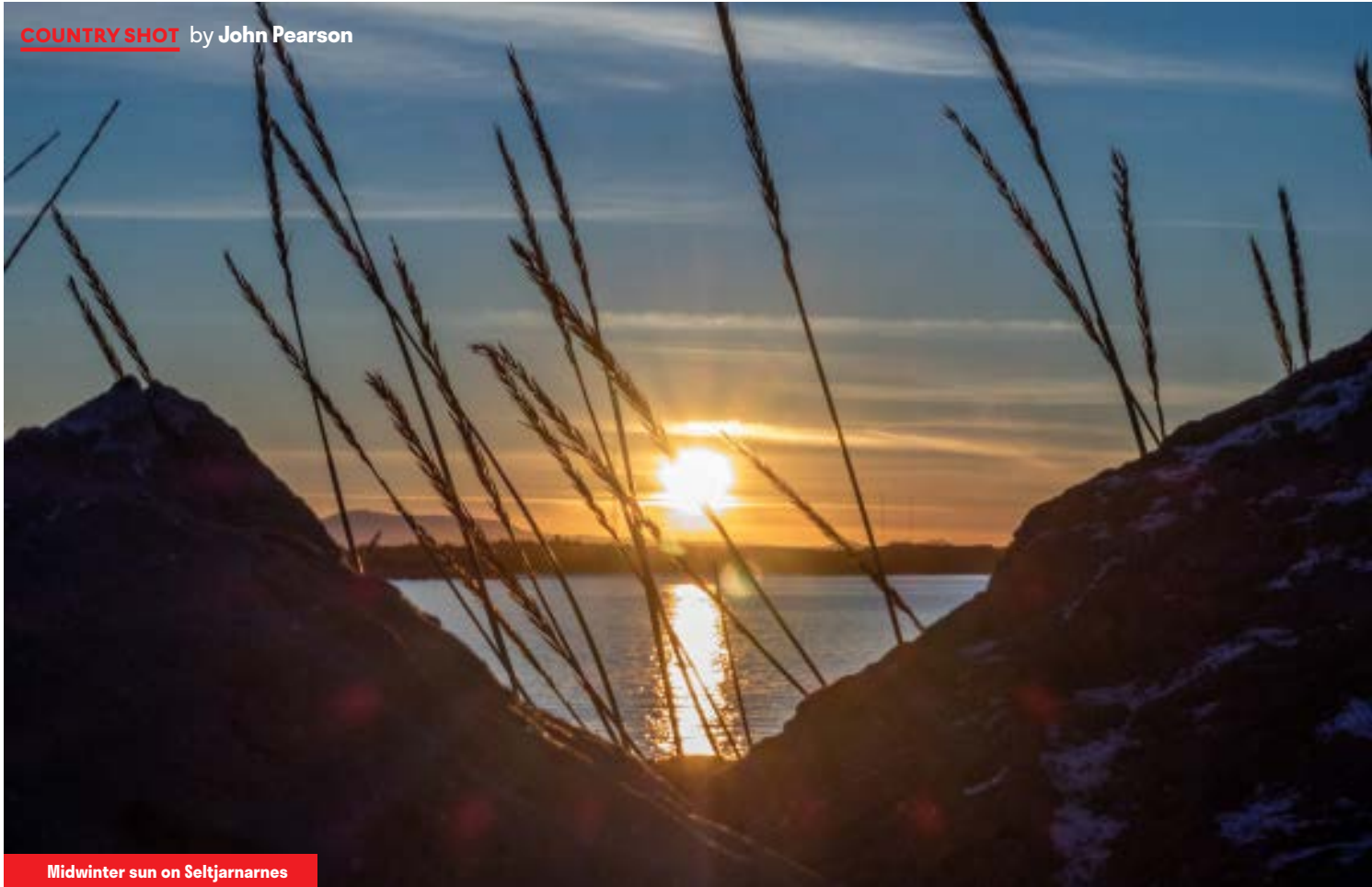
Fuck you very much for the question Arthur. I appreciate the opportunity to explain myself. I’m guessing you’re American because no other country in the western world really gives a shit about swearing. So, stop that imperialist bullshit of forcing your ethics upon other cultures. Icelanders curse pretty casually all the time, and it’s not considered. For example, we don’t ban cursing on TV or put these 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.

