



~~New~~ Same grinders

Garbage disposals identical to faulty units that cost city dearly, expert says; Bydrift disagrees

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The city's troublesome and costly attempt to install food grinders in all kitchen sinks is get-

ting even deeper in muck as a technician disassembling new mills claims they are practically identical to the highly defective old units.

There are slight differences between the models, and city officials defending the new units said they are far more reliable and plans to install them all homes by the end of the year are continuing despite the concerns raised.

The city has been mired in trouble ever

since mandating the grinders in 2010, with the units originally selected besieged with problems from clogging to catching fire. A two-year legal battle to recover costs from the vendor – chosen as "most economically advantageous" option – was recently abandoned as the company is in economic peril. The city's cumulative costs are now five times the original estimate.

See **DISPOSALS**, page 4



CAPCOM

SPACY INVADERS

Turning Pyramiden into training zone for alien combat sought by makers of game 'Lost Planet 3'

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

If this is Pyramiden's fate, no wonder the Russians are dragging their heels rebuilding the ghost town.

A simple miner just trying to support his family uncovers nasty secrets about his company and all hell breaks loose. Sure, it might look like aliens he's battling, but who knows what kind of life those devious scientists have been nurturing in the nearby seed vault all these years.

That's the not-quite-official plot of "Lost
See **SHOOTOUT**, page 3



CAPCOM

Jim Peyton, hero of "Lost Planet 3," above, surveys a frozen battleground on an alien planet that just happens to resemble Svalbard. So much so Capcom, the game's publisher, hopes to bring journalists to Pyramiden for a "training" mission as part of the game's publicity campaign. But while muckrakers will match wits against their peers, those playing the actual game will face an arguably nastier species, seen at left.

Multimedia: Band's documentary about Pyramiden debuts
Page 3

Inside

Oh, our weird and war-inducing laws
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Svalbard's fishing zone laws head for court
- Flights by Germans need altitude adjustment
- Hospital offering free after-hours youth care
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Mars: Svalbard in a past life

Those studying rocks, water in Arctic spit on if Curiosity's data suggests life on planet existed

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

While those oh-so-cool images of Mars from the Curiosity rover are keeping the world enthralled, they're just confirming much of what researchers who studied similar terrain in Svalbard already suspected.

But that still leaves plenty of room for debate, as two separate research group are coming
See **PLANET**, page 4



KJELL OVE STORVIK / AMASE

AMASE researchers collect data about rocks in Svalbard in order to compare them to Mars.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

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Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Making light of the night



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Scores of mostly local residents, top, gather at midday Saturday in Longyearbyen's central square for an outdoor market featuring live music, a barbecue, fire pits, a sleddog petting area for kids, and displays of snowmobiles and other items during the annual four-day KunstPause festival. At bottom left, local youths perform a 100th birthday tribute to Norwegian playwright Torbjørn Egner on Thursday at Kulturhuset. At bottom right, Gun Tone Letting, center, and Oddbjørg Frostod examine crafts by local artists for sale at Galleri Svalbard during Thursday's opening ceremony for the festival.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We've heard it called everything from "sensible" to "Nazi-like," but we're always happy to unpack more adjectives to describe one of Longyearbyen's more notable eccentricities. **The decree prohibiting anyone to die here makes the hall of fame for the world's weirdest laws** in Richard Happer's new book, "The Law is an Ass." "If you fancy a spot of eternal life, forget the Holy Grail: just go and live in the remote Arctic town of Longyearbyen," Happer writes, noting the cemetery stopped accepting bodies 70 years ago since they don't decompose. "So if you fall gravely ill there now, you will be hastily dispatched by plane to the mainland, where you can end your days without getting arrested" ... Staying with our enigmatic rules, **analysts for CNN suggest the Svalbard Treaty is a model for resolving the dispute between China and Taiwan about some islands in the Pacific.** Details aside, since "landmark" pacts between Norway and Russia seem to immediately deteriorate into more shouting matches to the point of threatening nuclear sub deployments, we're not sure it takes a master's degree to argue there are better options. Actually, maybe it does take a master's, since **a new graduate degree in Norwegian/Russian "borderogology"** is being offered by Murmansk State Humanities



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Salmon chanted evening: Maybe the ballet stinks but, hey, at least now it's free.

