



ISSUES AND IMAGES ICELAND

INSPIRED
BY
ICELAND



CONTENTS

Issues and Images ICELAND

4 Q & A

Have a question about Iceland? We have the answers to some diverse questions ranging from art to hiking trails.

6 ICELAND BY ANOTHER NAME

What does the country mean to you?

7 PEDAL AWAY

Cycling is becoming an increasingly popular means of travel in Iceland.

8 POMPEI OF THE NORTH

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Vestmannaeyjar volcanic eruption, a house buried in ash in 1973 has been dug out and put on display.

9 HB GRANDI - A LEADING FISHING COMPANY IN ICELAND

When Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson took over as CEO of HB Grandi in 2012 he was no stranger to the company, after running the pelagic fish division for years.

10 LEADER AND ENTREPRENEUR

Chair of the Federation of Icelandic Industries and founder of Stiki, a consulting and software company, Svana Helen Björnsdóttir, has been active in the debate on the restoration of the Icelandic economy.

11 A TALE OF TWO SUCCESSES

Developed by Reykjavík-based TM Software, the software add-on Tempo is making major waves across continents.

12 IN HOPE OF A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

Mentis Cura brings hope to sufferers of dementia.

13 BEAUTIFUL BREIÐAFJÖRDUR

Head out to sea to uncover the magic of Breiðafjörður Bay.

14 TOMATOES AND TOURISTS

At Friðheimar, farming and tourism goes hand in hand.

16 HEAVY METAL

The light metal industry is a heavyweight in the Icelandic economy.

17 CRUISING TO ICELAND

More and more tourists are traveling to Iceland by cruise ship. In 2013, 80 ships sailed to Reykjavík and 12 other destinations in Iceland, making around 250 calls.

18 HOLLYWOOD CALLING

After his acclaimed performance as a shipwrecked fisherman in Baltasar Kormákur's *The Deep*, Ólafur Darri Ólafsson has landed some exciting roles.

20 THE JÖR FACTOR

Meet Guðmundur Jörundsson, whose celebrated collections of vintage-inspired designs have made him—already at 25—one of Iceland's leading fashion designers.

22 IN APPRECIATION OF SHEEP

An early blizzard in mid September 2012 put the resilience of the Icelandic sheep to the test.

23 LOVING LOBSTER

It took Icelanders a long time to discover that lobster is a delicacy. Its taste and value is now widely appreciated, especially in Höfn, Iceland's lobster capital.

Editor: Benedikt Jóhannesson benedikt@heimur.is

Staff writers: Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir eyglo@heimur.is, Zoë Robert zoe@heimur.is and Páll Stefánsson ps@heimur.is

Contributing writers: Anna Moiseeva, Larissa Kyzer

Design: Erlingur Páll Ingvarsson

Photographers: Geir Ólafsson, Páll Kjartansson and Páll Stefánsson

Editorial Consultant: Jón Ásbergsson, jon@islandsstofa.is

On the cover: From Reykjavík. Photo by Geir Ólafsson

Back cover: From Reykjavík. Photo by Páll Stefánsson

Printing: Oddi

Published for Promote Iceland by Heimur Publishing Ltd. www.icelandreview.com

Copyright Heimur Publishing. No articles in the magazine may be reproduced elsewhere in whole or in part without the prior permission of the publisher.

icelandreview@icelandreview.com

Issues and Images

Vol. 8 1-2013



PHOTO BY PALL STEFANSSON

24 FESTIVALS GALORE

The Icelandic festival year is packed with diverse events that anyone can enjoy.

26 THIRTY YEARS OF RUNNING

When the Reykjavík Marathon was first held in 1984, runners were considered a bunch of eccentrics. Running has since become a beloved sport among Icelanders.

27 FROM ROCK AND ROLL TO CLASSICAL OPERA

What happens when a rock musician composes an opera? The result might be something like *Jesus Christ Superstar*, a series of rock songs connected by a story line. Gunnar Þórðarson chose a completely different way, composing an opera in classical style.

28 GATEWAY TO SCREE CLOISTER AND SNOWY MOUNTAIN

Visitors to East Iceland should not miss Skriðuklaustur, a center for archaeology, ecology, literature and local food on the doorstep of the highlands.

30 LET IT GLOW

Formed as a group of school friends in 2006, Retro Stefson have gone on to conquer the Icelandic charts and beyond.

31 SAGA SITE SENSATION

History comes alive on the Saga Trail.

32 DOORSTEP OF THE HIGHLANDS

Experience the magic of Landmannalaugar.

34 NATION OF BOOKWORMS

Publisher Jóhann Páll Valdimarsson keeps Icelandic book lovers supplied and exports the nation's love of literature.

35 MAKING SENSE OF DATA

Icelandic startup DataMarket is taking off.

36 NOW YOU HAVE ONE MORE EXCUSE TO COME TO ICELAND!

One of Reykjavík's newest landmarks, the majestic Harpa concert and conference center, has helped make Iceland's capital a viable and exciting location for large events of all kinds.

38 HISTORY, ART AND NATURE

Visitors to Djúpvogur in Southeast Iceland are in for a rich experience.

40 ICELAND'S ONE STOP INVESTMENT SHOP

Iceland has many attributes to offer growing businesses.

42 ICELANDIC MOVIES

Icelandic filmmakers are constantly exploring new avenues, touching upon sensitive subjects, portraying gangsters of the underworld and amazing survival stories.

44 ICELANDIC BOOKS

The English-language market is increasingly embracing Icelandic literature. Here are three very different books that were recently published in English.

46 30 + VOLCANOES

Facts about Iceland.

47 WELCOME TO NORTH AMERICA IN ICELAND

Almannagjá, the 8 km (5 mile) long fissure at Þingvellir National Park marks the boundaries of the North American and European plates.



Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Rauðarástigur 25, IS-150 Reykjavík. Tel +354 545 9900 Fax +354 562 4878
vur@utn.stjr.is www.mfa.is



PROMOTE ICELAND
ICELAND.IS

Promote Iceland

Sundagörðum 2, IS-104 Reykjavík. Tel +354 511 4000 Fax +354 511 4040
info@promoteiceland.is www.promoteiceland.is



Q & A



PHOTOS BY PÁLL STEFANSSON

Rachel Mello
*Somerville,
Massachusetts, U.S.*

Q: Where can I find local, emerging artists in Iceland, especially in Reykjavík and Seyðisfjörður?

A: Check out the website of the Association of Icelandic Visual Artists for current exhibitions by Icelandic artists in Iceland and abroad. sim.is/syningar

While in Seyðisfjörður, visit Skaftfell – Center for Visual Arts. The center has an exhibition space and also hosts a residency program with artists from around the world.

You should also check out RoShamBo, a collection of three artists based in Seyðisfjörður. They have a workshop in the center of town.

A number of Seyðisfjörður's artists were featured in an article in the January-March 2013 issue of *Iceland Review*.

Helen
Ireland

Q: Are there any activities in Iceland for tourists with young kids that you would recommend?

A: Visiting the swimming pools is the first thing that comes to mind.

The pool in the suburb of Árbær is reportedly quite popular with families with young children because of the indoor pool for kids but the other pools are also popular among this group. The Blue Lagoon would also be suitable.

More information on the city's pools is available on its website, reykjavik.is.

You could also visit the Reykjavik Zoo and Family Park and nearby Botanical Gardens located in Laugardalur (the same area as the city's largest swimming pool, Laugardalslaug). For more information go to mu.is.

If it's a rainy day, you could visit Skemmtigarðurinn, an indoor game center with a 'jungle zone' playground and other attractions in the Smáralind shopping center in Kópavogur, a town in the Greater Reykjavík Area.



Sean
Northern Ireland



Łukasz Chmielński
Warsaw, Poland



Kevin
Ottawa, Canada

Q: Why does one of the Icelandic words for snow reference dogs?

A: *Hundslappadrifa* (lit: 'dog feet snow'), probably refers to snowflakes as large as a dog's paw, or more specifically, a cluster of wet snowflakes gently falling down from the heavens in calm weather. , according to meteorologist Trausti Jónsson.

This is the type of snow people usually find very Christmassy and is quick to cover everything in a soft blanket of snow, branches of trees, railings and roofs of houses, creaks under your feet and can easily be made into snowballs.

Trausti added that the word *hundslappadrifa* first appeared in a written source in 1898, a newspaper. He mentioned two other sources where the weather phenomenon is described where the size of the snowflakes, or cluster of snowflakes, is emphasized, further supporting the metaphor of a dog's paw.

There's a very curious article (in Icelandic) on the University of Iceland's Science Web, visindavefur.is, about words for snow, mentioning many more.

It states that *hundslappadrifa*, that is, extensive snowfall in still weather, also goes by *skæðadrifa*, *logndrifa*, *kafaldsmýglingur*, *lognkafald* and *ryk*. The name for this type of snow varies a bit between regions.

Q: Why did Iceland change from left-hand to right-hand traffic?

A: Until 1968, unlike most other European countries, Icelanders drove on the left side of the road like the Brits and the Irish. They decided to make the change mainly for two reasons:

Two years earlier, Sweden, the only other European nation to drive on the left side of the road at the time, apart from the U.K., Ireland and Iceland at the time, decided to make the change. Icelandic authorities thought it would be wise for Iceland to also drive on the right side of the road to make it easier for tourists visiting Iceland and for Icelanders traveling abroad.

The other reason for Iceland making the change was that most of the cars that were imported to Iceland were designed for right-side traffic, i.e., with the steering wheel on the left, unlike most cars in Britain and Ireland.

Q: Where can I get more information about hiking trails in Iceland, including the Þórsmörk-Landmannalaugar trail?

A: You can purchase the map Þórsmörk-Landmannalaugar (which includes the route to Skógar) from FÍ, at book stores in Iceland or from eymundsson.is which ships internationally.

Fjallabak Nature Reserve can be bought at the Iceland Travel Assistance (ITA) office in Reykjavík, in ITA huts in Fjallabak, in bookshops in Iceland and online at eymundsson.is.

Fuels for camping stoves are available from gas stations and outdoor and adventure stores around town such as Everest at Skeifan 6 in Reykjavík. It's best to ask around once you arrive to see which store is closest to your accommodation in Reykjavík.

ICELAND BY ANOTHER NAME



Strokkur, South Iceland.

What does the country mean to you?

Before the first people settled permanently in Iceland, seafarers came and went. The first Norseman to discover the country was Naddoddur Ástvaldsson from Norway. Upon his departure, snow fell on the mountains and so he named the country Snæland ('Snowland'). He was followed by Swedish Viking Garðar Svavarsson. After one winter in North Iceland, he humbly named the country Garðarshólmur ('Isle of Garðar')—after himself. The name that stuck came from Flóki Vilgerðarson. His first attempt of settling in the West Fjords shattered because of a harsh winter. As he left, he looked upon a fjord filled with drift ice and named the country Ísland ('Iceland').

Now, more than 1,000 years later, Promote Iceland has been seeking suggestions from travelers on what the country should be called, based on their experiences. This is part of an Inspired by Iceland tourism marketing campaign and—contrary to a widespread misunderstanding—is just a bit of fun and won't result in the country actually being renamed. Tourists have been eager to participate and here are some of their suggestions and the reasoning behind the names they've chosen.

WONDER LAND

It's a complete Wonder Land because of the spectacular scenery seen nowhere else in the world, and the contrasts between one place and the next are stunning. Geysers and volcanoes are a passion of mine and seeing them together in one place is something I'll never forget. My favourite memory of Iceland was walking along the wonderful black beach in Vík and seeing the sunset over the water. I just couldn't stop staring.

Hannah Muston

ENDLESS NIGHT LAND

People tend to focus on the midnight sun in Iceland, but for me it's the endless nights of the winters that are the most magical. The 24 hours of beautiful, velvety blackness punctuated by the rainbow of the northern lights and scattered with stars. The awesome wonder of a never-ending night.

Nathan Hardy

BEST COUNTRY TO GROW A BEARD LAND

I left my home in the warm, desert climate of Phoenix, Arizona, clean-shaven and giddy as a kid to embark on my Iceland adventure. Fast forward a few days and I met a handsome local chap who I noted had substantially more facial hair than I. It made him fit in with the landscape, like an ancient Viking. When in Rome... So I decided I should heed the subtle advice my new friend was giving me—live free, grow a beard and be happy!

Jason Holecheck

AWESOME JUMPER LAND

Icelandic jumpers are rugged and striking just like the country's landscape. They are stylish, beautiful and practical like so many of the people. Even the way many are produced—hand-knitted by individuals, but brought together to distribute and market, seems to represent the collective spirit of how things seem to be done in Iceland.

James Holdaway

Intro by Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir.

Quotes from inspiredbyiceland.com



PHOTOS BY GER ÓLAFSSON

PEDAL AWAY

Cycling is becoming an increasingly popular means of travel in Iceland.

But there are so few months of the year when you can cycle in Iceland,” a friend of mine once commented when I told her that I rode my bike to work every day. I explained that for most days of the year, the ground is snow and ice free—at least in Reykjavík—and if necessary, studded tires are great for winter traction.

