



The Hekla Stålstrenga quintet plays northern Norwegian folk music Feb. 6 before a capacity crowd at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel as part of the 12th annual Polarjazz, the world's northernmost jazz festival. This year's five-day event saw record-pace ticket sales, with all main performances sold out well in advance.

CATS, BOOZE AND BANGING

Review: Stellar night makes up for rough moments at Polarjazz

Last year they were the band from another planet checking out a mysterious alien moonscape. This year was more like a rowdy family reunion.

An expectant crowd greeted the four women of Katzenjammer with a roar that rarely subsided during a multiple-encore exhibition of wild instruments and compositions on what easily was the most-charged evening of this year's Polarjazz.

The five-day event had some rough performance and technical moments, but the mid-point evening featured all the virtuosity and

weirdness one might hope for in midwinter at the world's northernmost jazz festival.

"Last time I think people were surprised," said Turid Jørgensen, who like all of Katzenjammer's members does some of everything with instruments and vocals on stage. "This year when we got here we got a feeling people were looking forward to the concert."

Preceding their Feb. 5 performance was a master display of modernistic jazz by drummer Alex Acuna, pianist Jan Gunnar Hoff and bassist Per Mathisen. That was followed by one of the highest alcohol-per-minute ingestions ever seen by a musician in Svalbard as Bjørn Tomren kept a wet whistle while yodeling and polkaing his way through a set with accordionist Heine Bugges.

"Afterward I had people telling me they didn't really believe I was drinking all that alcohol, that it was (watered down)," he said looking reasonably hangover-free before a free mini-concert at Svalbardbutikken the following afternoon. "That hurt."

Polarjazz organizers were able to call the 12th annual festival a success before the first note sounded, selling out all tickets and multi-day passes as a record pace. New and returning high-profile Norwegian artists were distributed throughout the schedule. Also, like plenty of other jazz festivals, there was a heavy emphasis on drawing power regardless if their music fit the genre.

Listeners expressed few disappointments

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Heine Bugges, left, and Bjørn Tomren perform polkas and old classics during a free appearance at Svalbardbutikken on Feb. 6 as part of Polarjazz. The store also features a tropical theme during the mid-winter event.

Pollution up, may get faster

Rising Svalbard emissions from coal and ships will speed up by 2025 without action, report says

Greenhouse gas emissions in Svalbard have risen sharply during the past decade and will rise even faster by 2025 without action, according to Norwegian Pollution Control Authority and other researchers.

CO2 emissions in Svalbard increased 30 percent, nitrogen oxides more than 50 percent and soot 56 percent from 2000 to 2007, an NPCA report released earlier this month states. It notes coal power plants and ship traffic were responsible for 92 percent of emissions in Svalbard in 2007.

Governor's profile of Svalbard in 2009

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Trying to keep tensions low

High North called Norway's most important strategic asset; mix of military, cooperation sought

The High North is Norway's most important strategic asset, but more military there doesn't necessarily mean more international tension, according to Minister of Defense Grete Faremo in a presentation this week.

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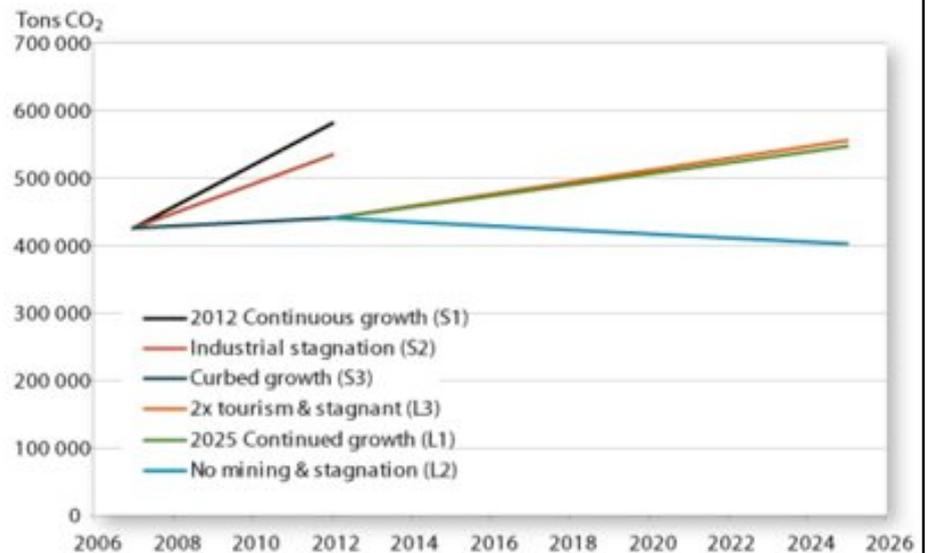
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Future CO2 emissions in Svalbard (projections for 2012 and 2025 under various scenarios)



