



FÁLKINN

THE OFFICAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO

November 2008

ICCT FÁLKINN 49th Year Number 2

Yrsa Sigurðardóttir writes for children, teenagers and adults.

Icelandic author, Yrsa Sigurðardóttir, was born in 1963. With her first novel, **Last Rituals** (2005), she enjoyed immediate success in her home country as a crime story writer. Before the publication date of the book in Iceland, the manuscript had been translated into eleven languages to be published in over thirty countries. The novel is now published in over thirty languages in one hundred countries all over the world, according to Yrsa's publisher in Iceland. Two novels have followed, her second one to be published in English translation by HarperCollins this year.

Yrsa has previously written for children and young adults and received two awards for children's literature in Iceland. She lives in Reykjavík, is married with two children, works as a civil engineer at Kárahnjúkar and is also a technical manager of one of Europe's largest hydro-construction projects.

Yrsa describes her female protagonist in *Last Rituals*, Þóra Gunnarsdóttir, a lawyer, as "supersmart, the best at this and that, but not perfect", as Yrsa does not like characters who are "too perfect". One could say that all her novels, deal with ordinary people that face most unusual situations.

Yrsa has been called the queen of crime stories in Scandinavia.



Yrsa is coming to Toronto to speak about her book Last Rituals

**Sunday November 30th at 2:30 p.m. at the Scandinavian-Canadian Club
91 Stormont Ave, Toronto**

5 dollars for members 6 for non members. Refreshments after the talk

Yrsa Sigurdardottir will be touring North America as part of the International Visits Program of the Icelandic National League of North America.

CHRISTMAS AT RIVERDALE FARM
2:30 p.m. Sunday, November 23rd, 201 Winchester Street, Cabbagetown

Instead of our usual Christmas Fair, Gryla is inviting the children to tour Riverdale Farm with her ... Brenda Bjarnason will dress up as Gryla and read one stanza of the Jolesveinar poem at each appropriate stop along the way. She invites children to dress up as Jolisveinar (she has costumes). For refreshments, she asks if two volunteers could bring some Icelandic cookies and each person can bring their own hot chocolate in a thermos. Adults are invited along as well! And Santa just might make an appearance. Please email Brenda at bbjarnason@rogers.com or phone 416 769-7707 to let her know you are coming and that you can bring cookies!



FÁLKINN-THE FALCON

Fálkinn is the newsletter of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto and is published 6—8 times a year.

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\$20, Family \$25, Senior Couple \$20,
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IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME AGAIN!

Dues for 2009 will be remaining the same, a real bargain! The club appreciates all of you and looks forward to bringing you more and better events in the coming year. The renewal form is enclosed!

ICELANDAIR FLIGHTS RETURN TO TORONTO APRIL 1ST

We were pleased to find out that starting April 1st, Icelandair will once again be flying the Toronto-Reykjavik-Toronto route, with connections to many destinations in Europe. And this time, all the airplanes will have been refurbished, with leather seats and seat-back on demand video. A new class has also been added, so now you will have a choice between Saga, Economy Comfort and Economy. The new seats will also give more leg room; the economy pitch will be 32", Comfort 33" and Saga 39"

Here is the flight schedule:

April 1 to April 29 Wed. Fri. Sun.
April 30 to May 24 Tues. Wed. Fri.
Sun.
May 26 to Sept. 9 Tues. Wed. Thurs.
Fri. Sun.
Sept. 11 to Oct. 23 Tues. Wed. Fri.
Sun.

INL Calendars 2009

The INL Calendars for 2009 are here, featuring visual artists from across the country.

\$10 each plus shipping

To order, contact Lynne Thorkelsson, 1680 Scugog St. Port Perry, ON L9L 1E2, mlynnet@gmail.com

Shipping: \$2 for one; \$3 for two to four, \$6 for five or six

SANTA'S ON HOLIDAY

Due to the club's very busy schedule this fall we regret that the Christmas Party is deferred for this year. Instead, see front page for Gryla's tour of Riverdale Fram

We are looking for hot new ideas for next year. One suggestion is a skating/hot chocolate party. We welcome suggestions.

