

THERMAL BEETS RECORDS – ICELAND

PRESS RELEASE: Embargo until Nov. 5, 2024

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ICELAND AIRWAVES 2024 CONFERENCE ATTENDEES TO RECEIVE RECORD TO COMMEMORATE 25TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL; SAMPLER FEATURES 9 ARTISTS

Thermal Beets' records made from sugar beets; Iceland getting first factory since 1982



REYKJAVÍK, Iceland — Attendees of the Iceland Airwaves 2024 Conference on Nov. 7-9, 2024, will receive a record commemorating the festival's 25th anniversary. But this is not a vinyl LP showcasing songs from nine local artists performing at this year's festival. The record is especially unique because it is made from a plant-based material instead of traditional vinyl plastic.

A Taste of Iceland Airwaves 2024 marks the debut of Thermal Beets Records, whose founders are planning to build the first record factory in Iceland since 1982 and pressing eco-friendly records on the island by 2026.

In the meantime, their label will release records featuring both new and archival music across all genres as the factory is being built. Made from sugar beets and starches, the sampler record also debuts cutting-edge technology via an embedded chip that unlocks bonus multimedia material from the featured artists.

“We are incredibly excited by the idea of an eco-friendly record factory in Iceland! While we patiently wait and follow the development we can enjoy this sweet sampler celebrating the incredible talent emerging from Iceland's vibrant music scene, all artists that are playing this year's Iceland Airwaves.” —**María Rut Reynisdóttir, Director of Iceland Music Centre**

Working closely with the Iceland Music Centre, Thermal Beets aims to provide local services to musicians and build strong ties with Iceland's world-renowned recording studios, particularly sound engineer Vinny Wood, who recently refurbished a lacquer-cutting lathe at his Studio Silo on Iceland's eastern coast in Stöðvarförður. Since 1948, records have been made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a plastic scientists consider harmful to the environment.

“By replacing traditional vinyl plastic with a record made from sugar beets and starches, Thermal Beets is offering a glimpse into the future of record production, with a significantly reduced environmental impact,” stated Guðmundur Isfeld, executive producer of *A Taste of Iceland*. An Iceland native, he runs Copenhagen-based RPM Records, the only Icelandic-owned record-pressing factory that has produced hundreds of releases for Icelandic musicians over the years.

RPM also manufactured, in 2019, the soundtrack record for the documentary about teenage Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Considered groundbreaking at the time, the record was made from 100% recycled plastic, with packaging made from biodegradable, recycled, and wood-free paper, a biodegradable sticker, and plant-based ink. Thermal Beets is raising the sustainability bar by replacing the plastic with the sugar beet material.



What is Thermal Beets Records

The Thermal Beets team came together last year organically at Making Vinyl, the B2B conference co-founded in 2017 by Larry Jaffee, a New York-based journalist, academic, and author of the 2022 book *Record Store Day: The Most Improbable Comeback of the 21st Century*. Co-founder Kevin Da Costa has helped build 24 startup factories around the world. Rounding out the team is Jónbjörn Birgisson, an Icelandic engineer and musician who will serve as the plant manager of the future factory.

“This collaboration combines cutting-edge green technology with a love for music, showing what’s possible when innovation and sustainability come together,” said Jaffee, who teaches a music industry course at St. John’s University in New York City and has lectured at numerous colleges and universities about vinyl’s astounding revival as a multibillion-dollar business.

Da Costa also serves as the technical director of Evolution Music, the English company that developed the sugar beet material. In 2023, the material was used to press four limited-edition records released by Earth / Percent, the nonprofit group headed by Brian Eno focused on climate change solutions. On Sept. 29, the partners spoke publicly for the first time about the Iceland project at the Haarlem Vinyl Festival, after developing the business idea over the past year.

Guðmundur Ísfeld will represent Thermal Beets at a Nov. 6 event organized by Earth Sonic Iceland, a nonprofit organization dedicated to music-focused climate action, which plans to have its records pressed with Thermal Beets. The event is scheduled for 4 pm-5:30 pm at Iceland Music Centre (Austurstræti 5, 101 Reykjavík).

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