



Jazz fit for a queen

Queen Sonja to debut exhibit of her local art, host opening of Polarjazz – and, yes, she's a fan

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Um, no, Queen Sonja probably won't be doing any flash mob dancing during the concert. But thanks for asking.

Her Royal Majesty will introduce the 15th annual Polarjazz festival Thursday, shortly after debuting a gallery exhibit of images crafted from photos she took during previous visits. She has expressed a true appreciation of jazz, but the concerts she will attend feature a dance/hip-hop

duo and a contemporary singer/songwriter.

Apparently inquiring minds are wondering if the duo, Madcon, will inspire a royal jam since they had the ballroom chandeliers jingling during a performance at Princess Märtha's 40th birthday party and "got people all over Europe to dance the so-called 'Flashmob' dance," according to an article in *Se Og Hør* magazine headlined "Taking Sonja 'Flashmob' Dancing?"

Far more likely is Queen Sonja will focus her artistic energies on her exhibit "Tre Reiser – Tre Landskap," created with photos she took during previous trips here. Working with artists Kjell Nupen and Ørnulf Opdahl, the landscape photos were transferred to polymer plate and

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø, center, greets Queen Sonja as she arrives in Longyearbyen for Polarjazz and the debut of her art exhibition. Also welcoming her are Municipal Councilman Geir Hekne and airport supervisor Morten Ulsnes.



Ida Sofie Alnæs, 13, right, performs a song Sunday during the local UKM competition at Kulturhuset. At top left, peers of the teenage participants operate light and sound equipment while a panel of judges assess the performances. At bottom left, all of the participants gather to hear who is going to the regional competition in Tromsø. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.



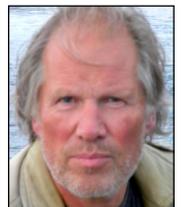
Jon Sandmo dies of cancer

Outspoken politician, physician and tour guide might have found final, cut-short 'salute' appropriate

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Jon Sandmo, 63, a blunt-spoken member of a city council he ridiculed as a delusional sham that ought to be abolished, died Wednesday (Jan. 30) of cancer.

The 14-year Longyearbyen resident – who could be humorous, gruff, profane, intelligent and infuriating all at once – was diagnosed



JON SANDMO

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Star tracks: the next generation

Younger students dominate local UKM talent competition; six of 14 acts going to Tromsø

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

There were worries it might be a very bad Hair day.

Familiar names representing the most educated student talent were again practicing their

songs and stagecraft. Just not for this show – they're performing the tribal love-rock musical Feb. 9.

So the lineup for this year's local UKM talent competition consisted almost entirely of 12- to 14-year-olds, many of them first-timers. Mari Tefre, director of the local event, said she didn't know how many would sign up.

"I was worried we wouldn't have that many," she said.

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Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

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.

Oddball oxymorons



A group of 47 racers, above, take off from the starting line Saturday at the annual Spitsbergen Up And Down. The 8K race from Nybyen to Trollsteinen requires participants to make the 800-meter vertical ascent and return by any non-motorized means.

Trond Espen Haug won the race for a second straight year with a record time of 47 minutes and 41 seconds. Sidsel Svarstad was the women's winner with a time of 1:10:50. At right, a polar bear dipper high-fives a lookout during the Spitsbergen Hot And Cold, featuring icy swims and a bonfire on the beach, the night before the race. The images are from a four-minute highlight video by Kjetil Yddtebø and Matias Modalsli Grøtteland available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-p2j3hKlw4A>.



Sandmo accepts life, death sardonically

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with an untreatable form of the illness last July. He accepted his fate – at least outwardly – with the same unvarnished attitude that brought him to Svalbard, waving off expressions of sympathy with "That's fucking life."

Sandmo sold his medical practice in southern Norway and moved to Longyearbyen because "I was shit tired of whining and complaining" by patients, he told *Svalbardposten* in a recent interview. He began working at Longyearbyen Hospital in 1998 and guided independent travelers with his company Svalbard4You.