There’s something about the fresh air and getting your circulation going, arriving wide awake and reenergized to work in the morning that becomes addictive. And more and more Icelanders are catching on. However, cycling in the center of the capital can test one’s nerves—either swaying past pedestrians on sidewalks or annoying drivers in rush hour traffic. Thankfully, the situation is set to improve as city authorities are now constructing new separated cycle and walking paths to make Reykjavík more bicycle-friendly and connect the city’s cycle path network with neighboring communities.

While cycling in winter can be enjoyable

in its own right, nothing beats long rides on sunny summer days. There are plenty of opportunities to explore the city on two wheels—some tourism operators even offer guided cycling tours.

For instance, try biking from Öskjuhlíð where the Perlan landmark building is perched, westwards along the seaside of Fossvogur, past the Nauthólsvík thermal beach and onwards to Vesturbær, the West End of town. You can continue past the capital’s borders and through Seltjarnarnes, all the way to the lighthouse on Gróttá. The spit, which turns into an island at high tide, is famous for its birdlife.

Another recommended tour is to head in the opposite direction from the starting point, cycle to the bottom of the cove and continue through the valley Fossvogsdalur, which separates Reykjavík and Kópavogur. Green and flowery during the summer, the valley is an oasis in the busy capital area. It connects with another valley, Elliðaárdalur,

through which a salmon river flows. The tall trees blocking out buildings, rabbits bouncing along the path and cheerful birdsong filling the air, you’d think the city were a million miles away. The path leads through a stable area and onwards to nature reserve Heiðmörk where you can circle endlessly.

That should have been pointed out to Hollywood superstar Russell Crowe who was in Iceland in summer 2012 to shoot scenes for Darren Aronofsky’s *Noah*. He cycled to stay in shape but tweeted that Reykjavík was too compact for him to get a proper workout.

Whether your wish is to exercise, get from A to B, go sightseeing, seek an adrenaline rush by downhill biking, cross or even circle the country, or simply enjoy the weather and view on a clear day, Iceland has something to offer. And you don’t have to bring your own bike. Rentals include: hjolafelagid.is, capitalinn.is, kriacycles.com and icelandbike.com.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



From the Vestmannaeyjar eruption 40 years ago.

POMPEI OF THE NORTH

To mark the 40th anniversary the Vestmannaeyjar volcanic eruption, a house buried in ash in 1973 has been dug out and put on display.

My dad woke me up and I heard a loud rumble. I looked out the window and saw a wall of fire extend from the mountain. My first thought was that a war had broken out—with the Cold War being on everyone’s mind—and remember feeling relieved when I realized it was a volcanic eruption... I was 13.”

This is how Kristín Jóhannsdóttir, marketing manager of Vestmannaeyjar (the Westman Islands), recalls the volcanic eruption of Heimaey which came without warning on January 23, 1973. She and her siblings were brought to the harbor from where ships carried islanders to safety on the mainland. Miraculously, only one person perished.

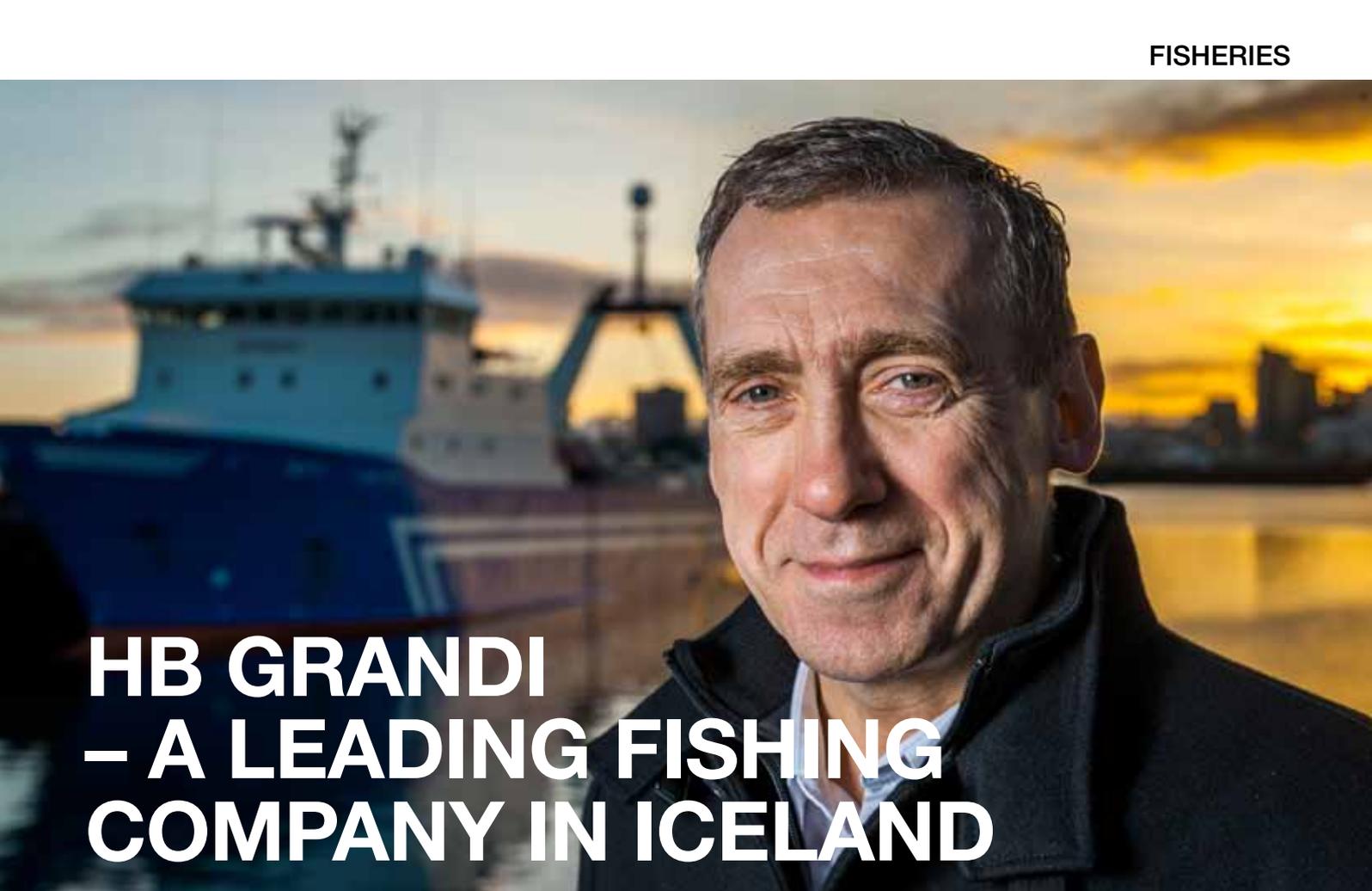
The next two and a half years Kristín and her family stayed as eruption refugees in Reykjavík, at first with relatives, then in temporary housing. Her father remained on Heimaey throughout the eruption to help save whatever could be salvaged.

Also making a hasty escape that fateful night was Gerður G. Sigurðardóttir, who was devastated when she realized that her new house had been buried in a 15-meter thick layer of pumice, emitted during the eruption, which died down on July 3, 1973.

But now her house is being excavated and Gerður has found everything the way she and her family had left it. A dome will be built on top of the house, which will become the center of the museum Eldheimar (‘Worlds of Fire’), set to open in 2014 to mark the anniversary of the Heimaey eruption.

On January 23, 2013, islanders remembered the anniversary of the eruption with a torch parade and fireworks show. The event was followed with the more celebratory *Goslokahátíð* (‘End of Eruption Festival’) held annually during the first weekend in July.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



HB GRANDI – A LEADING FISHING COMPANY IN ICELAND

PHOTOS BY GER OLAFSSON

When Vilhjalmur Vilhjalmsson took over as CEO of HB Grandi in 2012 he was no stranger to the company, after running the pelagic fish division for years.

HB Grandi is one of the largest fishing companies in Iceland and a leader in its field. The company has its headquarters in Reykjavik but processing plants in Akranes and Vopnafjörður, as well as in Reykjavik. HB Grandi markets its products worldwide—products made from both groundfish and pelagic fish caught and processed by the company's 800 employees.

HB Grandi is the only fishing company listed on the stock exchange in Iceland (First North) and has been listed since 1992. In recent years, the company has been doing well, has paid down its debts and invested in a new fishmeal factory at Vopnafjörður. The company also recently ordered two new ships to replace two of its older vessels. With the new ships, the company expects to further improve the efficiency of its operations. Vilhjalmur says that even though Icelanders have been fishing for over a thousand years they always place the greatest emphasis on using the latest advances in technology for fishing and processing. HB Grandi takes pride in its production of quality seafood

products and respect for natural resources and responsible use of Iceland's fishing grounds guide the company's operations.

THE FISHING FLEET

HB Grandi's four freezer trawlers are large, well equipped vessels that catch and process redfish, saithe, cod, haddock, and Greenland halibut. The catch is processed as soon as it comes on board. The result is outstanding seafood from the clean waters of Iceland.

The three wetfish trawlers catch redfish, cod and saithe which are delivered to the processing plants in Akranes and Reykjavik. The catch is pre-cooled and well iced in tubs to preserve the quality of the fish.

HB Grandi also operates a sophisticated fleet for catching pelagic fish: blue whiting, herring, mackerel and capelin. A growing part of the catch is processed for human consumption in the company's plants, while the remaining portion is processed into fishmeal and oil at the company's fishmeal factories.

THE PROCESSING PLANTS

HB Grandi operates groundfish processing plants in Reykjavik and Akranes and efficient freezing plants in Vopnafjörður and Akranes which specialize in capelin, capelin roe, herring fillets and flaps and H/G mackerel. Freezing of capelin mainly takes place from January to March and of herring from July to December while in its fishmeal factories in Vopnafjörður and Akranes, HB Grandi produces superior fishmeal and fish oil under strict quality control. The company operates a research laboratory where the raw materials and products are tested for quality.

Vilhjalmur knows that the job is never finished at Grandi: "HB Grandi is committed to supplying products and rendering services that fulfill the customers' expectations regarding quality, safety and reliability. To that end, HB Grandi employs capable, experienced employees and maintains quality management systems, that comply with internationally recognized standards."

By Benedikt Jóhannesson



LEADER AND ENTREPRENEUR

Svana Helen Björnsdóttir is the chair of the Federation of Icelandic Industries and founder of Stiki, a consulting and software company, specializing in data and computer safety, and has been active in the debate on the restoration of the Icelandic economy.

PHOTO BY GEIR OLAFSSON

About a fifth of the Icelandic workforce is employed in industry, but since the beginning of the crisis the number has fallen slightly, particularly in construction. However, production and service companies in industry have done rather well. Now there are signs that things are improving again, more jobs and more value are being created. Still, the growth has not been as fast as many forecasted after the sharp devaluation of the Icelandic króna.

According to Svana Helen, one of the factors hampering growth is education. “Human resources are the single most important factor, if we want to make Icelandic industry competitive. Hence, we must stress education in technical fields at all levels of education,” she says.

MORE INVESTMENT NEEDED

Iceland has been concentrating on heavy industry, especially aluminum, with three smelters currently in operation. Does Iceland need more investment in aluminum?

Svana Helen explains that investment is of key importance to Iceland’s economy. “One of the weaknesses of the Icelandic economy is low investment. Investment has been around 13 percent of GDP but should be at least 20 percent if we are to sustain a natural employment level. Therefore we would welcome new investment, whether it be in energy intense industries like aluminum or other fields.”

Iceland needs more foreign investment, but the country needs to regain economic stability, Svana Helen says. Five years after the downfall, capital controls are still in place with no end in sight. Svana Helen has been an outspoken critic of the Icelandic króna and thinks Iceland should pursue its application to the European Union. She names three reasons: First, the lack of economic stability in Iceland; second, Iceland would be full and active member in all European cooperation; third, membership would greatly reduce the disadvantages associated with running a company in Iceland, which are non-existing in neighboring countries.

Svana Helen acknowledges that there may be disadvantages, but regrets that there is not enough professional discussion on the matter. “We must be able to discuss this in a relaxed manner. The matter is of such importance to Iceland.”

THE BASIC VALUES

As a leader, Svana Helen has contemplated the qualities a leader should have. To her, a leader needs a clear vision, and must be optimistic and honest. “Of course the leader must praise workers and reimburse them for success. The good old truths that people should not spend more than they earn and a company should not have excessive debt are still fundamental. Discipline is needed to keep the manager on a straight track. The entrepreneur must inspire the workers and the manager must be aware of the inherent dangers in business, hence improving productivity and continually try to keep an edge on the competition.”

By Benedikt Jóhannesson

A TALE OF TWO SUCCESSES



The TM Software team.

Developed by Reykjavík-based TM Software, the software add-on Tempo is making major waves across continents.

Tightly integrated with the software platform JIRA (developed by the Australian company Atlassian), the Tempo plug-in was initially developed as an internal solution for a time tracking pain-point felt by the organization's numerous development teams. The product was launched externally in 2008 and has been growing exponentially ever since.

Back in 2006, TM Software was introduced to Atlassian's portfolio of software tools. This was part of the company's initiatives to introduce Agile tools to its internal development teams. JIRA was initially introduced for software development teams to help track issues and projects related to the development process and has extended to other uses since then, such as for Agile marketing and sales, customer support and more.

