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Police went into the homes of several civil servants last week with search warrants, after allegations of corruption in the federal government's Buildings Agency



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Rock climbing in Flanders? Well, we're not exactly teaming with sheer cliffs, but indoor rock climbing is all the rage: a psychological challenge, an intense physical workout and emphasising endurance over strength



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Cuban-American actor Andy Garcia spent last weekend in Ghent to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award. He tells Lisa Bradshaw about his new movie *City Island*, his secrets and life as an exile



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES – PART 4: ANTWERP > SPECIAL PULL-OUT GUIDE INSIDE! <

Death of a hard rider

Was former champion cyclist Frank Vandenbroucke robbed by a prostitute and left to die in a seedy hotel in Senegal? The police investigation continues

ALAN HOPE



© Wim Beddegnoodts/Reporters

Flemish cyclist Frank Vandenbroucke was on holiday in the west African country of Senegal with his friend and teammate Fabio Polazzi. The two were staying in the four-star Royam Hotel in the resort town of Saly and went out on their first night in town, 11 October.

At around midnight, having had a few drinks, the friends split up; Vandenbroucke wanted to go back and meet up with a

woman he had talked to earlier in the evening.

The next day, Polazzi saw no sign of Vandenbroucke at the hotel. He tried calling the mobile numbers Vandenbroucke had with him, but received no reply. At about 18.30 that evening, police brought him news that his friend had been found dead.

Vandenbroucke had apparently gone with a woman to the Maison Bleue hotel about three kilometres away, an estab-

lishment reputed to be used by prostitutes and their clients. They arrived at about 2.00, and, according to an employee, the man later identified as Vandenbroucke was very drunk. Two hours later, the woman came downstairs and asked for a cloth because her companion had been sick. She left the hotel about 6.00, and the body of Vandenbroucke, age 34, was found by the hotel's manager about 12 hours later.

The cause of death was initially reported to be a pulmonary embolism: a clot of blood that travels to the lungs and blocks the artery. An embolism is a common cause of unexplained deaths, but it is an unusual condition to find in someone young and fit. The body was taken to the coastal nation's capital, Dakar, for autopsy. A preliminary report later said there were no external signs of violence, but needle-marks

were found on Vandenbroucke's left arm.

According to the French press agency AFP, investigators found Xanax (a tranquilliser), Stilnox (a sleeping pill) and insulin beside the hotel bed, but it's not yet clear whether this was in the Royam or the Maison Bleue.

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Antwerp says "no" to Lange Wapper

The people of Antwerp have voted against plans by the government to build a viaduct through a part of central Antwerp. In a referendum held on Sunday, 19 October, nearly 60% of the electorate voted No to the so-called BAM plan, under which the Antwerp ring would finally be completed by a tunnel under the Scheldt and a viaduct (known as the Lange Wapper). The plan was supported by just over 40% of the voters.

A shadow has hung over the vote since the referendum was announced, with the Flemish government (excluding socialist minister Ingrid Lieten) saying the result of the vote would not be legally binding. At the weekend,

supporters of the BAM plan seemed to be rehearsing the arguments for a rejection of the will of the people.

BAM supporters argue that only 35% of eligible voters in Antwerp turned out to vote. In other words, only 21% of the voting population, or fewer than 75,000 people, had rejected the proposal. The other 79% had either voted Yes, or had declined to express a preference.

The No vote was unconvincing, Yes supporters said, because it represented a minority of the electorate. In addition, some argued, it was inappropriate for 135,000 Antwerp residents to decide on behalf of the six million Flemings directly affected, not

to mention those indirectly affected.

Among those supporting the result was Annick De Ridder, an Antwerp council member and opposition Open-VLD member of the Flemish parliament, who was prominent in the Yes camp. "As a liberal, you can't organise a popular vote and then ignore the result," she said. "The ball is now in the Flemish government's court."

As Flanders Today went to press, the government had still not reacted to the result. Kris Peeters' government is legally free to disregard the No vote, but the democratic pressure to accept the result could be hard to resist. ♦

Electrabel busts federal budget by refusing to pay

What the government giveth, the power companies taketh away

ALAN HOPE

The federal government finally achieved the difficult task of presenting a budget to the country last week. But the satisfaction of prime minister Herman Van Rompuy at this minor success – a budget savings of €3.3 billion over two years (within a structural deficit of €25 billion) – was soon dashed when Electrabel announced it would not be paying the €500 million premium demanded for this year. That's slightly more than double the €215-€245 million a year Elec-

trabel is due to pay in the future as compensation for being allowed to keep the country's nuclear power stations open longer than anticipated.

Other budget measures include:

► The price of diesel will go up in 2010 by four cents, and a further eight cents in 2011, a measure expected to bring in €140 million next year and €285 million in 2011.

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News in brief

Two Brussels trams will travel across the Atlantic and through the Panama Canal to Vancouver to enter service at the Winter Olympic Games in February 2010. The trams, constructed by Bombardier in Bruges, are the T3000 type currently operating on some lines in Brussels, each one more than 30 metres long with a capacity of 184 passengers. They will operate a shuttle service between the Olympic village and the venue's arenas.

Flanders has some of the **ugliest buildings in the country**, according to visitors to a website designed to find Belgium's ugliest building. The site is the idea of demolition company Jan Stallaert, which is offering to raze the winner to the ground for free. Current leaders at the time of going to press were Den Bosuil stadium in Antwerp; the Vanden Stock stadium in Anderlecht; and the Astrid Hotel in Antwerp. Among the top 10, five are in Flanders, three in Brussels and two in Wallonia. www.hetlelijkstegebouw.be or www.lebatimentlepluslaid.be

Police in Ghent **pursued a wild stag** through the night-time streets last week, but the beast evaded capture and escaped along the railway line in the direction of the outer ring. According to a veterinarian called in by police, shooting the stag with a tranquiliser dart is not an option, as it has to be fired from closer than three metres, with the risk of attack. "Shooting the deer dead is the only possibility," the vet said. It's not yet clear where the stag came from.