The Icelandic Depression

By Tomas Gunnarsson

Most people have probably heard about the financial and currency crisis in Iceland. The three biggest banks collapsed and were taken over by the government. , the krona lost about 40% of its value, Britain froze Icelandic assets under anti-terrorist legislation, and foreign exchange and trade has been seriously interrupted. British law firms are working on law suits, both on behalf of Kaupthing shareholders and the Icelandic government, to challenge the British action.

The situation is very dire, there is no point in denying that, but one can easily say that the media tends to colour it more black and white than it really is. Iceland is not bankrupt, the Icelandic government has not defaulted on any of its payment or any of its obligations.

In shorter terms the situation is bleak, and the tasks that Icelanders face is enormous; unemployment and hardship are foreseeable for the next few years. Real estate prices are falling rather sharply and the government will have to tighten its purse as well, as taxes will not bring in the expected amount of money.

But taking a longer view, the Icelandic economy is good, even enviable. The trawlers are still going out to sea, the turbines are still turning, making renewable energy, most Icelanders are still going to work every day, tourists are coming in greater numbers, as Iceland has suddenly become a much cheaper destination. The companies which are exporting goods or are competing with imported goods are in a better position than before. One of the biggest problems facing Icelanders the last few weeks has actually been in bringing the foreign currency that these companies earn, back to Iceland, as the collapse of the banks and the use of anti-terrorist legislation by the UK, has made that so much harder.

Many might have worries for friends and relatives back in Iceland. But there have been no shortages in Iceland and these are unlikely to occur. Fuel, food and other necessities are in sufficient supply, deposits in banks are safe, though stocks, money market funds, mutual funds etc, have mostly taken serious hits. But for most people everyday life goes on. The biggest worry is how widespread unemployment will be. The hardest hit sectors are finance and construction.

The task is enormous, in the next weeks (Icelanders hope to secure a huge loan (approx. \$6.5. billion) from a consortium made up of at least the IMF, the Nordic countries, and Poland, with more countries possibly to join (this might even have come through when this is read). But looming is a dispute with the governments of Britain and the Netherlands, regarding deposit insurance for accounts with Landsbankinn in those countries. Without a doubt, Iceland and Icelanders will pull through; in the future this crisis will be filed among many other crises and hardships that have visited this island in the middle of the Atlantic ocean. Icelanders are nothing if not persistent and have faced challenges of unbelievable magnitude before. The standard of living will for sure go down a bit, but not to the 20th century levels, most likely it will recede to levels of the beginning of the 21st. Iceland has taken a hit, but it is not down; it needs some help but Icelanders are still looking ahead, after all, a half full cup is not so bad.

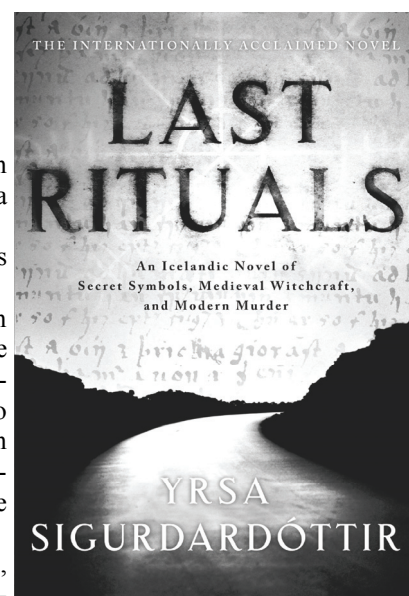
Last Rituals by *Yrsa Sigurðardóttir* Book Review by Joan Eyolfson Cadham

Gail Bowen, Saskatchewan's Queen of mystery writing, says that North American readers have rediscovered mysteries because they crave stories with plot, characterization and a beginning, middle and end, and mysteries generally deliver.

Bowen would approve of Last Rituals, the first in a promised series of mystery novels featuring Icelandic attorney Thora Gudmundsdóttir.

Last Rituals opens with a mutilated body. The victim is Harald Guntlieb, a German post grad student in Reykjavik whose research centres around the Icelandic witch hunts of the Dark Ages during which, unlike in Europe, men were tried. A suspect is quickly found but Harald's very wealthy family is convinced the wrong man has been arrested and hires Thora to privately investigate the murder. However, Frau Guntlieb stipulates that Thora must work in company with the Guntlieb's German employee, a former policeman whose stiff and sometimes imperious manner Thora finds intimidating. In reality, she takes the job only because she needs the money.