PERSEVERANCE, RESOLVE ... AND A LITTLE FUN ALONG THE WAY

The company quickly discovered with its adopted Agile and lean processes that its existing time tracking solution was neither efficient nor sufficiently accurate for the types of data needed for internal and customer billing purposes. Employees had to book their time in two systems: one for salary and billing calculations and the other for Agile project management. From this problem, Tempo plug-in was conceived.

As part of the company's lean initiatives, primary problems were initially identified and solutions were created for them. TM Software's in-house iteration of Tempo was launched in 2007. After discovering a hole in the market for time tracking software related to JIRA, Tempo plug-in was foisted onto the international market as a tool for painless and accurate time tracking solution for JIRA issues and projects.

EARLY SUCCESS

When Tempo plug-in was first introduced to the external market, there was little idea whether it would flourish or flounder. But with a lot of tenacity and determination, Tempo met an early and consistent success. Perhaps it is because TM Software and the Tempo

team were and continue to be actual stakeholders in their own product as both product developers and users, providing real-time reviews and tweaking, that the product has reached such accomplishments.

Today, Atlassian's JIRA is the most popular issue tracking system in the world and is used by nine out of ten *Fortune* 10 companies. Tempo plug-in is now used by nearly 4,000 companies in over 90 countries worldwide, and has remained one of the top-grossing, most popular add-ons in Atlassian's Marketplace, since it was formally launched in June 2012, and was voted the best Atlassian add-on of 2012. The add-on is available as both a locally hosted and on demand cloud solution. Tempo's customers range from small startups to large enterprises.

THE FUTURE'S SO BRIGHT

Their swift success hasn't gone to the Tempo team's heads. While continually growing in size, the group currently perseveres with a modest 15 full-time employees, not including a handful of contractors and consultants. The team does not include sales staff, but instead, relies heavily on inbound marketing strategies that targets Tempo's core audience, and an online sales system.

Tempo's team still remains tightly connected, delivering around eight product releases per year, in addition to one major product release. Building on the strong relationships the team has cultivated with its customers, in 2013 Tempo plans to introduce a number of new JIRA add-ons to Atlassian's Marketplace, built from early testing and feedback from its customers. One new product will provide resource planning for Agile and other teams using JIRA, and will launch over the upcoming months. Another will provide innovative solutions for multiple organizational pain points related to billing, invoicing, and generating fundamental customer and employee data.

Tempo's identity, as symbolized both in its name and logo, is representative of the cyclical and rhythmic nature of time and the need to move and remain in sync with it to reach their objectives. The team's primary aim is to create tools that enable users to maintain their rhythm and tempo, while continually reaching their goals. It plans to maintain its own rhythm while dancing into the future.



Mentis Cura CEO Kristinn Grétarsson.



IN HOPE OF A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

PHOTO BY GER ÓLAFSSON

Mentis Cura brings hope to sufferers of dementia.

Icelandic company Mentis Cura has developed a biomarker to help diagnose Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in their early stages. An all-Icelandic design, it's the first of its kind in the world. In August 2013, the company signed a major contract with a large Chinese hospital. The tool, Sigla ('Navigation'), also promises more accurate diagnosis, and efficient monitoring of the disease's progress and the effect of medication than other methods available today. Mentis Cura opened its first diagnostic center in Reykjavík in February 2013. "The reaction has been incredibly good; we have assisted over 40 individuals seeking help with the diagnosis. They are mostly referrals from GPs but some come here because they suspected that they might have Alzheimer's disease—in some cases, their suspicion has been confirmed," says Mentis Cura CEO Kristinn Grétarsson when we meet two months after the diagnostic center's opening.

Sigla, an easy-to-use tool, applies a five-minute EEG recording for the diagnosis.

Comparing the results to an EEG database of over 5,000 carefully-documented clinical cases of dementia and healthy individuals—compiled by Mentis Cura's research partners at Landspítali National University Hospital in Iceland over the past ten years—Sigla can differentiate between mild cognitive impairment, depression, Alzheimer's disease and Lewy bodies-Parkinson's dementia. Whereas people aren't usually diagnosed until the diseases are in their advanced stages, Sigla can diagnose them years before conventional technology. And the need is dire. "There are 36 million people who suffer from dementia in the world, including Alzheimer's. More and more people are affected each year because the world's population is aging. Every year, more than ten million people seek help with diagnosis without getting sufficient answers." Kristinn points out that a recent study by the NIH (US National Institute of Health) reveals that it takes more than three years and seven visits to the doctor to obtain a diagnosis for Lewy bodies-Parkinson's dementia. The International Alzheimer's Society predicts that by 2030, 66 million people will suffer from the disease and 115 million by 2050. "Today, Alzheimer's is the 18th largest economy in the world and the 2nd to 5th most common cause of death in the Western World. It's the fastest-

growing disease in terms of cost and death rate," Kristinn states.

Today, there is no cure for Alzheimer's but Kristinn is hopeful early and more accurate diagnosis can help pharmaceutical companies and researchers develop better treatment options. For that purpose, collaboration has been launched with researchers in Europe and China. Also, in spite of there not being any cure for the disease, early diagnosis makes a world of difference for Alzheimer's patients. "Early diagnosis is a matter of human rights," stated Fanney Proppé Eiríksdóttir, who chairs FAAS, an association for relatives of Alzheimer's patients in Iceland, at the center's opening. "It means that patients can fight their own battles, instead of having to rely on their partners or children, take care of their own matters and retire with dignity." With Sigla, hope is given to sufferers of dementia. "Doctors all around the world can send in EEG recordings. They're inexpensive and available everywhere. We then send a report back," explains Kristinn. While working on further diagnostic tools, Mentis Cura is aiming for Sigla to be put to use around the world. Already planning the next product launch, a biomarker for ADHD will become available in late 2013.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

BEAUTIFUL BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR



From Flatey.

PHOTO BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

Head out to sea to uncover the magic of Breiðafjörður Bay.

Unique basalt rock formations, uncountable islands, colorful birdlife and stunning scenery are some of the attractions which sum up Breiðafjörður Bay. Separating Snæfellsnes peninsula and the southern West Fjords, Breiðafjörður runs 50 km (30 miles) wide and 125 km (78 miles) long.

Among the many islands, islets and skerries—there are an estimated 3,000—is Flatey. The island is the largest in Breiðafjörður and the last that remains inhabited year-round. In former times the island was important both as a fishing centre and as the hub of the commercial life of Breiðafjörður. After peaking at 400 in 1900, the population now consists of just two farming families during the winter while the island is a popular destination among tourists during summer.

Arriving on the island, you really get that sense of time standing still. No cars are allowed onto the island so tractors and wheelbarrows are the transport of choice for carting goods from the ferry down the island's single street to the old town area. It's there that the island hotel is located. Colorful 19th century houses, many of which have been renovated and turned into summer homes, are also scattered across the island.

Breiðafjörður's natural beauty is complemented by its rich bird and marine life. Puffins, eider ducks, shags, kittiwakes, fulmars and the occasional white-tailed eagle are among the bird species found in the area while the bay also boasts the 'Big Five': blue, fin, hump-back, minke and killer whales.

Seatours run a range of trips including day tours to Flatey, whale watching and various gourmet tours, such as the Vikingsushi Adventure which offers guests a taste of the region's fresh seafood: scallops and sea urchins eaten fresh on the boat with soya sauce, wasabi, ginger, lemon and a glass of white wine.

The company also runs the ferry *Baldur*, which sails across the bay, considerably shortening the route between the mid-west and West Fjords. Passengers who wish to stop at Flatey for a few hours or longer along the way (*Baldur* sails twice daily during summer and to a reduced schedule during winter), can have their car ferried across where it will be waiting on their arrival.

seatours.is

By Zoë Robert



TOMATOES AND TOURISTS

Friðheimar is one of the largest tomato farms in Iceland, located in the hub of Iceland's greenhouse farming in Reykholt, South Iceland. The farm is run by couple Knútur Rafn Ármann and Helena Hermundardóttir with their five kids taking active part in farm work. Moving from the city, they bought the abandoned farm in 1995 and restored the onsite greenhouses, the oldest of which was built in 1946. "We needed a place that could combine our interests, horticulture and horse breeding, a place where a couple of 25-year-olds could settle down," explains Knútur. They started dating in high school, then he moved on to study agronomy and she enrolled at the Icelandic Horticultural College.

The biggest advantage of Icelandic horticulture farming is closeness to markets. "The tomatoes are harvested in the morning, picked up in the early afternoon and sometimes become available in stores the same day," says Knútur. "It also enables us to let the tomatoes ripen longer than in many places abroad," adds Helena, "making them redder and sweeter when they reach consumers." They produce four types of tomatoes and, to a lesser extent, cucumbers. Icelandic tomatoes hold a 70 percent share on the domestic market and Friðheimar provide 18 percent of the total supply, 370 tons in 2012. Knútur and Helena are also about to launch a new product, a drink made from the juice of second and third-class tomatoes designed to give consumers an energy boost.

"When one considers that 90 percent of a cucumber and tomato is water, one is bound to conclude that the quality of the water is an important taste factor," theorizes Knútur of his products'

At Friðheimar, farming and tourism goes hand in hand.



The farm is run by couple Helena Hermundardóttir and Knútur Rafn Ármann.

PHOTOS BY PALL STEFÁNSSON



popularity. “Foreign vegetable farmers are amazed when I tell them that in Iceland we water our plants with drinking water.” Another factor in the quality of Icelandic products is the lack of pesticides in greenhouses; biological pest controls replaced chemicals about 15 years ago. “My job as a vegetable farmer is to manage the flies; if I see too many whiteflies, I release some more green flies,” says Knútur, making it sound like a video game. He also has to manage the bees used to pollinate the tomato plants.

Tourism has proven a valuable extra income source for Friðheimar. “It started out with horse shows,” explains Knútur. Friðheimar has a herd of around 40 horses. “I thought foreign tourists might be interested in learning more about the Icelandic horse,” he says. His and Helena’s children help demonstrate the different gaits at shows with narrations running in a range of languages. Afterwards, the tourists get to meet the horses. “They always love petting them,” Knútur smiles. The greenhouses caught their attention too and Friðheimar eventually became a regular stop on Reykjavík Excursion’s Golden Circle Tour. “I give a little speech about greenhouse farming, show the guests around and then they get a cup of tomato soup,” says Knútur. He and Helena have installed a kitchen in the main greenhouse. “We welcomed 25,000 guests last year and expect 40,000 this year.” Buses drop by every day. “We work on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Day,” says Helena. “It’s a conscious decision. Dairy farmers have to work every day too.”

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



PHOTO BY GEIR ÓLAFSSON

HEAVY METAL

The light metal industry is a heavyweight in the Icelandic economy.

The aluminum industry contributes ISK 90 billion (USD 753 million) to the Icelandic economy annually, making the industry a heavyweight in the Republic's economy. Approximately 1,800 people are employed directly by the three aluminum companies operating in Iceland with 2,800 employed by related industries.

In March 2013, the Institute of Economic Studies at the University of Iceland released a report on the direct and indirect contribution of the aluminum industry to the Icelandic economy. The authors of the report concluded that the industry in conjunction with the energy sector is a major industry in the Icelandic economy.

The report says that the aluminum's industry annual direct and indirect contribution to the economy corresponds to 7 percent of Iceland's GDP. In comparison, Iceland's single largest industry, the seafood industry, is estimated to contribute 18 percent of the GDP. Aluminum's share in exports has grown steadily and now consti-

tutes 40 percent of export products, a similar percentage as the seafood industry.

Of the three aluminum producers in Iceland, Alcan Iceland Ltd. is the oldest. It's located in Straumsvík, just southwest of the capital region. Alcan has around 450 employees and an annual production capacity of 188,000 tons. The second-oldest is Norðurál – Century Aluminum, located on Grundartangi east of Akranes in West Iceland. Norðurál employs 500 people and produces 275,000 tons per year. Norðurál is now in talks with the government on building a new top-of-the-line smelter in Helguvík, near Keflavík in Southwest Iceland. The newest smelter is that of Alcoa Fjarðaál in Reyðarfjörður in the East Fjords, employing 500 people and producing 350,000 tons of aluminum annually. Alcoa also considered building a 300,000-ton smelter in Bakki near Húsavík in Northeast Iceland but aborted those plans in 2011.

By Páll Stefánsson



PHOTO BY GERD OLAFSSON

Leaving Reykjavik harbor, Viðey and Mt. Esja in the background.

CRUISING TO ICELAND

Adventure at sea.

More and more tourists are traveling to Iceland by cruise ship. In 2013, 80 ships sailed to Reykjavik and 12 other destinations in Iceland, making around 250 calls. Every year, cruises are becoming more popular and Iceland is offering more and more destinations, each with their own special tours and activities, not to forget the great photo opportunities.

In the past decade, the number of ports marketing themselves to cruise ships has grown, almost year by year. Tourists flock to take part in the various activities, whether it be shopping, horseback riding, cave diving or simply enjoying the unique seafood at local restaurants. Bus companies offer trips to the most exotic places and you can also decide to see the country from above, by helicopter or airplane. The adventures are just waiting to happen.

By Benedikt Jóhannesson

HOLLYWOOD CALLING

*After his acclaimed performance as a shipwrecked fisherman in Baltasar Kormákur's *The Deep*, Ólafur Darri Ólafsson has landed some exciting roles.*



Darri in his role in *Stormland*.



Darri as Guðlaugur in *The Deep*.