Work begins this week (26 October) on the **new Holocaust and human rights museum** in Mechelen, to be built facing the site of the Dossin barracks. During the Second World War, some 25,000 people were deported from the barracks to the Nazi concentration camps. The new museum, designed by architect bOb van Reeth, is due to open in July 2012 and is expected to attract 100,000 visitors a year. The Flemish government has invested €25 million in the project.

Bruges is the **most expensive location** in the Benelux for hotel accommodation, according to a survey by online booking site hotels.com. Bruges overtakes Amsterdam for the first time, where hotel prices fell by 16% in the first half of the year, to an average of €103. Prices in Bruges went up 3% to €110 a night.

Zambia project to count Flanders' birds



One of the dwindling number of barn swallows

The number of migratory birds in Flanders is in serious decline, according to the Flemish agency for the protection of birds, VBV. In November, Dutch ornithologist Bennie van den Brink will go to Zambia to carry out a three-month study of the birds' habits for VBV.

Since the 1970s, the number of European turtle doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) in Flanders has fallen by 70%, nightingales (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) are down by 40-50%, and whinchats (*Saxicola rubetra*) have declined by 80%. There used to be 200-300,000 brooding pairs of barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), but that number has been reduced to 20-30,000, a cut of 90%.

"Because the barn swallow is our 'Bird of the Year' we're concentrating on that species," said Jan Rodts of VBV.

Zambia is a useful field to study because the Zambians do not hunt migratory birds, although there is a certain amount of trapping and caging. In neighbouring countries like Nigeria, Congo and Cameroon – also favourite destinations for the birds' winter migration – the birds are not only hunted for food, they also suffer from the development of marshlands for agricultural purposes and the presence of insecticides on farmland.

• Meanwhile, VBV is one of several nature-protection organisations to launch a new website, www.dierenonderdewielen.be, where the public can report cases in which wildlife has been killed by road traffic. Flanders has more than 70,000km of roads and vehicles clock a massive 55.4 billion km every year. Estimates based on 1995 figures suggest at least four million wild animals and birds are killed by traffic annually, although the real figure by now is likely to be much higher. The website is available in English as well as other languages.

The medical faculty of the Free University of Brussels (VUB) has developed a website that they claim will be able to **tell whether you have swine flu**. The site is intended to prevent doctors' surgeries from being overrun by people who mistakenly think they have the disease, as well as to provide advice and information for anyone who has it. The faculty stresses that the site is not a substitute for a doctor's visit. www.testuwgriep.be.

Animal rights protestors last week scattered 20,000 pink balls at the headquarters of the Farmers' Union in Leuven, in protest at the castration of male piglets without anaesthetic. The action group Gaia claims the painful procedure is carried out on 5.6 million pigs a year. The Farmers' Union said it supported research into alternatives and pointed out

that neither the meat industry nor pork consumers wanted pig meat from uncastrated animals.

Visits to the **school medical service** "lack discretion and respect for pupils," according to the association of Flemish school students. The group says regular visits to the medical service, in which students are forced to wait in their underwear in full view of others, are old-fashioned and humiliating. The Centre for Student Support, which carries out the examinations in its 73 centres in the region, said it would hold talks with the students' representatives to look into the problem.

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Deficit: restaurant taxes and tank cards will not close the €25 billion gap

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► Tank cards, given by employers for fuel, will in the future be only 75% tax deductible, something the road haulage industry said threatened to price them out of the international market.

► VAT on restaurant bills will be reduced from 21% to 12% from January 2010, but only for meals. The government retained the option to lower VAT further to 6% in the future, which is what the trade has requested. The measure is intended to help create jobs in the industry or move jobs from the black economy to the legal economy. In most cases, customers are unlikely to see restaurant bills come down.

► A measure allowing homeowners who are building new houses to pay only 6% VAT on up to €50,000 of construction

work will be extended for three months. Anyone who files for a building permit before the end of March will be eligible, regardless of when the work actually starts. Each applicant stands to gain a maximum of €7,500.

► Banks will be made to cushion the effects of the financial crisis by paying a yearly sum as "insurance" for government guarantees on savings deposits and some insurance products. The measure is expected to bring in €220 million next year, €670 million in 2011 and €540 million a year after that. But the government will give with its left hand what it took away with the right: the banks will get €600 million over three years from reserves in the former guarantee fund. They will also stop paying the €50 million a year they previously



budget © BeGa

paid into the fund, bringing their rebate to €700 million in the first two years. The banks are expected to pass the costs on to the customer.

► The excise duties on cigarettes and other tobacco products will be raised by an amount not disclosed in the budget.

► Tougher action against benefit fraud will save an estimated €100 million a year, the government said, while the fight against tax fraud could save €300 million.

► At the same time, the system allowing tax defaulters to pay an agreed sum to avoid prosecution will be extended. Coupled with the savings involved in reducing the number of legal actions, this could raise €450 million a year.

► Company cars will in future be taxed on the basis of their carbon dioxide emissions, rather than the "fiscal horsepower" formula currently used. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

4%

of Belgian drivers were caught speeding during the large-scale Operation Speed II carried out last week on roads across the country

92,665

cars were checked by 24 mobile radars, 84 members of the federal traffic police, and two officers from French and Dutch police

70%

of people in Flanders still opt (or their families do) for a church funeral, regardless of falling church attendances. In Wallonia, the figure is around 50%

100,658

funerals took place in Belgium in 2008, half of them at crematoria

€404,587

damages awarded by a court in Leuven to the relatives of victims of a drunk driver, now serving five years. A woman, her 10-year-old daughter and 11-year-old twin friends were killed in the accident. The woman's husband later committed suicide, leaving their 15-year-old daughter the sole survivor of the family

566,000

items of mail held up by recent strike action among postal employees. A day's normal mail consists of about 11 million items

€265 million

amount from this year's budget of €350 million for cycle paths in Flanders that has not been spent. The Cyclists' Union blamed cumbersome procedures for the delays in laying new paths

€678,000

paid out by Belgian businesses in the first six months of the year for using unlicensed software. The costs include damages and the purchase of legal copies, the Business Software Alliance said

80%

of children under 18 who had no trouble buying alcopops illegally, according to a survey carried out by consumer organisation OIVO



Houses searched in corruption investigation

Police last week carried out search warrants in the homes and offices of a number of civil servants working mainly for the Buildings Agency, which administers the federal government's real estate. The searches were coordinated by the federal prosecutor's office, together with local prosecutors' offices in Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp, Mechelen and Ghent.