\*\*\*

**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. 🐟

### COUNTRY SHOT by John Pearson



Midwinter sun on Seltjarnarnes

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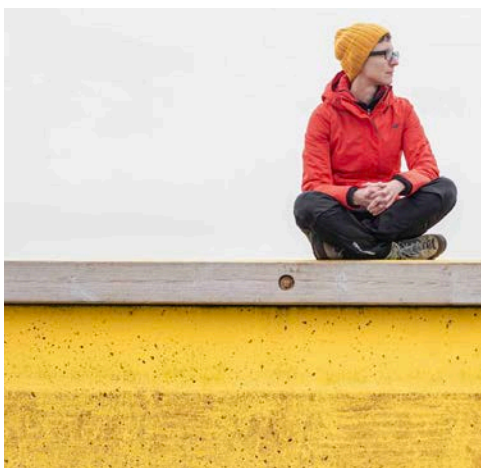


**DON'T QUOTE ME ON THAT**



**“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.”**

Kaśka Paluch blends progressive house, the sounds of nature and Icelandic folk. **p19**

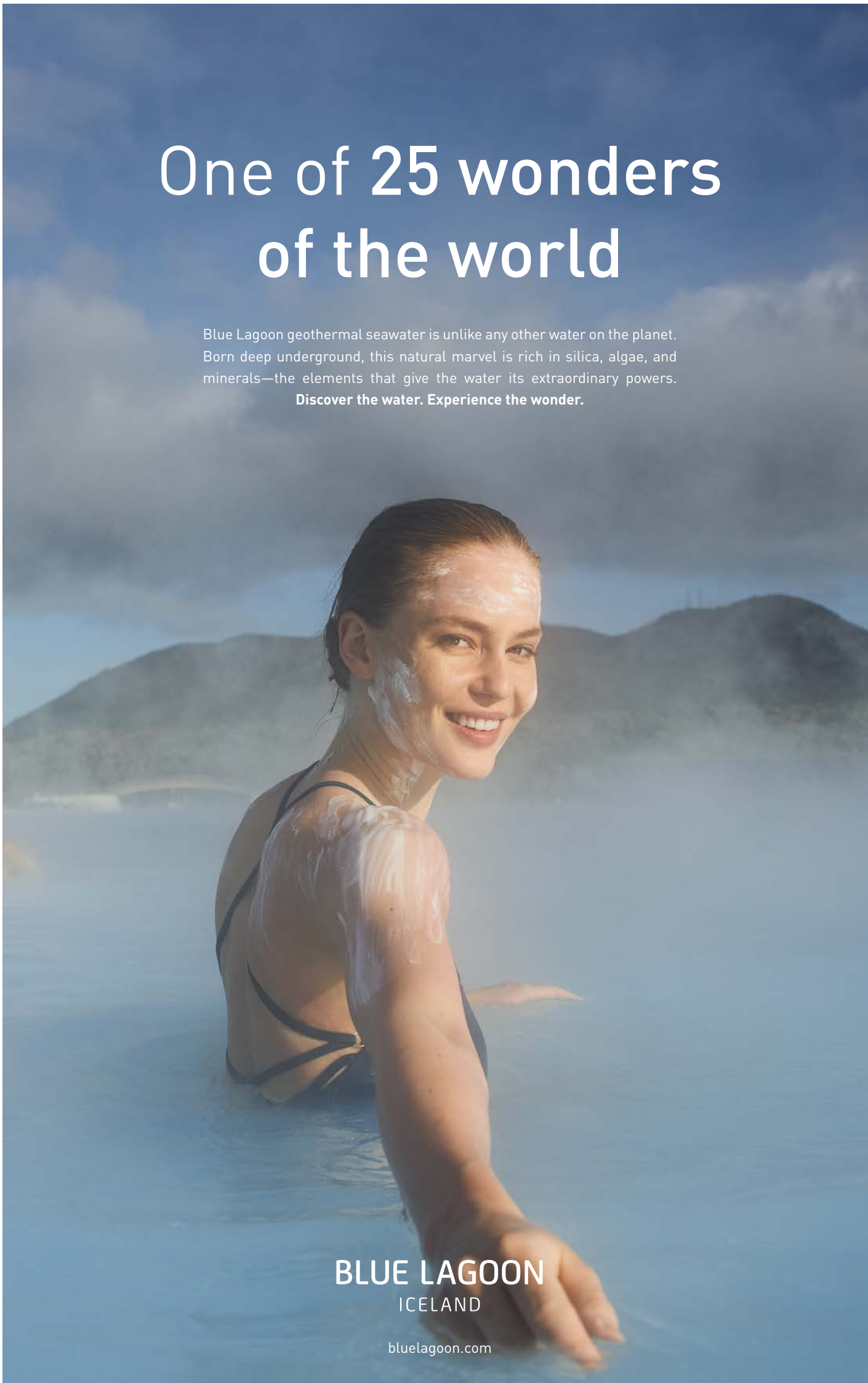


**“The courts are dominated by men who have already made up their minds not to believe survivors.”**

Edda Falak discusses misogyny, hypocrisy and the inherent injustices of Icelandic justice. **p8**

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\* You only need to type the URL in once