Ólafur Darri Ólafsson's parts range from macho marine engineers, to mentally-disabled gentle giants, to party-loving playboys. Through the lead in the much praised docudrama *The Deep* (*Djúpið*) by Baltasar Kormákur, which was shortlisted for a 2013 foreign-language Oscar nomination, he proved that he is among Iceland's top artists.

HIGHS AND LOWS

The Deep is based on the incredible feat of Guðlaugur Friðþórsson, a fisherman in Vestmannaeyjar (the Westman Islands), who swam three nautical miles for five hours in ice cold waters and then walked barefoot across a rugged lava field for three hours to safety, after his ship, *Hellisey VE 503*, sank one harsh winter's day in 1984. The four other crew members perished.

"It was no easy task but a rewarding experience", says Darri, as the actor is usually called. All ocean scenes, apart from a few underwater shots that were taken in a swim-

ming pool, were actually filmed in the ocean, under authentic circumstances. Special effects weren't used to any extent. It was important to make the film as authentic as possible, not to give a fake picture of what it was like being a fisherman at the time. I was often at a loss and sometimes came close to giving up. I wasn't really going to give up but it just seemed so impossible at times. Once when I hit a low Baltasar [Kormákur, the director] told me to imagine how great it would be at the premiere to be able to say that we did it all for real—and he was right; we certainly enjoyed the fruits of our labor."

BRAVING THE COLD

While in real life, Guðlaugur swam to shore in 5°C (41°F) cold water in the dead of winter, most of the ocean shots for *The Deep* were taken in early autumn 2010 when the ocean was about five degrees warmer.

"The sea was cold but I wore a wetsuit. Cold comes and goes and a cup of hot chocolate was waiting for me and it was great to

relax in the hot tub at the swimming pool in Garður afterwards. Just wonderful. I always felt safe in the ocean, there were people looking out for me. And to be honest, it was cozy at times, plainly meditative to be carried with the waves. The hardest part was the landing scene." Darri refers to the scene where his character finally reaches land and the wild surf knocks him against rocks on the hostile beach. "We had to do it three times in three days—when we made the shot that ended up being used in the scene it was very windy and not without risk. But I was surrounded by good people who were prepared to walk through fire for me."

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL TRIALS

Filming in the ocean wasn't the only challenge the crew faced, they also shot in a sinking ship in the Helguvík harbor. "We had to sink the ship more than once. Engineers had to work out how to overturn and sink it. They weren't certain of the best way to proceed—mostly they're working on how to keep ships



PHOTO BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

“I always felt safe in the ocean, there were people looking out for me. And to be honest, it was cozy at times, plainly meditative to be carried with the waves.”

afloat. I think they rather enjoyed themselves. They had to use two large cranes and chains to the ocean floor. Once the ship sank accidentally and then it just had to be fished up and sunk again.”

The role wasn't only challenging for Darri physically, as he also had to convey certain emotions while in the freezing water. “Mentally the role was difficult because I had to put myself into the mind of a man who survived—it was a miracle, it wasn't supposed to be possible—while others died. It must have been extremely difficult for him to experience. I found it harder to play those scenes than those that were physically de-

manding. They were really trying and the premiere took me back to that place.”

HOLLYWOOD COMES KNOCKING

Darri holding dual citizenship—he was born in New Britain, Connecticut in 1973—made it easy for Ben Stiller to cast him in a supporting role in his remake of *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, partly filmed in Iceland in 2012, set to premiere in late 2013. Stiller praised Darri's performance on Twitter, calling him, “One of the best actors in Iceland.”

In late December it was revealed that Darri has been cast for *A Walk Among the Tomb-*

stones, directed by Scott Frank (*Minority Report*, 2002), in which the leading role is played by Liam Neeson. Darri will also play in the television series *True Detectives* with Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson.

When asked on an earlier occasion whether his ambitions might lead him to Hollywood, Darri responded, “I would go there for the right part but not necessarily move there. Artistically, I have all the motivation I need in Iceland. But I like to keep my options open,” adding, “It's vital to try new things, to push one's boundaries.”

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

DESIGN



PHOTOS: THE SPREAD BY PALL STEFANSSON

THE JÖR FACTOR

Meet Guðmundur Jörundsson, whose celebrated collections of vintage-inspired designs have made him—already at 25—one of Iceland’s leading fashion designers.



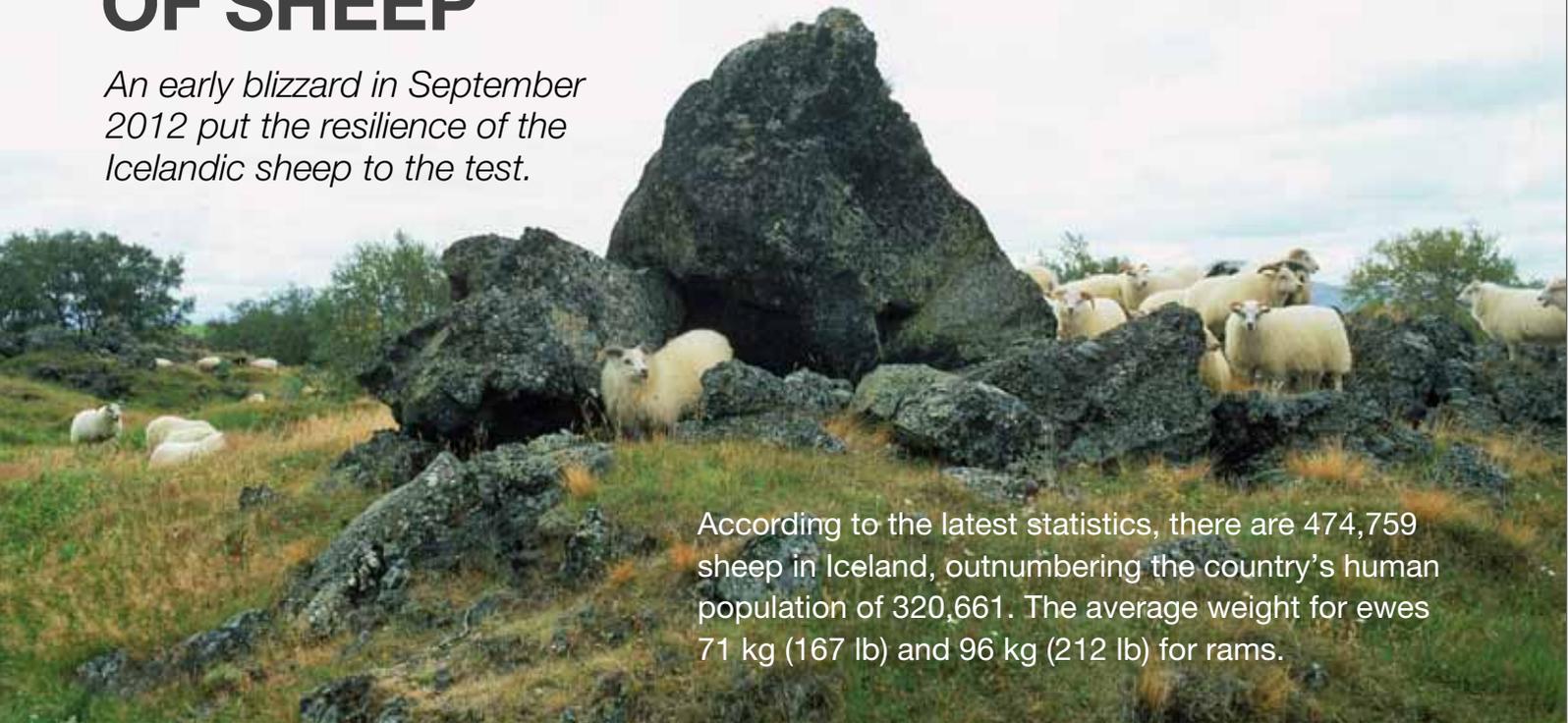
JÖR by GUÐMUNDUR JÖRUNDSSON is a new Icelandic fashion label, the creation of fashion designer Guðmundur Jörundsson and the company's co-founder, Gunnar Örn Petersen. The debut collection, called JEWLA, was showcased in October 2012, as a spring/summer 2013 menswear collection, and received great reviews from Icelandic fashion enthusiasts. "It was my first spring/summer collection ever and I was inspired by the traditional dress of Jews and priests, crystal jewelry and pastel colors, intertwined with chic modern patterns," says Guðmundur. Guðmundur's new collection JEWLIA, which premiered at the 2013 Reykjavík Fashion Festival (RFF), is constructed of high quality fabrics such as Holland & Cherry and was produced at a production

house in Turkey where luxury brands like Armani and Paul Smith produce their designs. Guðmundur and his partner Gunnar Örn are looking to expand into international markets. "We are very excited about the Nordic countries as well as Japan," Guðmundur states. At the opening of RFF, he received an export grant from DHL in Iceland. Guðmundur graduated with a BA degree in Fashion Design from the Icelandic Academy of the Arts (IAA) in 2011 whilst working as the creative director and head designer of the local menswear brand KORMÁKUR & SKJÖLDUR (K&S). The brand is renowned for its masculine designs combined with classic tailoring. "I will still design for K&S and work on my own new collections simultaneously," Guðmundur notes.

By Anna Moiseeva

IN APPRECIATION OF SHEEP

An early blizzard in September 2012 put the resilience of the Icelandic sheep to the test.



According to the latest statistics, there are 474,759 sheep in Iceland, outnumbering the country's human population of 320,661. The average weight for ewes 71 kg (167 lb) and 96 kg (212 lb) for rams.

Through the centuries, sheep have kept their masters alive as a source of meat, fat, milk, wool and skins, and also provided the materials for tools and toys. A clear sign of their value: the Icelandic word for sheep, *fé*, also means money.

The hardy creatures run wild in the summer and—as proven during the disastrous blizzard that struck North Iceland's mountain pastures in September 2012—can survive up to 45 days under a cover of snow. Among surviving sheep were two lambs that managed to dig themselves out of the snowdrifts that trapped them and, in spite of their mother being among the around 10,000 sheep that perished, were able to handle the harsh winter conditions in the mountains until they were recovered 110 days after the snow-storm.

The toughest of the tough are the leader sheep, *forystufé*, which lead the herds across obstacles and to cover in bad weather. They are not a separate breed but have special characteristics. Leader sheep are described as long-legged, skinny, fit and resilient, with large intelligent eyes; they have a light and special kind of walk and their coat is often dark in color. Leader sheep are mentioned in the Icelandic Sagas but have also been known in other countries—they

are even referenced in the Bible. However, nowadays, their breeding appears to be limited to Iceland.

Sheep are among the animals brought to Iceland with the Norse settlers more than 1,100 years back and have been isolated on the island since. They are of the short-tailed breed, which used to be common across Northern Europe but can now only be found there in small numbers, and in even smaller numbers in Russia. Icelandic sheep were first exported to North America in the 1980s, where the breed is in rapid growth.

While Icelandic sheep are bred almost entirely for their meat nowadays, wool is a valued by-product. The coat has an inner and outer layer and two kinds of fiber. These are called *tog*, long, wavy, coarse and water-resistant outer hairs, and *pel*, short, fine, light and insulating inner hairs. This is a special characteristic Icelandic sheep are thought to have developed due to cold and fluctuating weather conditions. The two variants of fiber can be spun separately but combined they're used to make *lopi*, a special kind of yarn, of which the distinct Icelandic *lopapeysa* woolen sweater is produced.

Like other Icelandic domestic animals, sheep come in many colors. The four main colors are white, gray, black and rust

brown—most sheep are white—but there are many more color patterns and variants. For example, there are tens of different variants of bicolor sheep. Both male and female sheep can be either polled or horned.

In late summer, the annual Icelandic Championship in Ram Groping is held in Hólmavík, the West Fjords, where professionals and non-professionals can take a stab at ranking rams according to their qualities. The prize is sperm from the West Iceland Sheep Insemination Center, much appreciated by breeders. The pairing of ewes and rams is a carefully calculated affair. The competition is held by the town's Sheep Farming Museum, dedicated to this particularly hardy creature to which Icelanders, to a considerable extent, owe their existence.

As a token of appreciation, some listeners of *Rás 2* cast their votes for the Icelandic sheep in the national radio station's annual selection for Person of the Year in December 2012.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

Sources:

The Farmers Association of Iceland (*bondi.is*); Statistics Iceland (*statice.is*); *Íslenska sauðkindin og saga sauðfjárræktar á Íslandi*, compiled by Árni Brynjar Bragason; and *Forystufé á Íslandi* by Lárus G. Birgisson, 1994.

LOVING LOBSTER

It took Icelanders a long time to discover that lobster is a delicacy. Its taste and value is now widely appreciated, especially in Höfn, Iceland's lobster capital.

The history of catching lobster, or langoustine, off South Iceland goes back to the 1950s. “They had neither the right boats nor the right fishing gear. The first successful attempts were made in the 1960s by the crew of *Hafbjörg* from Norðfjörður. It often takes out-of-towners to point the value out to locals,” says Gunnar Ásgeirsson, chair of Skinney-Pinganes, of fishermen from the East Fjords. Based in Höfn, Skinney-Pinganes is now the country's largest producer of lobster. “It created employment,” Gunnar adds of the rise of lobster fishing. “When the herring disappeared in the late sixties, the industry's focus shifted from herring to lobster. It didn't occur to anyone to eat the lobster at the time—all of it was exported,” Gunnar remarks. This is still the case. Although the domestic market is growing with Icelanders having developed an appetite for the delicacy and tourists eager to try Icelandic lobster, Skinney-Pinganes' main markets for the seafood are Spain and Canada.