Source: Norwegian Pollution Control Authority

Cleaner electricity and ships sought

EMISSIONS, from page 1

"Emissions from Svalbard are miniscule compared to emission released from the Norwegian mainland and waters (1 percent in the case of CO₂)," a summary of the 56-page study states. "Even so, local releases of climate influencing compounds in the vulnerable Arctic may turn out to make a difference both with respect to adverse environmental effects and to climate change."

Other research notes many pollutants on Svalbard may be carried airborne from elsewhere. A just-released study by The University Centre in Svalbard, for instance, finds pesticides from mainland Europe and northern Asia.

Multiple scenarios for 2012 and 2025 are examined in the NCPA study based on factors such as power sources and tourism volume. The researchers declare "a steep increase in emissions of climate-related compounds both in the short- and in the long-term can be expected for the coming years if steps are not taken in order to reduce the emissions."

Gov. details the good, bad and odd of 2009

There were more emergency rescues and visa applications, fewer vehicle registrations and VIP dinners. Foreigners still like coming here to get married, but they're having a tougher time renting guns.

And, all in all, the Svalbard governor's office is pretty pleased with the general state of things.

A summary of events, policies and statistics affecting Svalbard in 2009 are in the newly-released governor's annual report.

The general tone is positive, noting things such as record-low crime and strong working relationships with other governments, but also details formidable challenges for the present and future.

"Several factors – such as the international interest in global warming, the establishment

"Emissions of climate-influencing pollutants will continue to grow by about 30 percent towards 2012 even if the current plans to reduce the Norwegian coal production to half the 2007 level are realized," the report states. Depletion of coal reserves and the resulting reduction in mining in later years will lower those CO₂ emissions, but "a potential doubling of the tourist related activities will cause emissions to increase significantly (25 percent)."

Short-term recommendations include improved technology and filters at power plants, initiating energy-saving measures, and requiring cleaner fuel types and better exhaust filters for ships. Long-term proposals include centralizing coal-based power production using carbon-capture technology, and developing renewable energy using solar and tidal sources.

The report does not consider the cost or practicality of implementing such measures.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story and to download the full report (in English).

of the Svalbard International Seed Vault and media exposure of Svalbard as a tourist destination – contribute to the great pressure on the governor's organization," Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø states in an introduction to the report.

Among the things keeping officials busy were emergency rescues, with 81 compared to 72 in 2008. In addition, the average time to perform them was longer due to several long sea missions, including a record-length helicopter flight to the northern tip of Greenland.

On the other hand, the governor only hosted 11 dinners with visiting dignitaries, down from 17 each of the previous two years, due in large part to parliamentary elections keeping mainland officials otherwise occupied.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

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That Russia does not fully share the Norwegian view of how the resources in the fish river zone around Svalbard are to be exercised has not led to a general increase in tension in the area.

- Grete Faremo,
defense minister



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Norwegian Minister of Defense Grete Faremo calls for both a strong military and strong international cooperation in the High North during a Feb. 8 speech at Bodø University College.