Together, Thora and Matthew Reich find themselves privy to an alien world of drugs, symbolism, secret societies, and strange and dangerous modern practices, all connected to violent medieval history. They encounter Harald's friends, a small, secretive group of young Icelanders who are obsessed with historical events involving torture and execution.



Continued on pg 7

The Icelandic Sheepdog - a National Treasure

By Laura Ford

The first settlers in Iceland brought hardy spitz-type dogs along with their sheep, cattle and horses. Over the next thousand years, the Icelandic Sheepdog developed into a unique pure breed. To endure rugged terrain and harsh living conditions, farmers required dogs with the best of temperament, working ability and health. The dogs were vital to the seasonal herding of sheep, could work in any weather condition, and were invaluable for finding lost sheep buried in snow.

The Icelandic Sheepdog breed is 16 to 18 inches tall, featuring several colours and either a short or long coat type. The dogs are alert, confident and lively. They usually get along well with other family pets and have little hunting instinct. From their heritage as a herding dog, the Icelandic Sheepdog is a devoted and trainable companion. They require regular exercise and enjoy outdoor activities, but also relax contentedly at home as long as they are with their family.

By the twentieth century, the breed had become very rare due to distemper and other epidemics. Starting in the 1950s, about 22 purebred Icelandic Sheepdogs were located from isolated farms and breeding programs were carefully undertaken to preserve the breed. Some dogs were exported to start breeding populations in Denmark and other countries. There are now about 5,000 registered Icelandic Sheepdogs worldwide. The Icelandic Sheepdog International Committee is an organization of national breed clubs which seeks to preserve the health and genetic diversity of the breed.

The Icelandic Sheepdog breed was fully recognized by the Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) in March 2006. The Canadian Icelandic Sheepdog Club promotes the breed and includes active breeders in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario. The breed is still fairly rare in Canada with just a few dozen dogs having been registered by the CKC to date. Whether at dog shows, agility or herding events, we've discovered that Icelandic Sheepdogs receive much admiration for their good looks, friendly temperament, athleticism and working abilities.

Laura Ford breeds Icelandic Sheepdogs in Toronto. Her website is: <http://www.sundogwalks.ca/solhundur>

Other references: <http://www.icelanddog.org/>

<http://www.canadianicelandicsheepdogclub.blogspot.com/>



Solhundur Leika Oskadis ("Leika") with breeder, Scott Nygren, and show judge, at the Kingston District Kennel Club show on June 21, 2008, which included an Icelandic Sheepdog booster. Leika makes her home with ICCT President Brian Eyolfson

ICCT LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

Do you have some spare time? Would you like to be more involved with the club? We are looking for a few people to fill some vacancies in our executive.

Merchandise Coordinator

Phone Committee Coordinator

Falcinn Newsletter Editor

Please contact Brian Eyolfson 416 762-9452 brian.eyolfson@sympatico.ca or Gail Einarson-McCleery. icegem20@cs.com for more details or to volunteer.

INL CONVENTION 2010

We are also hosting the Icelandic National League of North America Convention in April 2010, and we are now looking for hotels and planning assistance. If you can lend a hand in anyway, please contact Kara Schuser karaschuser@rogers.com

A Snorri Story by Marc Whiteway



2008 Snorris atop Drangey Island. Snorris that traveled from Ontario, Eileen-far left, Marc-second from left, Tara-far right

It seemed like a dream come true. A trip to Iceland to explore my culture, meet my relatives, learn the language, and just plain BE in the remarkable country that my ancestors left from over 130 years ago.

When I heard about the Snorri Program, I was filled with excitement and immediately began to gather together the necessary documentation so that I could apply for this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Fast-forward to June of 2008, and there I was, with a severely overpacked suitcase in hand, boarding a flight to the motherland.

This would be the first time anyone had returned to Iceland since the great Magnus Magnusson (somewhat of a legend in my family) sailed from there in 1877.