Even though it only accounts for about 10 percent of Skinney-

Pinganes' turnover, lobster is its most valuable product per kilo. Approximately 600 tons of lobster are caught by the company's vessels each year, 50 percent is packed as whole lobster and 50 percent as tails. The lobster is caught in trawls, pulled along the soft and muddy ocean floor, mostly off Hornafjörður but sometimes, as the season progresses, as far west as Reykjanes. Lobster only exists in the waters off South Iceland. Tours take 24 to 62 hours, depending how successful they prove. Back in Höfn, the catch is brought into the processing plant under super-chilled conditions where the lobster is washed and placed on the plant's specially-designed production line. Bjarni Ólafur Stefánsson, assistant to the production manager, demonstrates the production process. “The lobster is examined carefully by our employees and all lobster that is whole and doesn't have claws missing or holes in the shell is hand-packed in boxes, classified according to the size.” After packing, the lobster is blast frozen and then stacked in the plant's freezing storage where it awaits export.

By Eygló Svala Amarsdóttir



PHOTO BY PÁLL STEFANSSON



PHOTO BY PÁLL STEFANSSON

FESTIVALS GALORE

The Icelandic festival year is packed with diverse events that anyone can enjoy.

There's always something happening in Iceland. In every time of year and region, people find reasons to celebrate. Here are some of the highlights.

ARTS AND DESIGN

- ▶ Packed with performances and exhibitions, Reykjavík Arts Festival is the biggest arts event of the year, running from late May to early June. listahatid.is
- ▶ Throughout the summer, art-related events take place in North Iceland as part of the Akureyri Art Summer. visitakureyri.is
- ▶ At the LungA festival in Seyðisfjörður, East Iceland, in July, young artists let their light shine. lunga.is
- ▶ In March, the focus is on design with the Reykjavík Fashion Festival and DesignMarch bringing creativity and color to the capital. rff.is; icelanddesign.is
- ▶ The biannual Sequences, next scheduled for 2015, is a celebration of real time art. sequences.is

MUSIC

- The biggest event of the Icelandic musical calendar is without doubt the Iceland Airwaves music festival, held in Reykjavík in late October 30, early November. icelandairwaves.is
- Contemporary music is celebrated in the capital during Dark Music Days, in late January and early February. darkmusicdays.is
- Held for the first time in Reykjavík in February 2013, Sónar, International Festival of Advanced Music and New Media Art, is here to stay. sonarreykjavik.com
- The annual International Reykjavík Blues Festival in Reykjavík in March has attracted some of the world's biggest blues legends. blues.is
- The free music festival Aldrei fór ég suður in the West Fjords's capital Ísafjörður at Easter is always a hoot. aldrei.is
- Also in Ísafjörður, Við Djúpið, a feast of classical music festival, is held in late June. viddjupid.is
- Meanwhile, chamber music is the focus of Reykjavík Midsummer Music in the capital. reykjavikmidsummermusic.com
- The Skálholt Summer Concerts are a celebration of classical music in the old South Iceland bishopric, from late June through early August. sumartonleikar.is
- On the same note, the Reykholt Festival of classical music takes place in West Iceland in July. reykholtshatid.is
- And for something completely different: the Eistnaflug heavy metal music festival is held in Neskaupstaður, East Iceland, in July. eistnaflug.is
- Close by in Borgarfjörður eystri, also in July, is Bræðslan, presenting a range of musicians. braedslan.is
- Back to the capital region, the Icelandic Chamber Music Festival takes place in Kópavogur in August. musicfest.is
- The summer ends on a jazzy note for the Reykjavík Jazz Festival is celebrated at the end of August. reykjavikjazz.is



PHOTOS BY PAUL STEFANSSON

FILM, THEATER AND DANCE

- The early autumn is all about film as the popular Reykjavik International Film Festival runs from late September to early October. riff.is
- A celebration of short films and documentaries, Reykjavik Shorts & Docs is held in May. shortsdocsfest.com
- The Skjaldborg festival attracts film lovers to Patreksfjörður in the West Fjords and the Northern Wave festival to Grundarfjörður, West Iceland. northernwavefestival.com; skjaldborg.com
- The theater festival LÓKAL is held in Reykjavik in August and the same month, the Act Alone solo performance festival takes place in Suðureyri, the West Fjords. lokal.is; actalone.net
- In late August, it's time for the Reykjavik Dance Festival. reykjavikdancefestival.is

CULTURE AND SPORTS

- ◆ The Food and Fun culinary festival, where world-renowned chefs whirl up creative dishes made with Icelandic ingredients, is held in the capital every year in late February, early March. foodandfun.is
- ◆ In June, people are offered to step back in time at the Viking Market in Hafnarfjörður and observe all sorts of Viking-style activities. fjorukrain.is
- ◆ The biannual Landsmót – Icelandic Horse Festival will next take place in 2014. landsmot.is
- ◆ The annual Medieval Days are scheduled at the heritage site Gásir outside Akureyri in July. gasir.is
- ◆ In early August it's time to get dirty at the European Championship in Swamp Soccer in Ísafjörður, the West Fjords. myrarbolti.com
- ◆ The Great Fish Day, a free food festival, is celebrated in Dalvík, North Iceland, the second weekend of August. fiskidagur.muna.is
- ◆ Meanwhile, Gay Pride takes place in Reykjavik. reykjavikpride.is
- ◆ The Reykjavik Culture Night and Reykjavik Marathon are always held in late August. menningarnott.is; marathon.is
- ◆ With chilly autumn winds, it's cozy to snuggle up on the sofa with a book; September is the perfect time for the Reykjavik International Literary Festival. bokmenntahatid.is

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



THIRTY YEARS OF RUNNING

When the Reykjavik Marathon was first held in 1984, runners were considered a bunch of eccentrics. Running has since become a beloved sport among Icelanders.

A road race was an absolute novelty in Iceland; only two other such races existed in the country at that time,” says Knútur Óskarsson, one of the founders of the Reykjavik Marathon. On August 24, 1984, the first Reykjavik Marathon kicked off with 281 runners. Among participants were around 90 foreigners. Since then, the race has been steadily growing with almost 14,300 registrations in 2013, including around 2,000 foreign participants—a new record. Today, the Reykjavik Marathon includes six distances, in addition to the marathon and half marathon, a relay race, 10k run, 3k fun run and a children’s run—it’s not just for competitive runners but is also a family event. “We are proud of the increase of female runners. In 1984, 23 percent of participants were women but in 2012, they accounted for 53 percent of participants,” comments Reykjavik Marathon executive director Frímánn Ari Ferdinandsson.

“It’s the biggest running festival in Iceland. I find it very special—I’ve participated from the start. I’ve watched it grow and it’s always a lot of fun,” says Martha Ernstdóttir, the only Icelandic female athlete to have run a marathon at the Olympics, competing for Iceland at Sydney in 2000. The Reykjavik Marathon, which is held to coin-

cide with the Reykjavik Culture Festival in late August, is always a fixed event on her calendar.

The race begins and ends on Lækjargata in the heart of Reykjavik, leading past landmark buildings, through a residential area, along the seaside with a view of the open ocean and scenic mountains, through a park, a forested valley along a river and all the way to Gróttá on Seltjarnarnes, with a view of a lighthouse and seabirds diving into the sea.

“It’s friendlier, smaller and more rustic than marathons I’ve participated in abroad. It’s more comfortable, peaceful and not as stressful,” comments one of Iceland’s foremost athletes, marathon runner Kári Steinn Karlsson, the first Icelandic male athlete to compete in a marathon at the Olympics, placing 42nd at London 2012. “It’s an important tradition for me to run at the Reykjavik Marathon every year.” He has participated in the Reykjavik Marathon 13 times, winning the half marathon in 2013. “Foreign runners don’t necessarily register to achieve their best time. They come here to experience nature and tackle whatever the weather gods have in store for them. It’s part of the atmosphere not to know what to expect.”

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



FROM ROCK AND ROLL TO CLASSICAL OPERA

*What happens when a rock musician composes an opera? The result might be something like *Jesus Christ Superstar*, a series of rock songs connected by a storyline. Gunnar Þórðarson chose a completely different way, composing an opera in classical style. The public and critics loved it.*

Gunnar Þórðarson became famous in Iceland with the ‘Icelandic Beatles’ Hjómar from the town of Keflavík, Southwest Iceland. His hit song ‘Bláu augun þín’ (‘Your blue eyes’), is still a favorite of an entire generation. Gunnar has written hundreds of pop songs, but lately he started experimenting with classical music and a few years ago he decided to compose an opera. He got together with Friðrik Erlingsson and they chose the famous tragedy of Bishop Brynjólfur, his daughter Ragnheiður, and her teacher Daði.

In 1661 the bishop in Skálholt demanded that his daughter take an oath that she was a virgin and “as free from all dirty deeds as she was when she was brought into this world.” Nine months later she bore a child. This was a real scandal. The child—a boy—was taken away from her and she never saw him again. A year later she died of some serious epidemic. Her older brother died a few years later and the old bishop, having lost all his children, decided to adopt his illicit grandson, then six. The boy was extremely bright and lively, but at the age of 11 he too got tuberculosis and died. Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson, had lost everything that was dear to him: his wife, seven children and his beloved grandson.

This is an irresistible score for an opera. *Ragnheiður*, by Gunnar Þórðarson and Friðrik Erlingsson is based on a real life tragedy almost too sad to be true. Brynjólfur was the most learned man in Iceland and was chosen bishop at the age of 35, when he could have had a career at universities abroad. In 1660 he chose his trusted student Daði as tutor for his only surviving daughter, Ragnheiður who was 18 at the time.

Rumors started that the teacher-pupil relation was too close for decency, and Brynjólfur took the ill-advised decision to let Ragnheiður



The men behind the opera: Friðrik Erlingsson the librettist, conductor Petri Sakari and composer Gunnar Þórðarson.

take the infamous and humiliating oath. The oath was taken in the church of Skálholt. Nobody can ever say whether the oath was true or false that day, but the son was born nine months and six days later. To add insult to injury, Daði the trusted tutor, fathered twins by a “lowly working woman,” as the story goes, in Skálholt, a year before his son with Ragnheiður was born.

The opera appropriately premiered in Skálholt, August 2013. The church was packed three times and people left with tears in their eyes. Critics loved it, one giving five stars out of five and another four and a half. The music of Gunnar Þórðarson, the old pop star, was said to be touching and catching.

In spring 2014, the opera will be staged at Harpa, Iceland’s opera house. That performance will be worth a trip to Iceland in itself.

By Benedikt Jóhannesson



Skriðuklaustur built by author Gunnar Gunnarsson.

GATEWAY TO SKRIÐUKLAUSTUR AND SNOWY MOUNTAIN

Visitors to East Iceland should not miss Skriðuklaustur, a center for archaeology, ecology, literature and local food on the doorstep of the highlands.

TOP PHOTO BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON. OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF SKRIÐUKLAUSTUR.



■ THE CLOISTER

Skriðuklaustur is an ancient farm originally known as Skriða. In 1493, a convent and monastery dedicated to the Virgin Mary was established on the land, and so the suffix *-klaustur* (cloister) was added to its name. A house of religion, its monks also produced literature and provided education, poverty relief and medical aid to the public. However, the cloister did not operate for long as in 1550, Icelanders reformed to Lutheranism.

In August 2012, then Minister of Education and Culture Katrín Jakobsdóttir formally opened the heritage site at Skriðuklaustur to the public—the northernmost cloister to have been unearthed in Europe. The event marked the end of one of the most extensive archaeological projects in Iceland in recent times. It had taken a decade to excavate the remains of the much larger and more complex buildings than initially expected.

In the green and luscious East Iceland valley Fliótsdalur, where glacial river Jökulsá tumbles down from the highlands and mouths into the long and deep Lagarfljót Lake, stands a distinct black-and-white fairytale-like stone building, and next-door, a futuristic eco-friendly information center—both with turf roofs.



THE CULTURE CENTER

Acclaimed Icelandic author Gunnar Gunnarsson (1889-1975) bought Skriðuklaustur in 1938. He asked his friend, German architect Fritz Höger, to design a European manor for the land, which was built the following year. Gunnar dreamt of operating a large-scale farm at Skriðuklaustur but his farming ambitions were never realized in full. In 1948, Gunnar donated his house to the Icelandic state.

In 1997, the cultural institution Gunnarsstofnun at Skriðuklaustur was officially established, modeled on the author's wishes, and the culture center opened in 2000. The institution runs an exhibition about Gunnar and his work, along with an exhibition about the cloister, and organizes concerts, presentations and other cultural events year-round. Skriðuklaustur has also hosted an arts-in-residence program for artists, authors and academics since 1989.

THE CAFÉ

Visitors to Skriðuklaustur should not leave on an empty stomach. After taking in all the information the center has to offer, take a seat at Klausturkaffi, a restaurant and café on the ground floor with a view of Fljótsdalur valley, and relax with a cup of coffee and a slice of the café's popular stone bramble berry *skyr* tart.