The investigation, which concerns allegations of corruption, has been going on for the past three years. It involves civil servants who allegedly took bribes to ensure that lucrative contracts went to cooperating contractors. The inves-

tigators have already questioned and detained civil servants and contractors in Brussels and Leuven. The targets of last week's searches are reported to be connected to the Flemish and Brussels administrations in charge of roadside verges, waterways and building maintenance.

The corruption scheme is thought to have added up to 10% to the cost of public contracts, with contractors factoring bribes into their costs when calculating their bids. In the end, the bill for the kick-backs is picked up by the taxpayer. ♦

Knack awards Van Groeningen; Israel wins big award at Ghent fest

Felix van Groeningen, the director of the new film *De helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunates*), which is playing now across Flanders, won the Jo Röppke Film Award from *Knack*, the magazine announced last week during the Flanders International Film Festival in Ghent. The award is given annually to a filmmaker who has significantly and creatively contributed to Flemish film during the last year. *De helaasheid* also won big at The Hamptons International Film Festival in New York earlier this month, earning the festival's three top prizes. Meanwhile, Israel was the big winner at

the film festival, which came to a close on 17 October. The award for Best Film went to *Eyes Wide Open*, a drama about two Jewish men who fall in love in Jerusalem by filmmaker Haim Tabakman. The prize for Best Film by the youth jury went to *Ajami*, an inventive non-linear story about revenge violence in Jaffa, by first-time directors Scandar Copti and Yaron Shani. French composer Alexandre Desplat, meanwhile, won both Film Composer of the Year and Best Film Score of the Year (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*) at the festival's World Soundtrack. ♦

→ www.filmfestival.be

Flanders' newest tennis hopeful, Yanina Wickmayer, defeated the Czech Republic's Petra Kvitová to win her second WTA tournament in Linz, Austria, last weekend. Wickmayer, who turned 20 this week, took the match 6-3, 6-4 and moved up to 20 in the WTA rankings. This week, she was joined at the WTA tournament in Luxembourg by the number 18 ranked Kim Clijsters, her old spar-



© BeGa

ring partner from Diest tennis club. Clijsters, who won her first-ever WTA trophy in Luxembourg in 1999, has a wildcard for the tournament. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

The voters' signal

Election days are almost a ritual in Flanders. In the evening, the buzzing begins in the TV studios. Sure, everyone wants to know who won and who lost, but for politicians there is more at stake. As soon as they know the results, they want to be the first ones to interpret them. In doing so, they will always use the same words: the voters' signal. Convincingly explaining exactly what this signal was sets the tone for weeks, months, sometimes even years to come.

The thing about this signal is that it can be whatever the politicians want it to be. It's all in the interpretation. Parties whose electoral results are actually lower than in previous elections, can even claim that they won if they did not lose as badly as everyone expected. Clearly, the voters' signal was that this party is not on the way down!

Parties can also claim issues by using the voters' signal. They can, for instance, say that state reform is badly needed, now more than ever before. Why? Well, because that is the voters' signal! Sometimes, post-electoral research into the motives of the electorate shows that these claims are unfounded. There are a multitude of reasons why voters vote the way they do. Still, by the time these researches are concluded, months have passed and everyone has accepted the parties' versions of what the signal means.

The same thing happened this weekend with the Antwerp referendum on the planned Oosterweel link. As soon as the results came in, everyone involved interpreted them. The action groups who started out the referendum claimed victory. Of course they had won – nearly 60% of the voters had voted against the current plans, including the Lange Wapper viaduct. Now there's a signal!

But those who supported the plans had also heard the voters' signal: 40% support the plans. As for those who oppose them, surely they on oppose only part of them – more specifically, the 18-lane junction near the Sportpaleis. CD&V alderman Marc Van Peel took the interpreting to an even higher level when he talked about those people who did not turn out to vote. Their signal? "They want the politicians to take their responsibility."

All of that may seem like idle talk, but it is not. It will be important in the decisions to be made in the next couple of weeks. Don't underestimate the voters' signal!

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Death of a cyclist

Inconsistencies pepper the reports of VDB's death

→ continued from page 1

Vandenbroucke, a father of two, has tried to commit suicide on two occasions in the past – once using insulin. But the circumstances of the suicide attempt were very different from the situation in which he died. During the attempt, he left a note explaining what he was doing and asking “not to be cut open,” as he explained in his autobiography *Ik ben God niet (I Am Not God)*. He also dressed himself in his champion's jersey before injecting the drug.

The woman with whom he took the room in the Maison Bleue was interviewed by police and held on suspicion. It's not uncommon in some African cities for the customers of prostitutes – often tourists – to be slipped a drug in their drink so that they can be robbed more easily. The next day, police picked up two men in possession of Vandenbroucke's telephones and a sum of money believed to have been stolen from him.

The authorities are now awaiting the results of toxicology tests to show the level of alcohol and drugs in Vandenbroucke's body at

the time of death. The Dakar coroner declared last week that he did not have the necessary resources to carry out the tests, suggesting that the body might be released quickly to return to Belgium for more lab work. But he did say there was no trace of alcohol found, which is directly contradicted by at least two witness statements, including that of Polazzi, who was drinking with him all evening. The coroner also confirmed the existence of the pulmonary embolism, which, together with a “pre-existing heart condition”, was the proximate cause of death.

The inconsistencies in the story – the prosecutor now says, for instance, that the woman raised the alarm, although she left the room about 12 hours before the body was discovered and while Vandenbroucke was still alive – need to be cleared up. As *Flanders Today* went to press, Vandenbroucke's body was expected to be released for repatriation. The family has already said the funeral will take place in private, and the press will not be invited. ♦

→ www.frankvdbroucke.be

“He died the way he lived” Reactions to the death of “VDB”

“I often asked him how he was, and the answer was always ‘everything is fine’. I think things were better than they had been, say, two years ago, but was he happy? No, Frank wasn't happy.”

Clotilde Menu, mother of Frank's 10-year-old daughter Cameron

“There were signs that things weren't quite right. The business of not being able to find a team kept eating away at him. And then he went to Senegal, so far away. I couldn't stop him, but I had a strange feeling about it.”