Minister: Many roles for military in Arctic

SECURITY, from page 1

The lure of lucrative natural resources and threat posed by climate change means the five nations with interests in the north must cooperate out of self-interest, even on fiercely contested issues, Faremo said in a Feb. 8 speech at Bodø University College.

"(The Arctic) has well-developed international cooperation," she said. "This is a good place to be at the forefront of innovation and to establish the necessary framework around a growing business in the area."

Faremo said she disagrees with those arguing there are "large, unresolved questions" about disputes – with Russia in particular – about issues such as who has rights to specific offshore areas. She said existing laws and treaties are sufficient to deal with the "relatively few such outstanding issues."

Military activity by both countries is increasing, but for reasons beyond a show of strength, Faremo said.

"An increased Norwegian military presence in the north is not a sign of a military escalation," she said. "Using the military's capabilities for social tasks such as fisheries inspection, coastal surveillance, ocean surveillance and rescue preparedness is a rational and economical use of resources."

Russia's increased presence is "a signal that the country is back as a regional superpower, with the ability and willingness to safeguard

their interests," Faremo said.

Maintaining stable relationships with other nations is vital for Russia, since more than 60 percent of the Arctic's oil and gas may be in their territory, she said.

"Russia will best be able to optimize the utilization and allocation of its resources in a stable economic and political climate, with access to foreign capital and technology," Faremo said.

Cooperation on issues such as fishing and shipping have generally been good, and disputes don't seem to pose a threat to that overall relationship, she said.

"That Russia does not fully share the Norwegian view of how the resources in the fish river zone around Svalbard are to be exercised has not led to a general increase in tension in the area," she said.

One factor to cooperative relationships may be latitude, as a report released last week by the Norwegian Barents Secretariat indicates "the further north you go the better East-West relations get."

The report, focusing primarily on the Kirkenes-Murmansk area, states that while solving issues of dispute "has a long way to go," years of frequent cross-border contact are helping keep tensions low.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story and to download the full Barents study.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Svalbard Treaty, at age 90, has 'never been so practical'

The Svalbard Treaty, signed Feb. 9, 1920, in France, has grown stronger and more relevant over the years, experts said this week. "The treaty has never been so practical as it is now," said Geir Ulfstein, professor of public law at the University of Oslo, adding it's a crucial guide for potential fishery, oil and gas activity. Limiting activities on Svalbard has helped keep things smooth, said Arild Moe, assistant director of the Fridtjof Nansen Institute in Oslo. There are numerous current-day disputes about off-shore activities, as well as land-based ones such as Russian helicopter usage, but Ulfstein said he isn't concerned about the treaty being challenged in coming years. "One can speculate about future coal operations and intervention in nature, but right now I do not see major problems," he said.

Man suffers possible broken skull in snowmobile crash

A man injured in a snowmobile accident at Svalbard Airport at about 5 p.m. Feb. 9 was airlifted to Tromsø with a possible skull fracture, officials said. The man, a Longyearbyen resident in his 30s, is not considered to be in critical condition. The accident apparently occurred when airport employees were trying to use snowmobiles to trap a reindeer that strayed inside the airport's fence.

12 local youths selected for regional UKM competition

Twelve Longyearbyen students were selected to participate in Troms region UKM 2010 competition in April after a large percentage of the town's youths performed in the local exhibition Jan. 30. The local show at Huset included 14 songs, two dances and three visual art displays, with five of the performances selected for the Troms competition. Among the most active participants were Simen Henriksen, 17, and Inger-Johanne Mørk, 15, who each participated in three songs and have competed in UKM for the past four years. Last year more than 20,000 youths participated in UKM nationwide.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Light snow, cloudy. WNW winds at 8 km/h. High -9C (-11C wind chill), low -12C (-14C wind chill).

Thursday

Cloudy, a few flurries. SSE winds at 6 km/h. High -10C (-11C wind chill), low -16C (-16C wind chill).

Friday

Cloudy and colder. NW winds at 14 km/h. High -14C (-18C wind chill), low -21C (-28C wind chill).