Those hungry for more should try out Klausturkaffi's lunch buffet, emphasizing Icelandic cuisine and local ingredients. The curious dishes include reindeer meatballs, cream of wild larch mushroom soup and homemade bread with sheep sorrel pesto. On sunny days, visitors can enjoy their meals on the veranda, finishing off with homemade wild berry or birch ice cream.

THE NATURE CENTER

Snæfellsstofa, which opened at Skriðuklaustur close to the stone building in 2010, is the visitor center marking the eastern border of Vatnajökull National Park, covering Europe's largest glacier and surrounding areas. Designed to harmonize with the environment, Snæfellsstofa is the first BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) certified building in Iceland.

The visitor center facilitates an exhibition on the cycle and formation of nature, highlighting the interplay between vegetation and wildlife in the eastern highlands. Unconventionally, objects on display can be touched and even smelled. Located near Road 910 that leads to Snæfell ('Snowy Mountain'), Snæfellsstofa is the last stop before entering the wilderness. *By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir*

vatnajokulsthjodgardur.is, skriduklaustur.is





PHOTO BY GER ÓLAFSSON.

LET IT GLOW

Formed as a group of school friends in 2006, Retro Stefson have gone on to conquer the Icelandic charts and beyond.

We've been working hard on the live concerts, practicing like crazy," Logi Pedro Stefánsson of band Retro Stefson commented after a playing a gig at the 2012 Iceland Airwaves music festival, shortly after the release of their latest album, simply called *Retro Stefson*. And the band's efforts have clearly been paying off. Retro Stefson's infectious mix of what the band describes as "the best cocktail of European, South-American, African and North-American music," with influences from electro soul, and their reputation for putting on an extraordinary live show, has been garnering fans both in Iceland and abroad.

Retro Stefson, released internationally by Vertigo/Universal in March 2013, quickly reached gold status and a number of the singles have climbed the Icelandic music charts. In early 2013, the band boasted considerable success, being nominated for the Nordic Music Prize and taking home three Icelandic Music Awards—Performer, Song and Music Video of the Year—before heading off on a 24-concert tour of Europe. To top things off, lead vocalist Unnsteinn Manuel Stefánsson closed ELLA's show at the Reykjavík Fashion Festival in March with the hit 'Glow.' Next on the band's agenda: a string of shows across Europe and the Iceland Airwaves music festival in October/November.

By Zoë Robert



SAGA SITE SENSATION

*History comes
alive on the
Saga Trail.*

PHOTO BY PÁLL STEFANSSON.

The Icelandic Sagas (or Sagas of the Icelanders) are Iceland's greatest cultural heritage. Written in the 13th and 14th centuries, they feature the colorful lives of the settlers and their descendants in the 10th and 11th centuries and have remained, to this day, an exciting and timeless read about passion and pain, brave heroes and fair maidens, love and treachery. Scholars have debated whether they're fact or fiction but most people would agree today that even though the Sagas may be based on real-life characters and historical events to some extent, they're far from an exact documentation of the Commonwealth Era. Even so, the Sagas do provide an interesting, if partly skewed, picture of the lives of the early Icelanders, their culture and community. And what's more, they're set in actual locations in Iceland—many of the farms mentioned in the Sagas are still inhabited today.

Given the global interest in the Icelandic Sagas, cultural tourism is growing in Iceland. Contributing to that growth is the Icelandic Saga Trail Association, which has set up a website listing destinations of interest for Saga enthusiasts. These include English novelist David Mitchell, who recited his experience of the Saga Trail in *The Independent*

in July 2012. "Encountering names from the Saga Age endows the stories with delicious added reality; it's like driving past a matter-of-fact road sign saying 'Narnia 15km.' You experience an uncanny sensation that the landscape itself is the parchment on which the Sagas were inscribed," he wrote.

Njála (or *Njáls saga*), by many considered the supreme Icelandic Saga, is set in South Iceland, right around Hvolsvöllur where the Icelandic Saga Center is based. Housing an informative exhibition on the Saga and related subjects, the museum also hosts plays inspired by the Saga and its characters, and offers guided excursions to surrounding sites mentioned in *Njála*. These include Hlíðarendi, the farm where its main protagonist Gunnar Hámundarson lived, and Bergþórshvoll, the home of his best friend, the ill-fated Njáll, which was burnt down.

In West Iceland visitors can immerse themselves in the life of hot-tempered Viking poet Egill Skallagrímsson of *Egla* (or *Egils saga*) at the Settlement Center in Borgarnes. Like the Saga Center, the Settlement Center regularly stages plays on Saga characters, which make the stories all the more tangible. Not to mention when places like Brákarsund, the channel where Þorgerður brák, Egill's nurse,

was killed by his father, are right outside the window. Near the town lies Egill's farm Borg á Mýrum, where a memorial dedicated to its most famous resident stands.

Continuing northwards on the Ring Road, Saga trailers can drop by the farm Bjarg í Miðfirði near Hvammstangi where the unruly outlaw Grettir "the strong" Ásmundarson of *Grettis saga* was born and raised. A monument has been erected on the spot where Grettir's mother Ásdís buried his decapitated head, handed to her by her son's assassins. Further to the north, at the farm Reykir on Reykjaströnd, tours are offered to the island Drangey on Skagafjörður where Grettir lived as an outlaw. Afterwards, travelers can relax in the geothermal pool Grettislaug where Grettir rested and warmed up after the chilling swim from Drangey to the mainland. The purpose of this feat was to fetch fire, notably at Reykir.

Experiencing the locations where the Icelandic Sagas are set, which readers are sure to have envisioned in their mind, is an opportunity not to be missed. For other museums and destinations worth visiting, go to sagatrail.is.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

DOORSTEP OF THE HIGHLANDS

Experience the magic of Landmannalaugar.





Landmannalaugar in the south-central highlands is the gateway to the Icelandic highlands. Here starts the famous 50-km/30-mile long Laugavegur hiking trail to Þórsmörk, near glacier-volcano Eyjafjallajökull. Next door to Landmannalaugar you can find Torfajökull glacier, the Hrafninnusker geothermal area, and over the lodge, which has been in operation since 1951, towers the mountain Bláhnjúkur, 1,000 m/3000 ft up into the sky. From the top is one of the best panoramic views in the Republic.

The surrounding mountains display a wide spectrum of colors and after a long day's hiking, taking a dip in the natural pool is the natural way to relax and enjoy the best Iceland has to offer.

But beware, you will not be alone! Landmannalaugar is a popular destination for hikers on planet Iceland, even though it's only accessible by 4x4s.

By Páll Stefánsson



PHOTO BY GERD OLAFSSON

NATION OF BOOKWORMS

Publisher Jóhann Páll Valdimarsson keeps Icelandic book lovers supplied and exports the nation's love of literature.

In spite of reading being a widespread pastime in Iceland, Forlagið is one of the few success stories in Icelandic book publishing. In only a few years, the company has grown to become the largest publishing house in Iceland with publisher Jóhann Páll Valdimarsson and managing director Egill Örn Jóhannsson, his son, earning the title Business-people of the Year by prestigious business magazine *Frjáls verslun* in 2012.

"Forlagið publishes about 200 new titles annually, which includes translated works of literature, and, in addition, there are many re-publications," says Jóhann. "Our policy is to publish good books of all genres." Forlagið releases books under the labels JPV, Mál og menning, Vaka Helgafell and Iðunn. Affection is the driving force behind book publishing, Jóhann explains. "I have to be mindful to keep my passion and enthusiasm alive when running my business. If I'm depressed, everything goes downhill. I must make sure to spread the love within the company and make sure that it's carried into every book

that is published. I believe that the reader can feel it when he or she touches the book, that it's the result of a labor of love. Without it, the book is dead."

In 2012 a new record of 842 titles appeared on the Icelandic market, a large share of which hit the stores in the weeks preceding the holidays. The Christmas book season, *jólabókafloð* ("Christmas book flood"), is a special phenomenon in Iceland. In a 2012 Capacent-Gallup survey, 67 percent of respondents stated they had bought books as Christmas presents. "The tradition has its origins in lack of gift merchandise in the years of World War II," reveals Jóhann. "There were importation restrictions but book publishers obtained paper for printing, often of low quality, and met this demand." The literature landscape is changing, yet the Christmas market still forms the basis of book publishing in Iceland. "Even though the percentage of books published before the holiday season is decreasing it still accounts for 30 percent of our turnover. It's important to us but to some

other publishers it's a matter of life and death," states Jóhann.

Forlagið operates a special division for selling publishing rights of Icelandic books to foreign publishers. The division has proven a success, signing 170 contracts in 2012. "The Frankfurt Book Fair in 2011 put the spotlight on Iceland." Some 230 Icelandic books appeared on the German market in connection with the fair. "Germany is the most important literature market in Europe. It's big and German readers take a keen interest in translated novels," says Jóhann. Forty percent of books on the German market originate in a different country. "When I was young hardly any Icelandic books were published in foreign languages. There has been a complete turnaround. Export has become extensive and valuable to us. Foreign publishers are paying attention—they've recognized that Icelandic authors compare with any foreign authors."

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

MAKING SENSE OF DATA

Icelandic startup DataMarket is taking off.



DataMarket founder and CEO Hjálmar Gíslason.

Icelandic startup DataMarket signed a seven-year USD 4.2 million agreement with international electronic distributor ProQuest in June 2013, following which DataMarket and ProQuest announced the release of ProQuest International DataSets in autumn 2013. Their first joint product is to be marketed by ProQuest to its thousands of college, university and library partners around the globe with the aim of becoming one of the largest collections of economic, demographic and social data in the world, accessible to millions of faculty, staff and students.

“Our goal is to give people one place where they can get the data they need to understand the world around them. We are thrilled to be bringing together our technology and data collections with those of ProQuest, which include U.S. and international census and statistical abstracts and the Historical Newspapers archive, as well as unique resources from Oxford Economics. This is only the start of a long-term partnership, and our shared ambition is to create a world-leading gateway to global data and information,” says DataMarket founder and CEO Hjálmar Gíslason.

ProQuest International DataSets is set to bring together complex

and diverse data from hundreds of sources in one place and one format, enabling data to be searched, compared, visualized and shared. The resource will combine the full content set and technology architecture from DataMarket along with content from both ProQuest and Oxford Economics’ collection of quantitative and qualitative research. The plan is for it to be fully interactive, allowing users to create their own charts and reports from diverse sources and also embed context and commentary with them.

DataMarket was founded in 2008 to help business users find and understand data, and to help data providers efficiently publish their data and reach new audiences. Initially the company focused on the Icelandic market by incorporating data from various public institutions, including Statistics Iceland, the Central Bank of Iceland, the Icelandic Directorate of Labor, the Icelandic Marine Research Institute, National Energy Authority of Iceland and Registers Iceland. Now DataMarket also provides access to international data from Eurostat, United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank and the Gapminder Foundation.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



PHOTO BY PÁLL STEFÁNSSON

Holding conferences is no easy matter. They grow year by year so facilities have to grow with them. People like to go to interesting and exotic places. Preferably with good weather too. That's why so many conferences are held in cities like Paris, San Diego and Rome. Until recently, Iceland could not compete for conferences over a certain size. There was simply no venue big enough. Now Reykjavik has the majestic Harpa with its many halls and prime location.

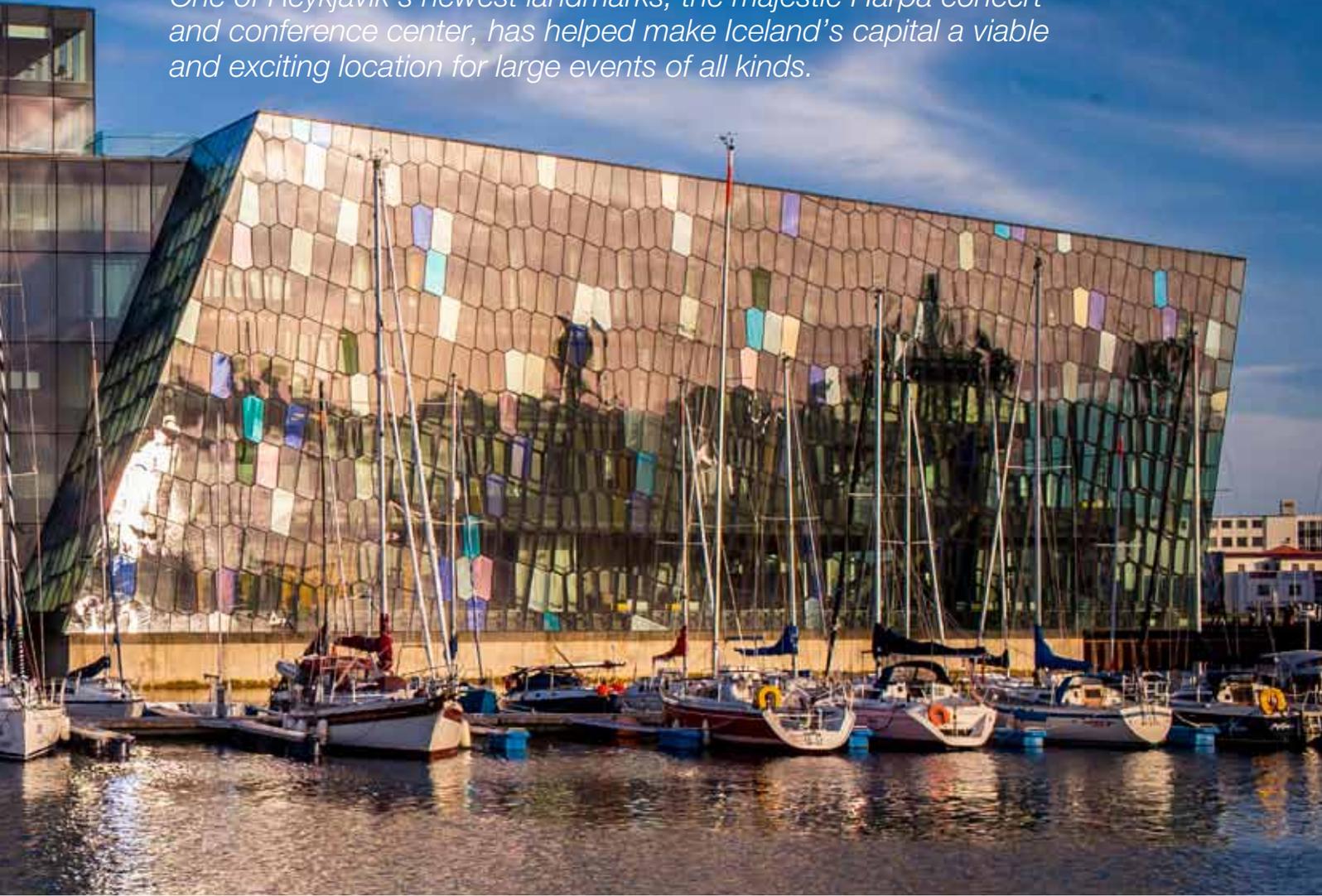
When the construction of Harpa began in 2007, the Icelandic musical community had been dreaming about a concert hall for almost a hundred years, and fighting for it for half a century. With Harpa, this dream was finally set to come true. But in October 2008, at the time of the Icelandic economic crash, Harpa was only half com-