Best friend Nico Mattan

“Sadly this is only a half-surprise. We were prepared for his chaotic lifestyle to come to a bad end.”

Uncle Jean-Luc Vandenbroucke, a former top cyclist

“He lived in extremes. Frank was restless, easily bored. He had to go faster, be harder, bigger, tougher.”

Manager Paul De Geyter

“He was an enfant terrible, but you forgave him. He was so popular. His death is a sad day for cycling, but my thoughts go out to the family. I still have to process the shock. I'm losing a contemporary but also a real friend.”

Former team-mate Johan Museeuw

“God is dead.”

Het Laatste Nieuws, referring to Vandenbroucke's nickname from better days

“I think cycling fans will be overcome with grief. I knew Frank since he was riding with the beginners. Even then he stood out head and shoulders above the rest.”

Laurent De Backer, president of the Cycling Federation

“I think that in a country like Belgium, where cycling stars are looked at like gods, people certainly took advantage of him.... He was one of those guys who found it hard to make a

decision about the best way to go, and he made a few wrong decisions in his career.”

Former cyclist, now team director Matthew White

“Nothing suggested that Frank would come to his end so suddenly. It had been hard to get in touch with him lately.... He wasn't struggling, but he was really annoyed by the fact that, despite all the promises, he wasn't going to find a team.”

Psychologist Jef Brouwers, Frank's therapist since 2001

“Frank died as he lived – not in a normal way. I can't say I expected it to end this way for Frank, but my wife and I were afraid something might happen to him.”

Frank's father Jean-Jacques Vandenbroucke

“It's a tragedy. I'm really shocked. 34 is no age to die.”

Pro Flemish cyclist Tom Boonen

Brilliant but troubled: Vandenbroucke's stormy career

LEO CENDROWICZ

Once seen as the great hope of Belgian cycling, Frank Vandenbroucke enjoyed a brief but exhilarating moment on the podium before his demons caught up with him.

Born in Mouscron in 1974 and raised in the village of Ploegsteert, Hainaut province, Vandenbroucke came from one of those rare families who live in Wallonia but speak Dutch. His first cycling drama came when he was four and was knocked from his bicycle in the village square by a rally car driver. His mother said her son didn't cry until doctors cut his cycling shorts.

Although he showed early promise as an athlete, Vandenbroucke was happiest on a bicycle. He earned his first major medal at 18, when he came third in the world junior road championship in Athens.

Vandenbroucke turned professional in 1993 with the Lotto team, whose sport director was his uncle, Jean-Luc. Labelled “VDB” by the cycling press, he soon developed his prodigious talent, winning 51 races in the next six years as a professional. He won the Paris-Brussels semi-classic in 1995 and stormed to victory in the Gent-Wevelgem classic in 1998 –

the same year he won Paris-Nice, the week-long “race to the sun” from wintry northern Europe to the Mediterranean.

The following year, he claimed one of the five “monuments” of European cycling – Liège-Bastogne-Liège – which is notorious for its short, sharp climbs; there was further success in the Omloop Het Volk; and two stage wins in the Tour of Spain.

But Vandenbroucke's transfer to the French team Cofidis in 1999 on a contract worth 30 million Belgian francs (€740,000) marked the start of a downward spiral, as he sunk into the first of many doping controversies. From 2000,

people in cycling were talking more about VDB's drug taking, depression and relationship problems than his cycling.

He served a six-month suspension from the sport in 2002 after a police raid on his home found several performance-enhancing substances. After the end of his volatile marriage to Italian model Sarah Pinacci, she accused him of being a cocaine addict. His depression led to a suicide attempt in 2007.

However, he was still attempting to return to the fray this year and in April won a stage in the French race La Boucle de l'Artois, his first win in a UCI-race since 1999. ♦



Vandenbroucke earlier this year with his ex-wife, Sarah Pinacci, their daughter Margaux (left), and Cameron, the daughter from his previous partner



Vandenbroucke leads the pack during the Mediterranean Tour in 2003

Bus-building business booming

Flemish company sells double-deckers buses to the US and the UK

ALAN HOPE

Economic crisis or no economic crisis, vehicle manufacturer Van Hool, based in Koningshooikt in Antwerp province, has just taken an order for 250 luxury tour coaches for the US market. That brings the company's total orders from the US this year to 380, out of a total construction of about 1,700 vehicles. Van Hool is in partnership with the Orlando, Florida-based ABC, in which it holds a 33% stake. And while the company here is also involved in truck construction, in the US it only deals in coaches. And no ordinary ones at that – the Flemish company specialises in top-end luxury buses, often custom fit to the wishes of the client, such as the "Straussmobile" made for the touring orchestra of André Rieu, where seats were tailored

to the measurements of individual musicians.

"We are growing in a falling market," said director Filip Van Hool, the third generation of the family of founder Bernard, who died in 1974. Of the buses sold to the US, 150 were double-deckers, which Van Hool says required a change in the law to be allowed to operate. The company has also, in a coals-to-Newcastle way, sold double-decker buses to the British, who invented them in the first place. The London-Oxford intercity coach line will henceforth be served by Van Hool coaches.

→ www.vanhool.be

• Meanwhile, at the country's second-biggest coach builder, VDL Jonckheere, based in Beveren, West



Flanders, the order books are also filling up, according to spokesman Mike Lenihan. Walloon public transport authority SRWT, which operates as TEC, has an order in for 125 buses, which should be completed by December, to be followed by orders from Ghana, Burkina Faso, Jamaica

and Dubai. Jonckheere was founded in 1881, building horse-drawn carriages, and now makes 70% of its production for export. ♦

→ www.jonckheere.be

Vlerick MBA course in world Top 10

Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School has squeezed into the top 10 of MBA schools worldwide, in the list compiled by *The Economist* magazine. Vlerick last year stood in 14th place and now moves up to number 10.

The list is headed by the IESE business school at the University of Navarra in Spain, followed by IMD in Switzerland, and the Haas School of Business at Berkeley in California. Harvard Business School comes in fifth place, with London at eight.

