



The most surprising inclusion in the Adelaide Film Festival would be a largely amateur film about Icelandic punk music, made by the chairman of BankSA, Peter Hanlon.

If it wasn't for this year's 40th anniversary of punk, and the fact AFF director Amanda Duthie decided to celebrate the rebellious spirit of leather-clad garage bands who prized making music over a polished result, his film probably wouldn't have been seen beyond an audience of family and friends.

"I'm pretty amazed that we're in," says Hanlon from Canada, en route to Greenland. "Obviously I'm really happy about it and it's sold out."

The first cinema Duthie put *Atlantis, Iceland* in had 100 seats and, when it filled, the location moved to one double the size. When that also sold out they added another screening. It has also been picked up by the Antenna Festival in Sydney.

"For some strange reason it seems to have got a bit of attention," Hanlon, 62, says.

It should not really be surprising that Hanlon, who spent his working life as a senior bank executive, with Westpac for 25 years then took over from Rob Chapman as chair of BankSA, loves punk music. The '70s was his time, when he was discovering music and his tastes were made. Punk burst on to the scene in the middle of the decade, spearheaded by the raw dissonance of The Sex Pistols but with a cluster of other bands playing rapid-fire rock like The Ramones, The Clash and, in Australia, The Saints. And he is not the only banker to love his music; at the Reserve Bank deputy governor Dr Guy Debelle has been known to quote in an economic context The Saints and Jim Morrison — "the future's uncertain and the end is always near" — and he plays in the Bank's occasional in-house band, The GFCs.

When Hanlon pulled back from full-time bank work two years ago, he decided to use his time to pursue the things he really cared about, namely film and music. As well as the BankSA board, he is also on the boards of the SA Museum and a community organisation in Victor Harbor, where he lives. He does some work with Music SA, and set up two internships to support young musicians while they undertake training and studies.

In the spirit of pursuing what he loves, he teamed up with a friend from Flinders University, Cole Larsen, to make a music video for an Adelaide punk band, Young Offenders. It was his first taste of making film.

"I'm a film lover but I've got not one iota of film experience other than having watched a few thousand," he says. "It was one of those things, it was a bit of fun."

Running parallel to punk was his fascination — obsession even — with a film from the 1980s called *Sans Soleil* (*Sunless*) by

PUNK BANKER

Peter Hanlon chairs BankSA's advisory board but he has long harboured a great love for punk music, and for film. So he and his mates made a film about punk, in Iceland

WORDS PENELOPE DEBELLE

French multimedia artist Chris Marker, which was partly set in Iceland. His fascination with Iceland stayed strong and intensified when he went there on holiday a few years ago. After the punk video experience, he and Larsen were chatting about their love of Icelandic music and they decided to shoot a few punk music videos, in Iceland. Why not?

"It was a boy's own adventure, to be honest," he says. "Then another friend, Rick Davies, who luckily for us is a lawyer and an

engineer ... decided to come as well." Then Hanlon had a brainwave. Why not combine *Sans Soleil* and Iceland by chasing a narrative thread connecting the two?

A scene from the 1983 film had stayed with him. Called "the image of happiness" it showed three golden-haired children walked along a rural road in 1965. They seemed oblivious to the camera and were entirely happy in each other's company. What was known about them and where were they now?

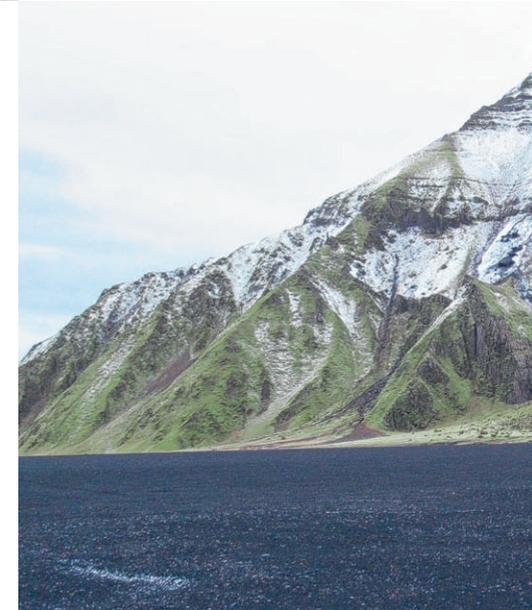
"Nobody knew who they were, they were

filmed anonymously," he says. "Were they alive? Were they still in Iceland? I started to think I might try and find these children."

By now he knew a bit more about the country. He read up on the Cod Wars between Iceland and the United Kingdom during the 1960s and 1970s, and he knew the music of performers like Bjork and Sigur Ross.

He also loves icy desolation and is intrigued by coldness, and the difficulty of surviving in

"It was a boy's own adventure, to be honest."





places of such harshness but also such beauty. "I mean Iceland has some of the most incredibly scenery in the world," he says. "I've been lucky enough in my life to see a few spectacular places but I think Iceland has way and above the most jaw-dropping scenery."

The idea took shape over December 2015 and January 2016. By February, he committed to searching for the children and, by July, he had developed a 20 to 30 page treatment (after first discovering what

a treatment was — a script with the visuals described). The plan now was to do some music interviews, and look for the children.

"Then I got a bit worried and whenever I get worried, that's time to take some action," he says. "So I looked up Icelandic film production companies and emailed three or four."