plete. The crash brought all construction to a standstill and the future of the project was completely uncertain. The building could well have ended as a gigantic symbol of Iceland's economic collapse, an abandoned and silent shell right in the heart of Reykjavik. But in early 2009, the Icelandic government and the City of Reykjavik made the daring decision, despite difficult financial circumstances, to complete the building, and in May 2011 Harpa opened its doors to the public.

In the first two years since the opening, Harpa has received almost two million visitors and has hosted over 1,000 events. Instead of becoming a symbol of the economic crash, Harpa has become a symbol of recovery, a new landmark in Reykjavik and stunning feature of the harbor area. So the story of Harpa is not

NOW YOU HAVE ONE MORE EXCUSE TO COME TO ICELAND!

One of Reykjavík's newest landmarks, the majestic Harpa concert and conference center, has helped make Iceland's capital a viable and exciting location for large events of all kinds.



only the old story of a dream becoming reality, but it also mirrors the history of Iceland in the new century. A building which is not only a wonderful venue for concerts, meetings and conferences, but also Iceland's largest outdoor work of art; a harp, playing on the rays of light from the sky and the sea, and the music inside.

In 2013 Harpa won the prestigious Mies van der Rohe Award for architecture. The design is unique, but the most important role of the structure is that it is home to the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and the Icelandic Opera. Furthermore, it has already hosted conferences of more than 1,000 people, something that was impossible before 2011. With halls seating from 200 to 1,800 people, Harpa has opened up new possibilities for those who have become bored with warmer climates.

By Benedikt Jóhannesson



PHOTO BY GEFYR ÓLAFSSON



The eggs in Gleðivík.

PHOTO BY PALL STEFANSSON

HISTORY, ART AND NATURE

Visitors to Djúpvogur in Southeast Iceland are in for a rich experience.

Djúpvogur is the oldest continuous trading center in Iceland. Its history of trading goes back to 1589, at first carried out by German merchants, later Danes. The town's oldest house, Langabúð ('Long Store'), was built in 1790, mostly serving as a warehouse. It was presented to Djúpvogur as a gift on the town's 400th trading anniversary in 1989, saving it from demolition. Langabúð's renovation was completed in 1997 and it now facilitates a museum about local sculptor and wood carver Ríkharður Jónsson (1888-1977), memorial center about local politician and former minister Eysteinn Jónsson (1906-1993) and a district museum. A café is also operated in Langabúð, a popular meeting place.

Thirty-four granite sculptures by renowned artist Sigurður Guðmundsson line the pier in Gleðivík at the Djúpvogur harbor, each of which represents the egg of a bird that breeds in the area. The eggs rest on top of pillars that once were part of a fish rendering factory. Sigurður is not from Djúpvogur originally but fell in love with the place and now lives there a few months of the year. He wanted to give something back to the community and his artwork has garnered considerable attention. The size and shape of each sculpture corresponds with the egg it represents but the loon egg is the largest as the bird is symbolic for the region. Bird watching tours and excursions to Papey island can be arranged from Djúpvogur.

The Icelandic state bought the farmland Teigarhorn by Djúpvogur in January 2013 to preserve its natural and cultural relics. The land is one of the best known locations of zeolites in the world and the region's landmark mountain, Búlandstindur, stands within its borders. A historical house, built in 1880-1882, where merchant Niels P. E. Weywadt lived with his family, stands at Teigarhorn. His daughter Nicoline Weywadt (1848-1921) was Iceland's first female photographer. The land is considered to have great potential for tourism and developments in that field are planned by local authorities. Teigarhorn is also where the highest temperature has ever been recorded in Iceland, 30.5°C (86.9°F) on June 22, 1939.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



PHOTO BY BENEDIKT JÓHANNESSON

The harbor at Djúpvogur. Mt. Búlandstindur in the background.



PHOTOS BY PÁLL STEFANSSON





ICELAND'S ONE STOP INVESTMENT SHOP

Providing free liaison services and reliable information on investment opportunities and the business environment in Iceland, Promote Iceland is a 'one stop shop' for foreign investors and organizations at all stages of planning and development. Primarily dedicated to four focus sectors—energy intensive, land intensive, knowledge-based, and tourism—Promote Iceland, of which Invest in Iceland is a part, recognizes the importance of diversifying the country's small economy and highlighting areas in which Iceland is competitive in the world market. "We are focusing on areas in which we have something unique to bring to the table," says director Þórður H. Hilmarrsson. "We want investments to be win-win on both sides."

Iceland has many natural attributes to offer growing businesses, green industries, venture capitalists and skilled professionals alike, starting with its physical location. Smack dab in the middle of the North Atlantic, the country is easily accessible from both North America and Europe. A direct flight from London to Keflavik International Airport takes only two and a half hours; flying time from New York City is just under six. Complementing this strategic position is the fact that Iceland enjoys favorable trading conditions with both continents, having 'most favored nation status' with the U.S. while also being a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) and having

"tariff-free access to the European Union."

Iceland can also boast its status as a world leader in stable and sustainable green energy production, having an advanced hydro- and geothermal energy infrastructure already in place and substantial resources still left to be harnessed. Well ahead of the EU's goal to achieve 20 percent renewable energy consumption by 2020, Iceland already derives 80 percent of its overall energy consumption and 100 percent of its electricity consumption from renewable resources.

As the cost of energy rises around the world, Iceland is proud of its competitive edge in this sector, offering domestic and industrial clients alike low-cost, long-term (10-20 year) contracts. And what may come as a surprise to those for whom the volcano Eyjafjallajökull is still a vivid memory, is that the reliability of Iceland's power network is ranked first in Europe. Since the country's geothermal energy resources are generally located in areas of high seismic activity, active volcanic and earthquake zones have been thoroughly mapped, allowing energy parks to grow in secure locations well outside of hazard areas.

One of the exciting industries that is growing in Iceland as a direct result of its thriving energy sector is data storage. Data storage is a huge and steadily growing field and data storage centers require enormous amounts of energy to maintain. It's estimated that by 2020, carbon dioxide emissions from data centers around the world will exceed that of





the airline industry. As such, locating data centers in a country with vast renewable energy stores is not only a cost-effective solution, but also an environmentally responsible one. Iceland's temperate year-round climate and abundance of cold water also provides data centers with free year-round cooling—a valuable incentive for an industry in which cooling costs make up at least half of its energy expenses. Two notable international data storage companies, Verne Global and Advania, have already established flourishing operations in Iceland, but there is still plenty of room for expansion in this industry, with smaller clean data storage startups such as GreenQloud also experiencing high levels of success after establishing their centers here.

Data storage centers are a strong example of the environmentally-friendly, value-added industries that Iceland is eager to attract, says Þórður: small to medium companies which will benefit from Iceland's unique resources while also bringing valuable jobs and new knowledge to the country. But it's just one of many industries which have been making use of the multiple energy streams from the country's geothermal resources. Production of 'green' methanol (CRI) high-tech greenhouse for production of growth factors for cosmetics and pharmaceuticals (Orf Genetics) and large-scale fish farming (Stolt Seafarm) are all recent examples of the variety of projects established by foreign in-

vestors or through cooperation between foreign and local investors.

And then there's the film and television industry. A wide variety of productions are actively taking advantage of Iceland's incredible atmospheric scenery, as well as the straightforward incentive scheme which reimburses 20 percent of costs incurred during production in Iceland. Recent works filmed in Iceland include Ridley Scott's extraterrestrial thriller *Prometheus*, Clint Eastwood's WWII epic *Flags of Our Fathers*, *Batman Begins*, and HBO's *Game of Thrones*.

Going forward, Þórður notes that Iceland will continue to strengthen and expand current industries, such as tourism. But it will also pursue a wide range of new and innovative export markets, producing commodities that range from carbon fiber and green chemicals to algae and organic produce. In each of these instances, Iceland will depend on its human resources—its own highly educated and motivated workforce, as well as the skilled professionals and foreign specialists who come to Iceland to work. This collaboration between locals and foreigners promises to be a boon for Iceland in the future, Þórður says, bringing new knowledge and expertise into the country while also providing a fresh perspective on Iceland's many unique qualities. "It's so rewarding to look at Iceland through the eyes of foreigners," he says, "to discover our strengths through them."

By Larissa Kyzer

ICELANDIC MOVIES: DRAMATIC, VIOL



Icelandic filmmakers are constantly exploring new avenues, touching upon sensitive subjects, portraying gangsters of the underworld and amazing survival stories.

VOLCANO

The first thing that came to mind after watching director Rúnar Rúnarsson's first full-length feature film, award-winning drama *Volcano (Eldfjall)*, was how very Icelandic it was. Not because of the volcano—contrary to what one might think when hearing the title, it's not a nature catastrophe film—but because of Hannes, the main character, brilliantly portrayed by Theódór Júlíusson.

Hannes is the embodiment of the older generation of Icelandic men, the silent farmers and fishermen who keep all their emotions tightly wrapped up in a knot inside them and never discuss their feelings. Instead they express their unhappiness by acting coolly towards their families, emitting authority at their workplaces and would rather end their lives than have anyone discover that they have a soft spot.

The only direct connection with a volcano is the opening scene of the 1973 eruption on Heimaey in Vestmannaeyjar from where Hannes and his wife Anna had to escape with their young children. Hannes and Anna made a home for themselves in Reykjavík and although both of them would have liked to move back to Heimaey, Hannes decided their children would have more opportunities in the capital.

Therefore, Hannes had to give up his life as a fisherman and work as a janitor, which, although never spelled out, seems to be the source of his unhappiness. However, working still gave his life some meaning and upon retiring, Hannes struggles with finding a purpose in life. Hannes has a small boat and when out on the open ocean, fishing, one can sense that he is free, in his element, while inside his house, he seems to be trapped.

Hannes' grown children despise the man their father has become and how he treats their mother and only after overhearing them talking about him does he think about changing his ways. It's heartwarming to see how the relationship between Hannes and Anna is rekindled but just as heartbreaking to see how short-lived that period turns out to be when Anna suddenly falls ill. Against the wish of his children, Hannes decides to care for Anna at home.

Volcano was awarded as Best Film at the 2012 Eddas, the Icelandic Films and Television Award.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

ENT AND MIRACULOUS



CITY STATE

Released in October 2011, *City State* (*Borgriki*) by director Ólafur Jóhannesson features a star league of actors, both Icelandic and foreign. British actors Jonathan Pryce (*Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, *Evita*) and Philip Jackson (*Little Voice*, *My Week With Marilyn*) play supporting roles as the U.K. ‘business partners’ of Icelandic gangster Gunnar, portrayed by Ingvar E. Sigurðsson (*Jar City*, *Angels of the Universe*).

Gunnar is striving to protect his ‘business’ in drugs and prostitution from wannabe gangster Ingólfur (Björn Hlynur Haraldsson) and Serbian mechanic-turned-criminal Sergej (Zlatko Krickic), who has the Balkan mafia on his side. Gunnar, however, has the Icelandic police on his side. A corrupt superior at the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police’s drug department, Margeir (Sigurður Sigurjónsson), likes to call in favors at Gunnar’s brothel. This is of major inconvenience to Margeir’s detectives Andrea (Ágústa Eva Erlendsdóttir) and Rúnar (Björn Thors)—who are having an affair—as they are trying hard to bust the gangsters. When put under strain, Margeir trades in their safety for his benefits.