Vlerick is not only in the top 10, it is the only Belgian MBA

school placed in the top 100. On a purely European ranking, meanwhile, Vlerick is sixth. The school's score was boosted by the range of languages offered – six in all – and the fact that all MBAs have a job within three months of graduation. Vlerick dropped points, however, on the effectiveness of its alumni network.

Vlerick is also good value, the magazine points out. An MBA at Leuven costs €24,500 and includes a trip to China. The cost of an MBA at the top school on the list is €67,900. ♦

→ www.vlerick.be

New role for CBFA in financial advertising

The government last week announced plans for improved regulation of the financial services industry, with a proposal aimed at increasing consumer protection. The Commission for the Banking, Finance and Insurance Industries (CBFA) will be given new powers, a CBFA spokesman said.

One of the most important aspects will be a veto power in financial advertising, including all savings and insurance products. At present, the CBFA only has prior approval rights on investment product advertising, but under the new rules,

all financial advertising would have to receive the commission's green light before going before the public.

Supporters of the change point out that although the CBFA could already take action to withdraw misleading advertisements, by the time action is taken, the damage has already been done to savers and small investors. A recent example given was a claim by ING to offer 5% interest on its "ING Performance Account" when the small print explained that the 5% was spread over two years. ♦

Balta aims to consolidate carpet market

Balta, the Zellik-based carpet manufacturer, plans to restructure and consolidate the whole carpet sector, the company announced last week. The largest carpet manufacturer in Western Europe, it plans "mid-large" takeovers (companies with a turnover greater than €50 million) that also offer expansion opportunities.

The carpet sector is in difficulties because of the effect of the economic crisis, together with a weak pound, on the most important market: the UK. Balta was founded in 1964 by the late Paul Balcaen and sold in 2004 by his son to the British venture capital group Doughty Hanson for €600 million. Doughty Hanson had hoped to sell the company in 2007, but only one bidder

emerged, and the price was too low. In 2008 the crisis took hold, and the collapse of the British market brought about a 25% drop in sales in the market overall, although Balta's sales there went up 9%.

In a rare interview given at the weekend to *De Standaard*, director-general Jules Noten and financial director Carl Verstraelen explained they were currently "cutting away the fat", before setting out on a campaign of consolidation in order to make the carpet sector more attractive again, and turn Balta into a saleable proposition.

Balta currently runs at full capacity in fitted carpets, but new capacity will only come via mergers and takeovers. And target companies must have

something further to offer: "We're barely active in the contract market," referring to carpets for hotels, offices and other large-scale customers. "We don't yet have any artificial grass, carpet tiles or needle felt in our range." The two executives decline

to name names, but among those companies that might appear on Balta's shopping list are: Balsan, the French wing of Associated Weavers; Lano, which is strong in the contract market; and the Belgo-American McThree Carpets. ♦



THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • Commerzbank

The German financial institution Commerzbank has sold its Brussels-based private banking activities, Dresdner Van Moer Courtens, to the affiliate's management.

Chemicals • Solvay

The chemical and plastics company has sold rights to its two Flammazine burn-treatment creams to the British Sinclair Pharma for €17.5 million. The move was made in agreement with the US Abbott company, which acquired Solvay's pharmaceutical division last month. Flammazine is distributed in 45 countries worldwide.

Investment • Gimv

The Flemish government venture capital fund Gimv has invested €16.2 million in Easyvoyage, a leading French website dedicated to travel.

Media • Alfacam

The Lint-based high definition TV services company Alfacam has won contracts worth some €7 million to film football matches in Africa later this year and in 2010. The deal was concluded with the world football organisation FIFA.

Pharmaceuticals • Omega Pharma

The over-the-counter pharmaceutical products manufacturer and distribution company Omega Pharma, based in Nazareth, East Flanders, has sold its Marseille aerosol production unit to the French Fareva.

Supermarkets • Colruyt

The Halle-based discount supermarket chain Colruyt will further develop its activities with the opening of up to 10 stores a year over the next few years in central and eastern France. Colruyt already has more than 40 outlets in France, and its affiliate, Pro a Pro Distribution, is one of the leading food services companies specialised in groceries and fresh products for the catering industry.

Supermarkets • Delhaize

The country's second-largest retailer has paid €7 million to acquire the Greek Koryfi company, which operates 11 stores in the country's northeast. The outlets will be transformed into Alfa-Beta supermarkets, joining Delhaize's 204 store-strong Greek affiliate.

Travel • Club Med

The upmarket travel and holidays group Club Med has opened a sales agency in Ghent, its third in Flanders after Brussels and Antwerp.



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TOURIST INFO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

CITY CENTRE

1 RIVER SCHELDE LOCAL TIP

Antwerp has the second largest harbour in Europe (after Rotterdam). The river **SCHELDE** is not only Antwerp's biggest source of money, it's also the place where we come to relax. When the weather is good, buy a sixpack and join the rest of us. The most popular picnic and barbecue spot is the green area to the north. If you haven't been sitting at the waterside on the Scheldekaaien, dangling your feet over the edge, you haven't been in Antwerp.

TOURIST FAVORITE

2 THE OLD FORTRESS

(Tue to Sun / 10.00 to 17.00 / € 3 / € 4 if you are older than 25) **T STEEN** is now a shipping museum. However it has been there since 1200, when it was a real fortress with a round stone wall. Shortly after, it became a prison with dungeons in which - strangely enough - only people from Antwerp could be locked up, tortured and executed. Visit it now, because at the end of 2008 the museum will close down.

3 EXTRAVAGANT (GAY) CLUB

(Thu, Fri and Sat / around € 7,50) Extravagant club with a high dose of fluo, leather and glitter: **RED&BLUE**. On Saturdays boys only, with a darkroom for more extreme parties. Every second Sunday: lesbian party **Café de Love** from the late afternoon until midnight. Strangely enough, boys are also admitted then. Every first Friday the club changes its name to **Studio 54** for all-the-way glamour and disco.

4 CLUBBING IN A CHURCH

(Thu, Fri and Sat / around € 8 / free or cheap on Thu or before midnight) **CAFÉ D'ANVERS** used to be a church, but now it is a thumping house club full of pumped-up boys and girls. Since 1989, Café d'Anvers has been the place-to-be for commercial beats with party animals from all over Belgium and the Netherlands, every weekend. Dress to impress.