He ran for and was elected to a municipal council seat in 2007 despite being highly critical of the body. In an interview last October, shortly

before he departed the city due to his illness, he said he joined the council to work on specific issues. But he said the council is nothing more than Norway's mainland leaders allow it to be, and authority over substantive matters should be openly returned to them.

"It's a mock democracy," he said. "We're kidding ourselves."

Perhaps fittingly for a man seeing local government as a puppet to national leaders, flags in Longyearbyen were lowered to half-mast after his death – but only for a few hours as they were raised again in observance of Queen Sonja's arrival for a three-day visit.

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We know the threat of polar bears and freezing to death makes Svalbard a less safe vacation than Disney World, but surely it doesn't rival getting shot with a few hundred arrows by tribesmen, right? Well, maybe, if you're the folks at CNN choosing the "World's Seven Most Dangerous and Remote Islands." Bjørnøya is one of the Seven Deadly Scenes, along with places like North Sentinel Island where the world's last surviving pre-Neolithic tribe attacks any approaching outsiders. As for our southern Svalbard island, "it's been a nature reserve since 2002 and has a lively history of failed occupation – hard to be-

lieve for a place of barren cliffs, near-zero precipitation and risk of leaks of radioactive material from the nearby wreck of a nuclear submarine" ... In other Wrath of God news, Longyearbyen School Headmaster Frode Sømme is belatedly joining the "war on Christmas" by objecting the school organizing worship services at Svalbard Church for students during the holiday. But it's a mere scuffle compared to the crusades for completely Christ-less classrooms, if we're translating *Svalbardposten* correctly. The school has numerous Christmas activities such as craft shows, which Sømme says differ from actual religious worship.



SOLVÅR-IREN DALSAUNE / UKM

Longyearbyen youths take a break backstage during the local UKM show Sunday at Kulturhuset.

New faces going places at UKM

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On Sunday 22 students participated in 14 artistic works, including 10 songs, two films and two photography exhibits. And the new kids held up fine, as a panel of judges voted to send six of the 14 entries to the regional competition in Tromsø.

Each local competition is permitted to send a certain number of entries to regionals, but judges won't stretch to meet that number with youths who might embarrass themselves, Tefre said.

"They should be at the same level as the others in Tromsø," she said.

The winning performances, with excerpts of the judges' comments, are:

- Ragnhild Engan, 18, and Emilie Sommer-vold, 18, for the film "En Reise Til Antarktis." "Beautiful and intense interpretation of the encounter with Antarctica. The music supports it. Great stills of animals/birds, but a bit boring landscapes. The story follows a classic pattern (departure - experience - the journey home), but it lacks the climax, and gets a bit flat."

- Sommervold's photo "Skumring." "The subject is not original and could easily become cliché, but she still manages to give it new meaning. Technically and artistically a very good photograph, razor-sharp and with accurate color reproduction. The composition is thoughtful, with a utilization of lines in the landscape and a vanishing point shifted to the side."

- Pauline Skreslett, 12, for the song "Beautiful." "Good sound, sings perfectly clean, and has

a cool rock vibrato and edge. Good English pronunciation. Looking at the crowd, and that's good. But you can continue to work to smile and relax your body during performance."

- Lusie Frostvoll Kuraas, 13, for the song "Jaktmars Til Jan Lars." "Violin is one of the most difficult instruments to master and get to sound good, and this is very good technically accomplished. Perhaps a bit monotonous. Can practice to smile a little more. Will definitely be a plus for originality and contributing to the breadth of the young culture in Longyearbyen. In addition to that, there was an artistically and technically superb performance."

- Ulrik Snibjør, 13, for the song "Skyrim Theme." "Original choice of melody (theme from the PlayStation game) and super sensitivity. Dramatic, in a positive way. Good interpretation of the composition, and manages to reveal variation in strength and melody highlights. Playing without sheet music! Good technical execution, with some errors. Establishes public relations at once (come on stage and bows) and charms the audience through the presentation."