For the next 6 weeks, I would meet a group of people who would become some of my best friends this side of the Atlantic. Together we would explore the old country doing everything from eating shark to whitewater rafting to bathing in the Blue Lagoon to drinking Brennivein (some of us enjoying it a little more than others), to becoming so tight knit we would feel an overwhelming sense of sadness when we all had to say goodbye.

To anyone interested in their Icelandic roots, I would highly recommend the Snorri Program. It really IS a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I guarantee you will want to return soon after.

Oh Iceland...how I miss thee!

The deadline for applying to the Snorri program for 2009 is January 12, 2009/ go to www.snorri.is If you are successful, you can apply to ICCT for a grant to help with expenses, and you just might get one!

HAFNARFJORDUR OPERA CHOIR SUCCESSFUL TOUR OF ONTARIO

We were very lucky that the Hafnarfjordur Opera Choir decided to tour Ontario this fall. They performed in Toronto September 28th and Ottawa September 30th. One concert-goer in Toronto wrote, "they were marvelous, I just wished they would never stop singing!"

Their Toronto performance was the first choral presentation in the newly refurbished Mazzoleni Hall of the Royal Conservatory of Music. This was made possible by David Visentin, Associate Dean of the Glenn Gould School at the Conservatory. It was a marvelous venue which was enjoyed by all. But of course the choir in their magnificent gowns and formal suits, singing so beautifully, was the star of the night! Soloists included Elin Osk Oskardottir, famous Icelandic opera singer and director of the choir. It was followed by a delicious reception, co-ordinated by Brenda Bjarnason.

And then we had the pleasure of their company also at our annual Gourmet Dinner, this year at the Delta Chelsea. There we were treated to more of their talent, as well as "party pieces", fun performances which didn't need any translation in order for everyone to enjoy them.

We thank them and Almar Grimsson, President of INL Iceland and Hafnarfjordur Councillor, as well as Jonas Thor, tour organizer and of course the sponsors, the town of Hafnarfjordur, government of Iceland, the Royal Conservatory of Music and many others for their gift of music and joy.



Kjartan, soloist, David Visentin, Elin Osk Oskardottir, Almar Grimsson, Gail, Pianist Peter Mate, Bjorg

Important New Library Acquisition!!

Reviewed by Don Gislason

Our club library is pleased to announce the recent acquisition of a remarkable study titled *Icelandic Migration to Canada, 1872-1875: New Perspectives on the 'Myth of Beginnings'* ~ M.A. thesis Department of History, Carleton University, Ottawa - by Ryan C. Eyford (2003) of Winnipeg.

This scholarly work traces the beginnings of Icelandic immigration to Canada, with a focus on the earliest settlements in the Muskoka District (Rosseau & Hekkla) and the ill-fated site on the fringe of the Precambrian Shield near Kinmount, Ontario. To this end, the author accesses seldom researched files and long hidden documents in both the National Archives in Ottawa and the Archives of Ontario in Toronto, as well as many other important references.

Eyford outlines the relevant physical disasters in Iceland, as well as the political, social and economic 'push factors' which prompted a relatively large number of people to leave their beloved island for Canada between 1872-1875. In turn, he discusses the 'pull factors' operating in Ontario during these early years, outlining why the tide of Icelandic emigration was directed to the province rather than the U.S.

This volume is important as it draws upon original print material of the times: between government and business, newspaper reports, private journals, correspondence between the Ontario guide and interpreter Sigtryggur Jónasson (later known as the father of *New Iceland*) and provincial immigration officials, as well as reports from the shipping lines which brought the settlers during those early years to Canada. Most arrived on the Allan Line *SS Manitoban* via Glasgow or directly on *SS St. Patrick*. New light is shed upon a number of historic myths associated with leave-taking from Iceland and subsequent settlement in Canada.

Although the experiment in settlement at Kinmount (building a segment of a rail line) turned out as a disaster for all concerned, it became the 'one of a kind' springboard for the founding of "New Iceland" in the autumn of 1875 at Gimli, Manitoba. Other new communities were established as time went on. For a more comprehensive and broader understanding of the Icelandic-Canadian contribution to the building of our nation, this book is an excellent read!!