5 OLDEST TRADE IN THE WORLD

Antwerp has a strange attraction: **VILLA TINTO** is a mega-brothel with 51 sex suites where more than 100 prostitutes alternately work around the clock. The building was designed by Belgian top designers Quinze & Milan, and almost everything is in the colour of love - down to the toilet.

6 EXPLAIN

Leguit, the name of this street, literally means 'Explain'. Other funny streetnames to look out for in Antwerp are Toog (Bar), Koeiensgracht (Cow canal), Kaasbrug (Cheese bridge) and Kipdorp (Chicken village).

7 CROOKED TREES AND ZONY TV'S

(Every day) **BARTILIA** is a nice no-nonsense bar, with young people on both sides of the bar. It's right across the street from Antwerp's red light district, on the Falconplein. On this square you used to find plenty of Zony televisions and Diorr handbags in the eastern European fake-stores. The neighbourhood was 'cleaned up' a couple of years ago and they're gone now. The linden trees (in Latin: Tilia) after which Bartilia was named, have also been removed. They're now replaced by new trees, that for some strange reason are all planted crooked instead of straight. The red light district however, is still where it has been for years. This means that sometimes a lost and lonely sailor stumbles into Bartilia, to join the young crowd for a spontaneous party.

8 PLASTIK?

(Mon to Sat / Dinner) **PLASTIK?** sounds bad for a restaurant, but you can check that everything is very fresh in the open kitchen. € 9 for risotto with chicken, a fish dish or a feta salad with fresh pasta.

9 DINNER WITH ADRIA

(Mon to Fri / Lunch & dinner / closed during school-vacations) **T LASTIG PORTEIT** is sure to be packed around dinnertime with the students of the art school around the corner. Good fare for small money, going from a scampi-bowl (€ 7,5) to Mexican tortilla with chicken (€ 7,5). Adria, who runs the place, is grumpy sometimes. But she's cool.

10 I CAN HEAR MUSIC

All over Belgium, recordstores are closing down - the best ones first. Antwerp is the only city where they seem somewhat able to survive. From all over the country, record-worshippers come to the Lange Koepoortstraat, which holds four first and second-hand music stores to browse until you find what you're looking for. In **FAT KAT** (n°51 / Tue to Sat) the guitar crowd rummage through the record bins. **RECORD COLLECTOR** (n°70 / Tue to Sat) is specialized in vinyl from 50's till 70's: endless rows packed full of jazz, blues and rock 'n' roll up to the ceiling. In the back of the store there's a whole room full of vinyl for € 2. As in most secondhand shops (n°65, n°78), it's up to you to shift the bad from the good and come up with a few 'wow's. Listen to the records before buying, or at least check them for scratches.

11 CHEAP SARDINIAN FOOD

(Mon to Fri lunch and dinner / Sat only dinner) Good alternative if you think the cheap Italian restaurants around the Cathedral are a bit too touristy. Run by three Sardinian brothers, **LA TERRA SARDA** is a small delicatessen, with a few tables in the back. Pizza starts as cheap as € 3,50 and cannelloni can be ordered by the roll (only € 1,50!).

12 AFRICAN ANTWERP

(Every Day) Around the Grote Markt, you find the usual boring tourist bars, but **CAFÉ AU LAIT** is very different. It's hidden just around the corner. A mix of funky white and black people (coffee with milk) come for the bright cocktails with fresh fruit and the subtrropical parties. Rare grooves, rumbling jungle, worldwide tunes and bad-ass funk.

13 GRANDMA'S KITCHEN

(Every day / Lunch and dinner) Don't be fooled by the tourist traps that claim to serve 'authentic Belgian food'. **DE ZEVEN SCHAKEN** serves the real thing. They even have 'mergpijp' (marrow-pipe), and 'escargots' (edible snails) on their menu: those are the things that only our grandmother cooks. Not exactly a table-adventurer? Then go for the 'garnaalkroket' (shrimp-croquet), or 'stoofvlees' (meat stewed in beer). Around € 15 for a dish.

14 TOURIST SQUARE

The **GROTE MARKT** is a beautiful square where tourists come to look at the city hall (a 1565 building with more than 40 doors) and at Brabo's statue. Real Antwerpians never come here, unless there is a protest march.

15 EARLY MORNING DINNER

(Closed on Tue / Late dinner) 3 o' clock in the morning? Not exactly sober and certainly hungry? At **KIEKOKOT** (Chicken Shack) they'll serve you chicken and bread for only € 4,95. On Monday they close 'early', at 2.00 (still 4 days of working ahead). Wednesday to Friday, they'll stay open till 4.00 (still need some sleep for those last days of the week) and on Saturday and Sunday they serve their last chicken right before 6.00 (everyone's forgotten they even have jobs).

16 LIVE MUSIC EVERY DAY

(Tue to Sat from 20.00) Don't be tricked by the closed curtains, those are only meant to keep the music and the cosiness inside. At **BUSTER** live music is served almost every day: jazz, rock, singer-songwriters or jamsessions. If hard rockin' blues is your thing: just cross the street to **KID'S RHYTHM AND BLUES KAFFEE** (Every day / Concerts on Wed and Fri).

17 NO MARIACHI

(Closed on Wed / Dinner) **CARAMBA** is a bric à brac Mexican restaurant, run by a Dutch expat and a Moroccan waiter. Nothing Mexican about that? Just wait 'till you get your food! Definitely no fake Mariachi-band disturbing your romantic evening, too. Vegetarian pelote (spicy corn-pastry) for € 13.50.

18 HEY HO... LET'S GO

(Every day / Shop closed Sun) **DE ROTS** means 'the rock', and that's what it is: the perfect spot for live rock and metal. About three free concerts every week (Fri and Sat guaranteed) starting at 20.00 sharp. Go for a Ramones tribute, metal from the UK or local guitar-addicts. Also check their record store with lots of secondhand material.

TOURIST FAVORITE

19 ANTWERP PIAZZA

If sun is shining the right direction, go here: it's like a piece of Italy in Belgium. The **HENDRIK CONSCIENCEPLEIN** is an old-fashioned and traffic-free square with an empty fountain, the baroque Carolus Borromeus Church - Rubens was one of the architects - and a huge beautiful tree.