- Åsne Hansteen, 14, and Vilde Markussen, 14, for the song "Thousands Years." "The vocalist has a voice with great range and dynamics - and chooses wisely a song that brings this. Very nice interaction between voice and piano. Flawless, delicate and mature piano. Great charisma on stage, even if the singer is mostly standing still."

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Local author's 'Arctic Soul' wins short story competition

Siw Monica Amundsen, 27, of Longyearbyen is the winner among 116 entries in a short story competition organized by NKS Online Courses and the literature website Digglitt.no. Her story, "Den Arktiske Sjel" ("The Arctic Soul"), features a local plot that "has a unique and effective way of combining the theme of 'Winter' with human insights," according to the judges' remarks. "The text describes a lost soul in a cold environment. To apply the theme given in the statement so that it refers both to cold human emotions, seasons and nature's brute reality is brilliantly done." The story, for which Amundsen won 12,000 kroner, can be read at tinyurl.com/anszxtv.

Special tourist flight by Arab princess nixed by governor

A private jet flight to Svalbard last weekend by an Arabic princess was rejected by the governor, who said no special exceptions would be given to a ban on tourism and sight-seeing flights. Sheikh Moza Tahnon Al-Nahajan, a close relative of the presidential family controlling the United Arab Emirates, sought permission for the seven-person trip in a Royal Jets Gulfstream, acknowledging it was for non-diplomatic purposes. It is not known if the princess took a regularly scheduled commercial flight to Longyearbyen instead.

Russians can't expand flights for tourists, ministry rules

Trust Arktikugol won't be allowed to fly commercial passengers between Longyearbyen, Barentsburg and Pyramiden, Norway's Ministry of Transport and Communications has ruled. The Russian company has repeatedly requested permission for such flights by helicopter in recent years, questioning the sovereignty of a ban on such flights and arguing it limits economic opportunities. The company is currently allowed to fly between Longyearbyen and Barentsburg for mining-related purposes, with permission for other single flights granted on a case-by-case basis. The rule is based on the Svalbard Treaty and the Norwegian-Soviet Agreement of 1974 regarding the use of Svalbard Airport.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Partly cloudy. SE winds to 32 km/h. High -18C (-25C wind chill), low -21C (-28C wind chill).

24-hour darkness

Thursday

Partly cloudy. E winds to 45 km/h. High -15C (-23C wind chill), low -18C (-25C wind chill).

24-hour darkness

Friday

Clear. NE winds to 35 km/h. High -16C (-22C wind chill), low -18C (-24C wind chill).

24-hour darkness

Saturday

Partly cloudy. SE winds to 18 km/h. High -16C (-21C wind chill), low -29C (-24C wind chill).

24-hour darkness

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -10C (-16C), -16C (-21C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -9C (-14C), -12C (-16C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -9C (-15C), -13C (-19C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -10C (-15C), -11C (-16C), light 0:00h

Data provided by storm.no



COURTESY OF THE BODØ BIG BAND

The Bodø Big Band, pictured here, will perform the only "true" jazz concert during the 15th annual Polarjazz in a collaboration with the Longyearbyen Storband. The festival typically focuses on other genres to appeal to a wider audience, but next year's event will be devoted to its namesake music.

Confirmed: Queen Sonja 'loves jazz'

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processed in gravure. The opening gala at 5 p.m. Thursday at Galleri Svalbard will also feature local children welcoming her with flowers and music by local musicians.

As for opening Polarjazz, the performers – like most of this year's festival lineup – are acclaimed but playing something other than jazz in order to appeal to a wider audience. That likely won't bother Queen Sonja, known for her participation in broad range of cultural activities, although Festival Director Lasse S. Hansen noted "she's really a fan of jazz."