University and the University of Nordland to figure out what the heck the law is. Also, it's worth noting the whole China/Taiwan debate might be mute since **scientists believe the islands may soon be submerged due to climate change** ... On a lighter note (literally), our planet saw its last total solar eclipse this week until Svalbard reaps the riches of a hotels-sold-out-long-ago viewing on March 20, 2015 ... Finally, **guys weaseling they way out of going to Norway's national ballet performance earlier this year can now be roped in** by their loved ones for a date-at-home with a free broadcast of the show at <http://tv.nrk.no/program/mkmf12014412/hovedscenen-dans>.



COURTESY OF EFTERKLANG

Members of the Danish band Efterklang capture sounds in Pyramiden for a recently released album as a film crew captures the effort for a just-released documentary about the Svalbard ghost town.

Pyramiden album now a documentary

History of ghost town shown in Efterklang's sound-capture tour and story of former resident

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

If hearing Efterklang "perform" the sounds of Pyramiden in their new album isn't enough, it's now possible to see the story of the ghost town through their eyes.

The documentary "The Ghost of Pirami-

da," featuring the Danish band's visit where they captured more than 1,000 sounds for the album "Piramida," as well as the story of a former resident of the abandoned Russian community, is premiering this week at festivals in Amsterdam and Copenhagen. At the latter it has been nominated for best music documentary.

A preview of the film is at <http://efterklang.net/home/2012/11/01/the-ghost-of-piramida-new-efterklang-film>.

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

Can reporters save us from aliens?

SHOOTOUT, from page 1

Planet 3," a third-person shooter Capcom plans to release in early 2013. While the game takes place on the planet E.D.N. III, apparently the setting is so similar to Pyramiden the company is seeking permission to bring journalists here for a rather rugged publicity junket.

"We will take them into the wilderness survival training with our team of guides," wrote Matthew Loader of Sublime Promotions, the game's publicist, in a message to Svalbard's governor. Also, "to make Pyramiden more like the game's alien theme, Sublime Promotions would like to 'dress up' one of the buildings."

Visiting journalists will participate in activi-

ties such as shooting, snow shelter construction and ice fishing, in keeping with a theme in the game of living off the land, Loader wrote.

"Lost Planet 3" is prequel to the first two games of the series introduced in 2006. The series has enjoyed modest success, with Metacritic scoring the first two titles in the lows 70s and mid 60s (out of 100), respectively.

It's the latest of a sudden spurt of video games with ties to Svalbard. The strategy game "Naval War: Arctic Circle" was released earlier this year and the first-person shooter "Arctic Combat" is scheduled for release Dec. 6.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Svalbard's 'discriminatory' fishing laws heading for court

The controversial Norwegian fishery protection zone around Svalbard is heading for court as a Germany company is challenging the seizure of a trawler. The *Keil* was seized Sept. 5 by the Coast Guard for catching large amounts of haddock and the ship's owner, Deutsche Fischfang-Union, was fined 55,000 kroner. "Norwegian authorities discriminate between Norwegian and foreign fishermen in the fisheries protection zone," said Hallvard Østgård, a company representative. "Now (we) want a principled decision on whether the Svalbard Treaty applies to the zone or not." A hearing is scheduled Nov. 20 in Nord-Troms District Court and the company is stating it will take the matter to the Supreme Court if necessary.

German company needs a loftier altitude, governor says

A German tour company needs an altitude adjustment, as its flights are too low in Svalbard's airspace, according to the governor's office. AirEvents' debut flight in March was at about 8,000 feet and the company, after being warned about altitude requirements, is seeking permission for a flight at 17,000 feet next April. The governor's office states only altitudes between 30,000 and 40,000 feet are acceptable. That's the standard for flights between Europe and North America, and complies with Svalbard regulations banning sightseeing flights. Company officials argue 17,000 feet is not a sightseeing height nor will it impact Svalbard's environment.

Hospital offering after-hours services free to local youths

Youths between 13 and 20 years old are being offered free health care after business hours every two weeks at Longyearbyen Hospital. "This is a new offer here, but common on the mainland," said Vigdis Solbakkbor, a nurse at the facility. She said many have questions about sex-related issues, for instance, and free tests for pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases are offered. Some youths have also come for psychological problems such as bullying at school or abuse at home.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. SE winds to 29 km/h. High -4C (-8C wind chill), low -8C (-13C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 29 km/h. High -7C (-13C wind chill), low -11C (-17C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 39 km/h. High -3C (-9C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill).	Cloudy. N winds to 42 km/h. High -3C (-10C wind chill), low -5C (-11C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -5C (-11C), -7C (-13C), light 0:00h; Monday, mostly clear, -7C (-13C), -12C (-17C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -10C (-15C), -12C (-17C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -7C (-12C), -10C (-15C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Andreas Johnsson, a University of Gothenburg researcher, examines a landscape in Svalbard in order to compare it the Martian surface. At right, satellite photos of Adventalen (top) and Mars show similarities in the gullies, and Johnsson claims those on the Red Planet may have once collected water under conditions capable of sustaining life.

