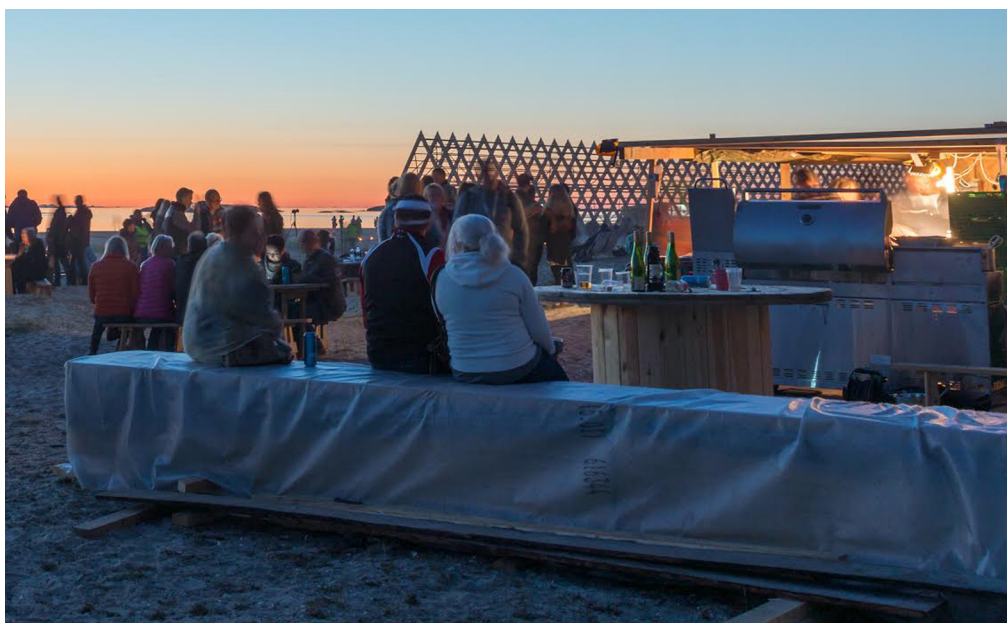




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You can sit in the amphitheatre in just a towel, watch the sand and the ocean and grab a champagne

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says. But Salt's isolation is also one of its strongest draws. The island's environment is meant to inspire visitors to question their own place in the world. "It's not like going to Glastonbury, where lots of people are arriving to eat and drink and have fun," says Mogård-Larsen. "With Salt we have had people making the journey all the way from Australia and New York and they all have different reasons for being here. Visitors can find out something about the people living in the Arctic – how they're thinking today and how they lead their lives – and they can learn from one another, too."

Mogård-Larsen is adamant about the event's appeal and seems to revel in its oddness. "On the opening weekend, people had been very sceptical about the project. And it is understandable when we're saying, 'Yeah, we're going to take some fish racks and make some art out of them.' But on this opening weekend people saw the beauty of it; some were actually standing on the beach and crying because it was so beautiful. And they understood what we tried to say: that this is our background, a strong symbol of the north, something we've been living off for thousands of years."

Mogård-Larsen and Nordby's high-north escape is a bold reinterpretation of the festival model but in its idealism is one that actually harks back to the roots of counterculture, when acting a bit strangely in a field – or a beach in this case – still meant something. It is an idea currently so out there (literally) that you can't help but admire its scope. A grand vision such as this is for those few willing to go further – and perhaps best enjoyed with a small pinch of salt. — (M)

## Cometh the icemen Norwegian electronic dance duo Røyksopp on Robyn, the umlaut trend and why their latest album will be their last.

WORDS by Ben Olsen  
PHOTOGRAPHY by Andrew Urwin

Self-proclaimed "two-headed Norwegian monster" Røyksopp are true legends of the Nordic nation's music scene. Originally from Tromsø but having emerged among the so-called Bergen Wave – the mini-milieu that also birthed Kings of Convenience and Annie – glacier-cool purveyors of polished electronica Svein Berge and Torbjørn Brundtland (pictured, from left) burst into the public consciousness with the release of *Melody AM*. Their career spans 13 years, five albums and collaborations with the music industry's biggest hitters. Having just released *The Inevitable End*, their final album, what better time to reflect on the duo's achievements? Fresh from a DJ set at London's Plastic People, we sat down with Brundtland and Berge in the rooftop bar at the newly opened Mondrian Hotel.