Tour of Iceland - June 2009

Jonas Thor of Thortravels is organizing a tour to Iceland in June of 2009. Seats have been reserved from Toronto on June 3rd and the return flight is June 12. The plan is to attend a special celebration at the Emigration Center in Hofsos where Icelandic North Americans will be greeted by family and friends in Iceland. This is a three day event. Following the Hofsos celebration there will be a tour around the island. Total price of \$2085.00 Can includes flight, Bus tour, Accommodation, continental breakfast and guide. Interested members can contact Jonas Thor at jonas.thor1@gmail.com before December 1. Those wishing to stay longer on their own can do so.

- Day 1: Wednesday, June 3:** Flight to Iceland. Departure from Toronto is 21:10pm. This is an overnight flight, plane lands in Keflavik at 6:30am, Thursday morning. Bus takes the participants from the airport to Reykjavik. Stay in Reykjavik two nights.
- Day 2: Thursday, June 4:** Tour of Reykjavik. This is a full day tour of the city and the surrounding area.
- Day 3: Friday, June 5:** Depart from hotel at 09:00am and head north. Hofsos in Skagafjordur is the destination where the three day celebration will take place. On the way numerous stops will be made at significant areas. Stay in Skagafjordur the next three nights.
- Day 4 and 5: Saturday June 6 and Sunday June 7:** Hofsos celebration. Details to follow.
- Day 6: Monday, June 8:** Depart from hotel at 09:00am. Many of the Icelandic immigrants to North America during the so called Emigration Period of 1870-1914 came from the regions visited today. We leave Skagafjordur and head into Eyjafjordur. Again numerous stops will be made in significant areas. Overnight at Husavik.
- Day 7: Tuesday, June 9:** Depart from hotel at 09:00am. The largest number of Icelanders who left for America came from the northeast. These districts will be explored today.
- Day 8: Wednesday, June 10:** Depart from hotel at 09:00am. The largest glacier in Europe, Vatnajokull is quite significant today. Today we travel south on the east side to the town Hofn. Overnight at Kirkjubæjarklaustur.
- Day 9: Thursday, June 11:** Depart hotel at 09:00 and head towards Reykjavik. As usual, numerous stops on the way. Overnight in Reykjavik.
- Day 10: Friday, June 12:** Flight back to Toronto at 17:00pm.

Sigríður Anna Þórðardóttir, Icelandic Ambassador to Canada

(by Gail Einarson-McCleery, Honorary Consul of Iceland in Toronto)

Our new Ambassador, Sigríður Anna Þórðardóttir, presented her credentials to the Governor General of Canada, Michael Jean, in September at Rideau Hall. Consul General Jon Johnson and I attended the ceremony, which was a very elegant occasion. We enjoyed meeting Sigríður and her husband and found them both charming and capable people.

Sigríður Anna was born on May 14, 1946 in Siglufjörður, northern Iceland. She has lived in North America before; after graduating from Akureyri College and doing a degree in Icelandic, history and classical Greek at the University of Iceland, she took further studies in linguistics at the University of Minnesota in 1982-1983. Her early career as a teacher took her to Grundarfjörður and Mosfellsbær. While in Grundarfjörður, she became Chairman of their Town Council.

She continued her interest in politics and had a long career with the Independence Party, as Minister for the Environment (2004-06), and Nordic Co-operation (2005-06) as well as serving on and chairing many Standing Committees including Foreign Affairs, Education and Culture, Health / Social Security and the Environment. Of particular interest to us was her term as Chairman of the Icelandic Delegation to the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region 2002-2004. In addition, she was President of the Nordic Council 2000-2001, and Vice president of the Parliament 2006 – 2007.

She is married to Rev. Jon Thorsteinsson, and they have three grown up daughters and seven grandchildren. We welcome them to Canada and look forward to seeing them in Toronto soon. We shall certainly extend them an invitation to our Þórrablót on March 28th!



Last Rituals Book Review Continued

The theme is gruesome, but the writing is not. Yrsa Sigurdardottir does not attempt to ensnare her readers through horror scenes or through gratuitous violence masquerading as action. She depends on skilfully crafted plotting and engaging, real-life characters – even the most unsavoury suspects have a distinctly human element. She also offers objective, scholarly insights into Iceland's past, and, always, subtle injections of humour.

Last Rituals is a mystery on three levels – the murder of Harald and the mutilation of his corpse, the location of a vanished manuscript from the time of Iceland's unsavoury history of witch hunts, and the Guntlieb's own tragic family secret.