20 SOUP+DISH = € 8,50

(Mon to Sat / 12.00 to 15.00 and 16.00 to 18.30) Youngsters who have trouble finding a job, learn how to cook and how to serve in a professional way at **LA CUISINE**. A daily soup + meal costs € 8,50. For that little money, it's OK if they spill some soup, but usually everything here is picture perfect.

21 SMALL RECORD SHOP LOCAL TIP

(Wed to Sat) **TUNE UP**'s a small record shop that just bursts with love for music old and new, on vinyl and cd. A true connoisseur's paradise. Ask for the latest musical excess of local wonderboy Mauro Pawlowski or the newest release on Dennis Tyfus' 'Ultra Eczema' label and be surprised how out-of-the-planet Belgian music can sound.

22 FREE JAZZ CIG

(Every Day) In the early sixties, **DE MUZE** was one of the first places in Belgium to embrace hippie-ideals. Local heroes Ferre Grignard and Fabien Collin performed hits such as 'Ring Ring, I've got to sing' and 'Maruwana Mariwana' here. They drove the local bourgeoisie totally mad - not only with their music, but even more so by their legendary drinking behaviour. Today, the place's become a bit more civilised, but there's still live jazzconcerts, every day at 22.00 (Sundays at 15.00).

23 INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINES & NEWSPAPERS

TOURIST FAVORITE

24 HOLY BEERS

(Every day) From your knee, right up to the ceiling, **T ELFDE GEBOD** is crammed with hundreds of holy figures. Legend says that those figures originally stood in the cathedral, but during the religious wars of the 16th century, they were tossed out and they ended up here. The bar is quite a touristy place, though.

25 CATHEDRAL AND COFFEE

(Every Day) Woo-hee-ha! In **WITZLI-POETZLI** they serve a great caffelatte-and-honey with your morning paper. A perfect start of the day. Now, if somebody will just demolish the Cathedral, we can sit in the sun...

26 FOOD FOR HUNGRY NIGHT BIRDS

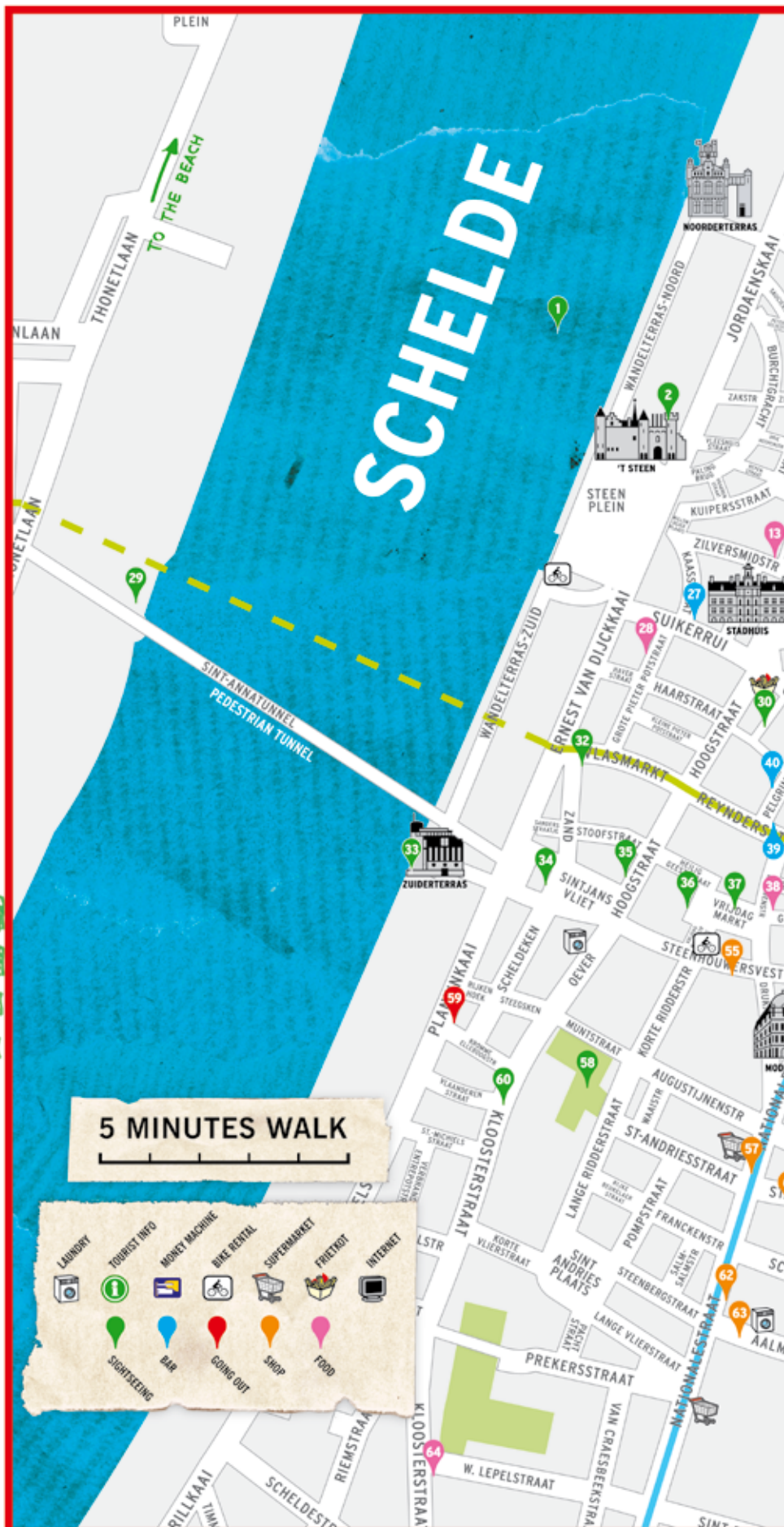
(Every day / Lunch & dinner) **PATERS VAETJE** is a cosy pub to eat or drink, with more than a 100 different types of Belgian beer. Even the housecat is named after a Belgian classic: Jupiler. The food is basic but good and the kitchen remains open until 04.30 in the weekend, 02.30 during the week.