Saturday

Partly cloudy and cold. NW winds at 12 km/h. High -17C (-21C wind chill), low -18C (-21C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -14C (-19C), -21C (-30C); Monday, colder and some snow, -19C (-33C), -21C (-34C); Tuesday, cloudy and not as cold -12C (-20C), -16C (-26C); Wednesday, snow and wind, -12C (-27C), -14C (-29C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Farmers Market, above, performs Bulgarian-accented fusion during a Feb. 4 concert at the Radisson, the first night of featured performances. At right, the eclectic rock/folk band Katzenjammer performs for youths at the Ungdomsklubben on Feb. 5 (photo by Maria Moe).



Sold-out crowds come away mostly happy

POLARJAZZ, from page 1

with the musicians they came to hear and generally seemed to appreciate the overall range of talent. But it's fair to argue that during the four days of multiple performances there was one excellent evening, a very good one, one not so impressive – and one that will forever be critic proof.

(Full disclosure: I've covered scores of jazz festivals worldwide and reviewed hundreds of albums, and consequently am a harsh critic. This is my third Polarjazz, meaning I'm familiar enough to know the workings, but not necessarily able to appreciate longtime Norwegian music stars. Hence the feedback from others where it seems appropriate.)

The festival opened with the traditional vorspiel, featuring about 70 local musicians performing whatever they felt they did best on the main stage at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel. Put that many people into an open-stage show and there's going to be a range of talent, along with plenty of hell for a critic singling out the lesser efforts.

Intimidation aside, there actually weren't that many rough spots. Maybe it's because some acts are improving (definitely the case with Blåmyra, whose members lit things up

with a few different mixes of musicians). Or maybe it's growing familiarity, so maximum cheese factor is expected when the faux-Elvis of the Longdrinkbyen Playboys starts singing "Crazy."

Overlooking imperfections doesn't apply when the "real" stuff starts, and there were some notable ones the following night as the concerts and sound crew were at something less than their prime.

The opening concert by Farmers Market revealed a band getting too loud and cluttered for its own good. The nearly 20-year-old Norwegian group has evolved from jazz into Bulgarian folk/fusion, which can be brilliant fun until the individual parts became indiscernible. At times they powered down into the more acoustic conversations that made them a quality listen several years ago, but there were also too many cheap crowd-pleasers like pasting brief snippets of classics into run-on medleys.

An imperfect soundboard setup may have caused some of the clutter. It definitely marred what for many was the most anticipated concert of the festival as longtime rock star Sivert Høyem made his Svalbard debut.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Feb. 9

7 p.m.: Meeting of the local board. Mediateket at Lompensenteret.

Feb. 11

7:30 p.m.: Undercover police agent Johnny Brenna discusses the award-winning book "Politi & Røver," he co-authored about a Munch robbery, and the history of Norway's crime and police work during the past 20 years. Longyearbyen Library.

Feb. 14

11 a.m.: Youth baptism. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Arthur og Maltazards Hevn," French animation with Norwegian speech, ages 7 and up. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "It's Complicated," U.S. romance, all ages. Huset.

Feb. 16

7 p.m.: Presentation "Images from the '50s" by Tone Nødtvedt. Svalbard Church.

Feb 18

2 p.m.: Meeting of the board of culture and leisure. Næringsbygget, "Tundra" room.

6 p.m.: Bydrift board meeting. Smutthullet meeting room.

Feb. 19

9 a.m.: Board for early enterprise meeting. Næringsbygget, "Tundra" room.

Feb. 21

11 a.m.: Baptism liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Sherlock Holmes," U.S. action/thriller, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Feb. 26-27

NNM soccer tournament. Svalbard Hall.

Feb. 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "Pelle Politibil Går i Vanne," Norwegian animation, all ages. Huset.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *N. Pole of Inaccessibility expedition off*
- *Store Norske's pricey coal-quality fix*
- *International climate panel taking heat*
- *'Most extravagant' valentine: N. Pole*