Thora, meanwhile, is a very real person living an average, modern life - a brilliant attorney in a tiny law firm dominated by the most incompetent secretary in the known universe, and a divorced mother of a young daughter and a teen-aged son, a single parent who is eternally short of the time and money her little family needs. The fourth level of Last Rituals involves Thora's own unfolding story, her challenges as a single parent and her struggles to maintain some semblance of balance between a high-pressure job and the needs of her children.

Author Yrsa Sigurdardottir also lives life on as many levels. A civil engineer, married with two children, Yrsa has written five children's and pre-teen novels, two of which have won Icelandic prizes for literature. She is the technical manager of the 690 MW Kárahnjúkar project, one of the largest hydro construction projects in Europe. Her debut into crime novels has been sold in thirty-one languages. The second of the Thora series, My Soul to Take, is also out in foreign editions.

LOGBERG-HEIMSKRINGLA

HONOURS

DONALD K. JOHNSON

AND GORDON REYKDAL AT

LJÓSANÓTT

JANUARY 31, 2009

The 2nd annual Ljósanótt tribute dinner given by Logberg-Heimskringla will be held at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg and one of the honorees is our ICCT member, Donald K. Johnson.

Details are:

Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg
January 31, 2009

6.00 pm cash bar 7 p.m. Program 8 p.m. Dinner
Entertainment: Valdine Anderson
Emcee: Grant Stefanson, Chair, L-H

Cost \$100 (tax receipt for portion)
To book: 1-866-564-2374
Deadline: January 23

ICELANDIC FILM SERIES RE-LAUNCHES!

by Gail Einarson-McCleery

October 23rd marked the return of the Icelandic film series at the National Film Board. There was a great turnout to enjoy the reception before the film and the film itself, "Jar City", directed by Baltasar Kormakur, based on the mystery novel by Arnaldur Indridasson. It was introduced by Steve Gravestock, Nordic Film Programmer at the Toronto International Film Festival, who gave us a good overview of Baltasar's career and informed us that "Jar City" was the most popular film ever shown in Iceland ... that is, until his current one "White Night Wedding" We hope to bring you that one soon.

On November 26th, there will be a screening of a Finnish film and on Wed. January 28th, the next Icelandic film. We hope to bring you "Heima", the very popular tour of Iceland by the Icelandic band Sigur Ros ... other films on our wish list include "Country Wedding", which was very popular at TIFF in September. The other good news is that Lynne Kamm, a young screen writer of Icelandic descent, will be taking over the programming of the Icelandic film series. She has very good contacts with the Icelandic film community and has moved here recently from Vancouver.

DECEMBER MOVIE

Keisarikunta/Harbour Brothers

December 3 @7:00pm, NFB Mediatheque
150 John Street at Richmond



Screening of Finnish film Keisarikunta/Harbour Brothers, winner of the People's Choice Jussi at the 2005 Finnish national awards as well as Best Costume. Directed by Pekka Mandart, it is a snapshot of the history of jazz in Finland in the harbour town of Kotka in the 1950's. Rempo, a drummer, and Olli, his piano-playing friend decide to guarantee gigs by starting their own jazz joint. The ships bring a colourful cast of characters to the Fennia bar with some entertaining music to boot. The film will be shown in Finnish with English subtitles, admission is free

DATES TO REMEMBER

November 23rd: 2:30pm

Christmas at Riverdale Farm
201 Winchester Street, Cabbagetown
(see page 1)

November 30: 2:30pm

Yrsa is coming to Toronto to speak about her book Last Rituals
Scandinavian-Canadian Club
93 Stormont Ave (see pg 1)

December 1: 7:30pm

Yrsa will also speak in Ottawa, both on her books and on geothermal energy at The Friends of Iceland Club Room at the Icelandic Embassy.

Vigdis Hardardottir has also agreed to speak on "The ocean floor and above," that same night. More information from judith.hoye@rogers.com

December 3: 7:00pm

Finnish Movie @ The NFB (see left)

January 28: 7 pm

Icelandic movie TBA

Sunday, February 15

TRAVEL SHOW

Saturday, March 28

THORRABLOT