Life on Mars? Rocks, water disagree

PLANET, from page 1

to different conclusions about whether life may have existed on Mars when climate conditions were more favorable on Mars. Beyond the "we're not alone" question, researchers are also trying to determine if Earth may be similarly threatened by climate change.

Scientists studying rocks in Svalbard found similar carbonate globule structures to a Martian meteorite discovered in 1996 that a NASA researcher claimed contained evidence of life. There was considerable skepticism about the NASA claim at the time and now Hans Amundsen of the Arctic Mars Analogue Svalbard Expedition (AMASE) project says the similarities ap-

pear to be caused by volcanic activity.

"If you can explain your observations with purely physical, abiotic processes, then you can't use it to argue that you have found life outside Earth," he said in an interview with *Astrobiology Magazine*.

But University of Gothenburg are hoping new data showing large areas of Mars' northern hemisphere underwent a number of freeze-thaw cycles may support their studies suggesting water capable of sustaining life collected in the planet's gullies. They studied similar gullies in Svalbard as part of their project.

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

Bydrift: Grinders not same despite parts

DISPOSALS, from page 1

The claim the units are identical, first reported this week by *Svalbardposten*, is made in a letter to the city by Heinrich Eggenfellner on behalf of a housing co-op where the old grinders were replaced in October. He said suspicions led to the disassembly of the old unit from Activum Consulting and new unit from Waste Maid.

"After complete removal of both mills, as well as correspondence with the American agent for Waste Maid, we are convinced that the two mills are exactly alike, and produced at the same place in China," he wrote.

Waste Maid's unit appears newer, but "it looks like they may have optimized production to get it as cheap as possible," Eggenfellner wrote. The only possible advantage, he added, is the new mill has an extra plastic cover with foam so it makes somewhat less noise.

But a key issue in the debate is the switch for the mill is connected in a different way. Eggen notes this in his letter, writing "one of the problems with some of the old mills was that they started by themselves when the plug was connected ... You could say the new one is safer because there is power in the bottom of the grinder all the time."



Old (left) and new garbage disposals ordered by the city are functionally alike, according to an analyst.

However, it would be simple to connect the old mills similarly, he added.

Eggenfellner's complaint puts him in a somewhat awkward position since he is also the chairman of Bydrift, the city infrastructure agency responsible for the grinder policy. Marianne Aasen, Bydrift's general manager, wrote in an e-mail interview the complaint will not delay installations.

"We will keep the plan in relation to the installation of the new mills and will be completed by the end of the year," she wrote.

The mills are similar in appearance and may share many common parts, but that doesn't make them functionally the same, Aasen told *Svalbardposten*.

"They are different products, even if they are very similar," she said. "Two hair dryers will also be very similar."

The old units had a failure rate of about 25 percent, compared to one to two percent for the new ones, according to a response letter from Håkan Eriksson, Bydrift's technical infrastructure leader. Also, the new unit's switch is protected from moisture so it can't short-circuit like the old unit's can.

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

What's up

Nov. 14

6 p.m.: Movie: "Beasts of the Southern Wild," U.S. drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 18

6 p.m.: Movie: "Tinker Bell - Secret of the Wings" (3D), U.S. family film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Sinister," U.S. horror/crime/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 19

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

Nov. 20

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Nov. 21

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 2," U.S. drama/fantasy/romance, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 23

9 p.m.: Board of Youth Enterprises meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Nov. 25

6 p.m.: Movie: "Møte på Valmueåsen," Japanese animation/drama w/Norwegian subtitles, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Mer Eller Mindre Mann," Norwegian drama/comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 26

11 a.m.: Environmental and Industrial Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

Nov. 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "Mesterkokken," French comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 29

7:30 p.m.: Christmas concert featuring soloist Torstein Sødal and band leader Kjetil Bjerkestrand. Kulturhuset.

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:

- *Polar bear week: Supportive or sham?*
- *BP to pay record fine for Gulf Coast spill*
- *Alaska ice tested as new energy source*
- *Freezer fresh: Greenland's gourmet food*