Hansen's observation is vouched for in a 2005 interview by NRK's Agnes Moxnes, who asked the queen asked about the music she would be hearing at an upcoming art event.

"American jazz" was the queen's reply, according to Moxnes. "The queen mentioned a number of jazz musicians she liked, so it was obvious that Queen Sonja loves jazz."

The performer she is certain to hear after her opening remarks gets plenty of affection from locals, as Kari Bremnes returns with her electronic rock/folk five years after performing one of the better concerts at the 2008 festival. The queen may or may not remain for the subsequent gig by Madcon.

Another big name making a return appearance is Sivert Høyem, a rock vocalist who was the overwhelming favorite of the 2010 festival. The intense aura of the Saturday night concert will continue with the evening's other two gigs, the rock/funk/jazz band Babylon Brothers and the local blues band Howlin' Huskies.

A more subdued and reflective concert pairs singer/pianist Liv Mari Schei with Arne O. Holmconcert. The Saturday show, "Homesickness – Words and Music From the North," features Holmconcert narrating texts "about living life and love on Svalbard."

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

Polarjazz 2013 schedule

Wednesday, Jan. 30

- 9 p.m.: Vorspiel featuring local artists. Kulturhuset.

Thursday, Jan. 30

- 7 p.m.: Unveiling of Panserbjørn sculpture by Julian Warren og Jason Roberts. Outside entrance to Kulturhuset.
- 8:30 p.m.: Queen Sonja officially opens festival. Concerts by Kari Bremnes and Madcon. Kulturhuset. **Audience must be in seats by 8:15 p.m.**

Friday, Feb. 1

- 6 p.m.: Free concert by Lumikide. Arctic Bay kennels. Free bus from Karlsberger Pub at 5:30 p.m.
- 8:30 p.m.: Concerts by The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, and John Olav Nilsen and Gjengen. Radisson. Also performing later into the night is Bargoo at Barents Pub.

Saturday, Feb. 2

- 1 p.m.: Concert by Longyear. Kroa.
- 5 p.m.: Concert by Liv-Mari Schei og Arne O. Holm. Kulturhuset.
- 8:30 p.m.: Concerts by Sivert Høyem, Babylon Brothers and Howlin' Huskies. Radisson. Also performing later into the night is Bargoo at Barents Pub.

Sunday, Feb. 3

- 6 p.m.: Free concert by Lumikide. Kulturhuset.
- 7 p.m.: Concert by Bodø Big Band & Longyearbyen Storband. Kulturhuset.

Festival passes: 1,400 kr., good for all concerts Wednesday through Saturday. More details about single-concert tickets and artists at polarjazz.no.

What's up

Jan. 30 - Feb. 3

Polarjazz festival. Details and tickets at polarjazz.no.

Jan. 30

1:55 p.m. (est.): Queen Sonja arrives at Svalbard Airport.

Jan. 31

1:30 p.m.: Local leaders host lunch for Queen Sonja. Huset.

5 p.m.: Queen Sonja debuts her photo exhibit "Tre Reiser – Tre Landskap" ("Three Visits – Three Landscapes") at Galleri Svalbard.

Feb. 4

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

Feb. 9

2 and 6 p.m.: Musical "Hair," performed by Longyearbyen School students. Kulturhuset.

Feb. 5

7 p.m.: Interview of local filmmaker Jason Roberts by Priest Leif Magne Helgesen. Svalbard Church.

Feb. 10

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ performance by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Isdragen," Swedish family film, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Flight," U.S. drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Feb. 11

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

Feb. 12

7 p.m.: Municipal Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3 Newtontoppen room.

Feb. 17

6 p.m.: Movie: "Wreck-it Ralph" (3D), U.S. action/thriller dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: "A Good Day to Die Hard," U.S. action/thriller, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Feb. 18

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

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:

- \$109M fund to boost world's seed banks
- Historic drill to Antarctic lake completed
- McD's 'sustainable' pollock kills salmon
- How do you give a polar bear a 'medical?'