**You've just released your final album. Why stop now?**

**Torbjørn Brundtland:** We're proud of what we've made in the album format and want to preserve that. There are no set rules for how to release music and we plan to explore other forms.

**Svein Berge:** In terms of consumption the album is declining but it's not the reason we're leaving it. We wanted to celebrate and pay homage to the conventional album.

**Was there really a Bergen Wave?**

**SB:** I wouldn't call it a "wave" as it was just a few acts and half of them lived together. There were a few of us in Bergen at the time who wanted to release music so we made a sort of pact with Mikal Telle [founder of Tellé record label] to release our music as Røyksopp, which he could use to promote his label.



**TB:** It has really captured people's imagination, though. Since A-ha, no one had really been thinking about Norway apart from Eurovision so it was really refreshing. It was a lot of fun in Bergen at that time. Most fame-hungry people headed to Oslo but in Bergen people were a little bit more down to earth.

**You released a joint album with Swedish icon Robyn this year. How did that come about?**

**TB:** If she was ever in Bergen she'd jump around on stage with us and vice versa. We did some work on [Robyn's 2010 album] *Body Talk* and she's appeared on one of our albums. We decided that the loudest and proudest way to present this project was to make a new band; it was a true collaboration where we worked through everything from every little high-hat to the phrasing of the lyrics.

**Scandinavian cultural exports are stronger than ever. Why is that?**

**TB:** I can't speak for Scandinavia – Sweden's got its own thing going on – but Norway has

often been misinformed about how to make "international" music. It has often been about emulation: trying to be a Norwegian Springsteen. But we've changed that: Røyksopp and [break-through single] "Eple" are Norwegian words and because of us I believe Scandinavia has a quality stamp on it right now.

**SB:** It has become a trend to use the umlaut in a band name: it was only Mötley Crüe and Motörhead before us. By using it there's now a certain pride in displaying that we hail from Norway. Plus festivals such as Øya [Oslo] and Way Out West [Gothenburg] are great at booking local acts.

**How has the industry changed?**

**SB:** It's easier to brand yourselves now. Two Norwegian guys making instrumental music couldn't get airtime 13 years ago; we thought we could try getting our music played on ads, which I think was a good idea. Just as important is the evolution of software; the fact you can easily get a programme like FruityLoops and produce music that sounds professional. The danger though, without wanting to slag anyone off, is that you get quite a generic sound thanks to the plug-ins and libraries that set the levels and compress it in a certain way. For us geeks it is easy to train-spot this.

**TB:** You don't have to get up from your chair now; you can think of an idea, download the software, make a track and upload it to a SoundCloud and YouTube channel.

**SB:** And cross your fingers and pray that someone will notice it. Or opt for novelty: it depends whether you want to be a "Crazy Frog" or make music that's got credibility.

**After two albums and a world tour you've had a busy year. How are you spending your holidays?**

**TB:** My mind jumps immediately to fireworks. It's a big tradition in Norway. I'm really looking forward to buying and wasting some fireworks.

**SB:** Being Norwegian, we have so much oil money that we can just send it up into the sky. I intend to eat my body weight in marzipan.

**What do Røyksopp want for Christmas?**

**TB:** An increased ability in the world's population to put themselves in other people's shoes. If I can't have that I want a Kindle.

**SB:** I want his Kindle.

**TB:** That makes us Kindled spirits... that's a dad joke for you.

**SB:** Actually, I want a nice time with friends and loved ones – that's all I need.

**Alpino's 10-track Nordic playlist**

- 01 Lykke Li *I Follow Rivers*
- 02 The Knife *Heartbeats*
- 03 Lindström *I Feel Space*
- 04 MØ *Pilgrim*
- 05 Kings of Convenience *Misread*
- 06 Røyksopp *Poor Lenø*
- 07 Björk *Venus as a Boy*
- 08 Sigur Rós *Svefn-g-englar*
- 09 Serena-Maneesh *Drive Me Home the Lonely Nights*
- 10 Oh Land *Wolf & I*