The message was basically that three old blokes from Australia who were making their first film needed help and were happy to pay. Three didn't get back to them but one did, Saga Films. So Hanlon hired two people; a line producer who booked accommodation and transport, and organised interviews with musicians, politicians and journalists; and a location manager. About 60 per cent of the film is shot in the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik but the rest was in more remote parts of the country, which Hanlon says included some wild and wonderful places tourists don't know about and which they would never have found on their own.

They had a three week shoot over October and November 2016. Before leaving, Hanlon swotted up by reading the extraordinary first novel by Adelaide writer Hannah Kent, *Burial Rites*, about Agnes Magnúsdóttir, a woman condemned to death in 19th century Iceland for her part in the death of two men.

He didn't know about the other Adelaide connection, Flinders University graduate and renowned theatre and film director Benedict Andrews, who lives in Reykjavik with his Icelandic wife, but he says the number of Australians who live among its population of just 300,000 people is surprising.

"It's a little island in the north Atlantic that until the Second World War was incredibly backward, with fisherman and farmers, and very strict religious management of the country," he says. "And yet in the last 20 or 30 years it's just gone wild in terms of art, culture, music and film."

The magnificence of the northern lights is another attraction and Hanlon says Iceland is probably the best place to see them because it is so accessible. Remember the old Skyshow, he says? It's like that but without the smoke. On top of that, Reykjavik at least is a very modern city with a good coffee culture and free, high quality wi-fi. He kept asking for the password until he found he didn't need one.

On top of music and film, Hanlon is also a political junkie. He treats elections like a Grand Final with the teams in play, balls dropped, goals kicked, passes fumbled. As it happened, Iceland was not due for an election until early next year but after a crisis, the Prime Minister resigned and an election was held the day after he was due to arrive. He went a week earlier to make sure all the political interviews were in place. (The resulting Government has since collapsed over another crisis involving the Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson and a new election will be held on October 28.)

As a bank executive, Hanlon was used to long days and hard work but nothing prepared him for shooting a film in a strange country in just three weeks. They were up early every morning, filmed non-stop, had dinner and a bottle of wine, and got up at 5am to do it all again. The days were filled with surprises. People they expected to interview dropped out, but they would find others they wanted to include. Then someone mentioned the Icelandic Punk Museum.

Peter Hanlon, chair of BankSA, on holiday in Canada enroute to Greenland, left; filming in Iceland, below; as a senior bank executive with Westpac before his move to Adelaide, right

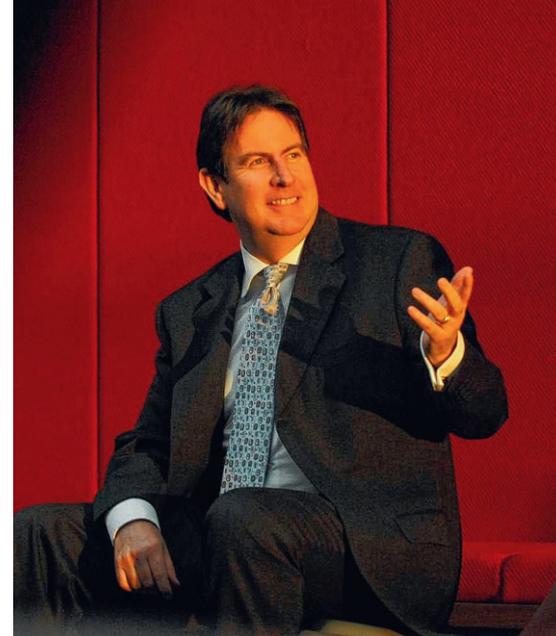
"What! The opening was advertised in Icelandic and we didn't understand but it said there was a special guest so we thought 'maybe Bjork,'" he says. "We rocked up and it was Johnny Rotten so we just filmed him. We didn't even have to get his permission or anything like that."

Like punk, Johnny Rotten is 40 years older but he was still very recognisably Johnny Rotten, particularly when he spoke.

"He is older and balder and fatter than he might have been in 1976 but he is still Johnny Rotten," Hanlon says.

After filming — and all of them falling sick as soon as the shoot was over — they began putting the film together in Adelaide. There was a lot that as first-time film makers they did wrong, or at least not quite right, like hiring an editor after the shoot began rather than before, and not recording the sound properly, which then had to be re-done in post-production.

The name, *Atlantis, Iceland*, is a stylistic nod to Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* and the film is a documentary cum fictional hybrid with references to the Lost City of Atlantis that explains the title. Hanlon says there are Icelandic stories and references in the sagas to the country being relatively new, at least in volcanic terms. The first people did not arrive until the eighth or ninth century and there is romantic speculation about a lost city whose origins are buried under the glaciers. A woman in her 50s, who is in the film, spoke about her belief in elves, or wilderfolk, and she talked about Atlantis as well. Hanlon found her weirdly convincing.



"She pretty much convinced us the elves were real," he says. "For some strange reason she is totally believable and not a nutter."

The final work is 89 minutes long and features in the AFF as a "work in progress". Hanlon says Duthie suggested re-editing it for commercial release, which had never occurred to them.

"I think I fainted," says Hanlon. "I mean, we started this off as a bit of fun, an expensive bit of fun, but something we thought our friends and family might like."

Now, Hanlon is keen to do more. The trip to Greenland was to make a short film then after that, he wants to make a psychological thriller in Victor Harbor. There is a script and the plan is to film next March, although this one they won't be funding themselves.

"It will be a full-length production and we have a couple of people lined up to be actors," he says. "But we haven't raised the money yet. This one we cannot afford to do ourselves." •

Atlantis, Iceland, adelaidefilmfestival.org

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