This is perhaps not an original storyline for a crime thriller but I like the format of the film in that it tells the story from four different angles. The focus shifts between Gunnar, Sergej, Margeir and Andrea so that the viewers obtain a deeper understanding of their characters and motives and come to understand that nothing is black-and-white. There is no clear line between the good and bad guys.

Of the four stories, Sergej’s is the most touching. He is an immigrant trying to make a decent living, looking forward to the birth of his first child. Sergej then gets tangled up in the drug trade and is molested in front of his wife, resulting in her having a miscarriage. Grief-stricken, he seeks vengeance and progresses further into the underworld, beyond the point of no return. The best part of this film is Krickic’s performance, which is particularly convincing. With no formal training in acting, he came to Iceland to play football. He turned out to have a talent for acting and ended up in the movies, until now playing minor parts.

City State has its weaknesses and failed to wow me, yet kept my interest through an interesting format of storytelling and in humanizing its characters, presenting them not as one-dimensional but rather as people capable of doing both good and bad, being tough and vulnerable at the same time. I cannot pass judgment on whether *City State* gives an accurate picture of the Icelandic underworld, but that is irrelevant. What matters is that as a piece of fiction it provides viewers with entertainment and food for thought to boot.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

THE DEEP

The Deep (*Djúpið*) by Icelandic director Baltasar Kormákur, recounts the 1984 sinking of a fishing trawler in the forbidding seas off Vestmannaeyjar, south of Iceland, and the remarkable survival of one of its crew members. That survivor was Guðlaugur Friðþórsson (portrayed by the mighty Ólafur Darri Ólafsson) and his ability to survive—against all odds—the freezing temperatures and rough seas. That winter night made him not only a national hero but the subject of international scientific interest.

The film paints a picture of life in the fishing village of Vestmannaeyjabær; husbands and sons coming and going, their families anxious for their return after long days and nights spent out at sea. In fishing villages around the country, many people know someone who has lost a friend or family member to the turbulent seas off Iceland.

Three of the five crewmembers escaped the sinking vessel but only Guðlaugur managed to swim the five to six kilometers to shore, and after having spent the same number of hours in 5°C (41°F) seas, climbed up the rocky cliffs and made his way, barefoot over snow-covered lava, into town.

The much-anticipated film was credited with treating the subject matter with humbleness and for not over-dramatizing the events.

I wasn’t aware of Guðlaugur’s story when I went to see the film, which was a disadvantage when watching the scene where the three men who manage to escape the sinking trawler cling to the side of the boat until it disappears into the depths of the ocean. One of the three men dies shortly after, leaving Guðlaugur alone with the captain. They continue talking, trying to keep each other’s spirits up, as they swim. Most people are said to be able to survive for around 20 minutes in such conditions and sure enough, Guðlaugur is soon the sole survivor. The men seem to be clinging to the boat for so long, alone in the dark. For audiences who are not familiar with the story, this part may drag on a little too long, unsure of what will happen next. Once I made the connection to the real life story, though, I appreciated this part as much as the rest for depicting the solitude, and the loss of sense of time; those hours must have felt like days. Guðlaugur, who was just 22 years old when the accident occurred, was hailed a hero at the time. Still today, his story and that of his fellow crewmembers continues to inspire.

The Deep was awarded as Best Film at the 2013 Eddas, the Icelandic Film and Television Awards.

By Zoë Robert

ICELANDIC BOOKS: LYRICAL, FUTURISTIC AND MAGICAL

The English-language market is increasingly embracing Icelandic literature. Here are three very different books that were recently published in English.

ICELANDIC POETRY (C. 870-2007)

Bernard Scudder was a poet and the most gifted translator of Icelandic literature into English,” starts Joe Allard in his introduction to *Icelandic Poetry (c.870-2007)* in translations of Bernard Scudder selected, edited and introduced by Joe Allard and Sigrún Á. Eiríksdóttir.

And there is nothing more to say.

I was so lucky to work with Bernard Scudder (1954-2007) for a couple of years, 20 years ago.

Born in Canterbury, he read English literature at York University. In 1977, he went to study the Icelandic language at Reykjavík University, after which he worked as a reporter, and deputy editor for *Iceland Review* magazine for a couple of years. Later he became member of the editorial team that produced the *Complete Sagas of Icelanders* in English translation in 1997.

In addition to his medieval translations, Bernard had a passion for contemporary poetry and fiction. His translations of prize winning novels included Þór Vilhjálmsson’s *Justice Undone* (1995), Guðbergur Bergsson’s *The Swan* (1997), Einar Már Guðmundsson’s *Angels of the Universe* (1995) and Þórarinn Eldjárn’s *The Blue Tower* (1999). He

also translated the works of crime author Arnaldur Indriðason.

What surprised me the most, working with Bernard, was that he spoke better Icelandic than I did, a native Icelander, after only seven years in Iceland.

He was a poet, a good poet, and in between works he translated Icelandic poems—for fun it seemed. And now at last, after his sudden death, the book *Icelandic Poetry (c. 870-2007)* is out.

The book is a gem to all those who like poetry and Icelandic culture.

The first poem in the book is from c. 870, *The Prophecy (Völuspá)*, Eddic Poetry by Anonymous.

*A hearing I ask
of all humankind,
the higher and lower
kin of Heimdall;
They, Father of the Fallen,
wanted me to recount
the ancient deeds of heroes
I recall from time’s dawn.*

The last poem is *The Trap Snaps Shut (Gildran lokast)* from 2007, by Sveinn Snorri Sveinsson

....Then I smiled back

*When I was about
to release his hand
and proceed on my way*

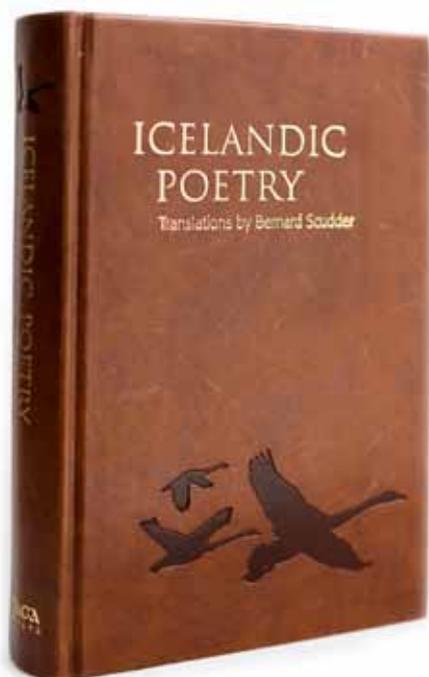
*the devil grinned
and told me to wait a minute*

*he squeezed, and I
winced.*

There are 1,137 years between these poems—and you have hundreds more in this great book of close to 400 pages of wisdom, fun, and God.

This book is good.

By Páll Stefánsson





LOVESTAR

In *LoveStar* (originally published in Iceland in 2002) author Andri Snær Magnason shares with us his view of the future in this crazy *Brave New World* meets *Futurama* sci-fi novel, which won an honorary prize at the prestigious 2013 U.S. Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Award.

Andri Snær isn't strictly a sci-fi writer. I'm not sure he fits into any genre unless there's one for good authors. Or perhaps one for environmentalist authors. Andri Snær told me once in an interview that his goal is to "betray his audience" in that he jumps genres. He has written poetry, children's literature and non-fiction, all to critical acclaim, and what they have in common are environmental references.

In *LoveStar*, electro-magnetic waves have messed up the instinctive navigation system of animals so that Arctic terns start nesting in Paris and bees invade Chicago. A mad scientist who calls himself LoveStar (although probably not the author's intention, I keep seeing founder of deCODE Genetics Kári Stefánsson as LoveStar) and his team study the waves animals use to communicate and discover the key to true love.

Building a business empire on pairing people up, LoveStar sets up his headquarters inside the distinct Hraundrangi mountain in the rural Öxnadalur valley in North Iceland where on the outside, the countryside seems as idyllic and peaceful as ever. Having conquered love, LoveStar expands into marketing death. Through LoveDeath people can choose to literally be sent to heaven for the afterlife by space rockets.

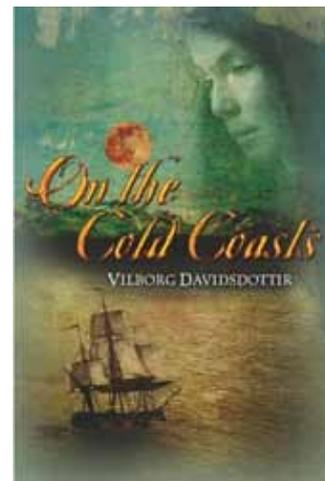
Gradually, life on the entire planet is taken over by LoveStar's empire, controlled from his headquarters in Öxnadalur. People lose their free will and all ambition in life as it is dictated for them. Finding a partner is pointless because LoveStar guarantees everyone their one true love. Parents don't have to bother with raising their kids properly because if they fail they can order a clone of the child and start all over again.

So what happens if someone rebels against the system?

The protagonist of the story, Indriði (who reminds me of Fry in *Futurama*), believes to have found the love of his life on his own accord, is happy with his darling Sigríður and refuses to give her up just because some computer says he should. Simply put, *LoveStar* is their story, of their fight against the system and for a better world. And the question is, can they save it from destruction?

I read *LoveStar* as a comedy but surprisingly, it also has a serious undertone and leaves one with food for thought. Not being an avid fan of the sci-fi genre, I enjoyed *LoveStar* mostly for Andri Snær's brilliant writing. Judging by the reaction from the U.S. sci-fi elite, it looks like it struck a chord with them too. I'd say it's safe to recommend for all literary connoisseurs.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir



ON THE COLD COASTS

On the Cold Coasts (originally published as *Galdur* in Iceland in 2000) by Vilborg Davíðsdóttir appeared in English in 2012, in a Kindle edition as part of an Icelandic literature series published by Amazon Crossing.

In 1420, teenager Ragna gives birth to a son out of wedlock, the result of an encounter with a shipwrecked Englishman. This brings an end to her upper class family's plans to marry her off to Porkell, a young man of equal estate. Subject to condemnation from the church and community as a single mother, Ragna is no longer considered marriage material. She is frustrated at her position in society when the new bishop in North Iceland, the half-English John Williamsson Craxton, offers to hire her as housekeeper at the bishopric Hólar and to educate her son. To her delight, her family agrees. At Hólar Ragna's and Porkell's paths cross again. After their engagement was broken off, he pursued theological studies and became a priest, serving as assistant to the new bishop. Porkell puts their reencounter down to destiny. Not all of his ambitions are particularly Christian and Ragna find that he has cast a spell on her.

Vilborg is known for carrying out extensive research before writing her historical novels, which are often based on real events and characters. *On the Cold Coasts* reads like an authentic description of 15th century Iceland, a repressed Danish colony at the edge of the world. Trading in fish was undermined when the English and other nations sent their own vessels to fish off the country's shores. However, many a fisherman lost his life to the unpredictable weather. The storm would smash ships against rocks, tear them apart, scattering the timber, crew and cargo across beaches. If possible, the survivors were nursed—sometimes resulting in love children—and the remains of the ship and cargo looted.

On the Cold Coasts is a love story in the backdrop of the culture clash and struggle with the English, the constraints of religion and etiquette and blind ambition, garnished with historical details and descriptions of the North Icelandic landscape.

By Eygló Svala Arnarsdóttir

30 + VOLCANOES

Facts about Iceland.



Eruption on Fimmvörðuháls 2010.

- Iceland is the 16th largest island in the world, 103,000 sq. km (38,000 sq. miles). Only Madagascar, Britain and Cuba are larger single independent island states.
- Ten percent of Iceland is covered by glaciers, including Vatnajökull, the largest in Europe. There you have Iceland's highest peak, volcano Hvannadalshnjúkur, at 2,110 m (6,923 ft).
- More than 30 volcanoes have erupted in Iceland over the past two centuries, Hekla the most famous before the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in 2010, which left thousands in Europe and North America stranded for two weeks.
- The population of Iceland is about 320,000, eight percent of whom are foreign-born. About three out of four people live in the capital area.
- Close to 900,000 travelers visit the country annually, almost three times the local population.
- The first traveler and person to settle permanently in Iceland was Norwegian Viking Ingólfur Arnarson, who settled in A.D. 874 and named his home Reykjavík, now the capital of the Republic.
- In June 1944, Iceland finally became independent from Denmark. The country is governed by the Alþingi parliament, whose members are elected every four years.
- Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson is Iceland's prime minister since May 2013. The president, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, is serving his fifth four-year term, first elected in 1996.
- Icelanders maintain a patronymic naming system, which means that someone's first name is followed by his or her father's name and the suffix -son or -dóttir.

By Páll Stefánsson



PHOTOS BY PALL STEFÁNSSON

Þingvellir

WELCOME TO NORTH AMERICA IN ICELAND

Almannagjá, the 8-km (5-mile) long fissure at Þingvellir National Park, both marks the eastern boundary of the North American plate and the western boundary of the Eurasian plate. Þingvellir is only 50 km (30 miles) east of Reykjavík, Iceland's capital.



PROMOTE ICELAND

Sundagörðum 2, IS-104 Reykjavík. Tel +354 511 4000 Fax +354 511 4040
info@promoteiceland.is www.promoteiceland.is



PROMOTE ICELAND
ICELAND.IS