27 ANTWERP MUSIC CITY LOCAL TIP

(Tue to Sun) In the mid-nineties Belgian rock finally got its big international boom. Ghent and Brussels had the good concert halls, Antwerp had the best bands. **dEUS** is without any doubt the best-known survivor of that era. Today, still, young and fresh bands pop up as if there's a secret chemical in the drinking water. The newest place to watch young talent is **BAR MONDIAL**. Located in a street full of tourist traps, this place is the exact opposite. They program up and coming Belgian and international bands and almost every concert is free. If you happen to come on a concertless night, just grab a flyer or ask the bartender where to go. He knows.

28 KEBAB AND FETA

(Every day / Dinner) **ALEXANDRIA** is a large kebab place without the typical neon lighting and luminescent waterfall. A classic among students because of the decent portions, good sauces and feta cheese. € 4,50 for a regular.



29 BEST SKYLINE

In the dark Middle Ages we sent all our diseased and criminals to the left bank ('Linkeroever'). Today, still, it's a bit of an unearthly place: lots of grass and lots of concrete. The Linkeroever apartment-towers are not the most popular places to live. That might be the reason why, in 2008, one of the first Belgian horror-movies was made here, and even named after the place ('Linkeroever'). If you live on the right side of the blocks, though, you have the most magnificent view over the city.

30 16th CENTURY ALLEY

Try to find the entrance into the **VLAIEKENSANGANG**: a well-hidden 16th century alley where the poorest of the poor used to live. It's like a piece of Bruges in Antwerp. Right around the corner, the **POORTERSWONING** (Pelgrimsstraat n°15 / Sat and Sun) is a 16th century house, rebuilt to the smallest detail. Have the enthusiastic elderly guide show you around and enjoy the smell of 16th century Antwerp. That smell might have something to do with the rabbits and chickens living in the attic. Luckily 16th century pigs were kept on the street.

TOURIST FAVORITE

31 BEAUTIFUL TOWER

(Every day / € 2 with student card / € 4) Even if it took us 200 years to build the **ONZE-LIEVE-VROUWE KATHEDRAAL** (Cathedral of Our Lady), we forgot to finish the second tower. The gothic masterpiece was plagued by war, fire and looting - in 1798 the French even considered tearing it down - but it's still the bright shining star of our skyline. The inside's spectacular as well: a couple of XL-Rubens paintings, huge stained glass windows and baroque sculptures. You can climb the tower only on Wednesday for a fantastic city-sight.

32 LEGENDARY ORGAN

(Closed on Tue and Wed) **CAFÉ BEVEREN**, with a 1937 organ, is a legend on planet Antwerp. Put in € 0,50 and the full mechanical orchestra of pipes, drums and trumpets will make every conversation impossible. From then on, everybody sings along to the tearjerkers that roll out. The first Decap organ was built in 1902 by Alois Decap, and they are still made by his great-great grandson today.

33 RIVERSIDE VIEW

(Every day / Breakfast, lunch and dinner) When the sun is shining, just sit down on the Scheldekaaien 1. If it's cold and raining, you can go for **HET ZUIDERTERRAS**, designed by architect bOb Van Reeth. If you're really lucky, you can get a seat by the large window - feels like you're actually on a boat on the river. Very romantic by night. Not a cheap place, but the experience is worth the € 2,50 you'll pay for a tea or coffee.

34 TO THE BEACH FOR MUSSELS LOCAL TIP

Here you find the entrance to the Art Deco **PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL**. Take it for a trip to the beach. The first thing you'll see is one of the last surviving frie-barracks in Antwerp. Now follow the river to your right side (enjoy the amazing city-view) for 20 minutes and you'll end up at the 'Strand van Sint Anneke' (Saint Anna's Beach). This used to be a place for older people who couldn't afford to travel to a real beach. Today, young people have finally rediscovered the place: a white sanded beach, with a view on some industrial installations that by night turn into the most romantic, fairy-like lightshow. Have some mussels in one of the beachhouses - the most kitschy often have the best mussels (never cheap: around € 20). It's forbidden to swim in the river but there's an open-air swimming pool.

35 FREE CONTEMPORARY ART

(Thu to Sun / 13.30 to 18.00) **DE ZWARTE PANTER** used to be a hippie-hangout-place, and is still a big art gallery in an old chapel. The exhibitions are always for free and that's the way we like it. Tip 1: have your picnic on a bench in the hidden garden. Tip 2: if you're allergic to regular exhibitions and museums, ask for the free art gallery map.

36 16th CENTURY CARTOON

(Tue to Sun / 10.00 to 17.00 / € 4 / € 6 older than 25) The **PLANTIN-MORETUS** museum is located in the monumental home and printing shop of Christoffel Plantin. Don't hang around too long at the world's oldest printing presses, downstairs. The interesting stuff is upstairs. The Rubens room for example, or the Boloniensis map of Antwerp, made in 1565. This large map even features tiny cartoon-like characters. Look for a minuscule guy hunting a duck or a happy little dog wagging its tail.

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TOURIST FAVORITE

47 RUBENS' HOUSE

(Tue to Sun / 10.00 to 17.00 / € 4 / € 6 older than 25) The painter Rubens is best known for the 'Rubens-like women': full-figured ladies who enjoy life and who are not bothered about their cellulite or fat rolls. Single-handedly, Rubens is one of the main reasons why hundreds of thousands of tourists visit Antwerp each year. No other city is connected that closely with him: his paintings in many Antwerp churches, his statue on the Groenplaats, his grave in the St. Jacobskerk... This place, the **RUBENS HOUSE** is where he lived and produced about 2500 paintings. An impossible task for one man? That's right, certainly when you look at whoopers like 'The Adoration of the Magi' and the triptych 'The Descent From The Cross'. His secret: the master was assisted by younger artists. He only put the finishing touch on most paintings that left the studio. You won't be the only tourist here, so prepare to push one or two people over to see a painting.

48 PRE-WAR BAR

(Closed on Thu / 07.30 - 19.30) There's about 400 bars in the centre of the city. Too many to discover in one visit. So come back next week. If you just want to see the kind of bars our grandparents used to get drunk in, **OUDE ARSENAAL** is the real deal. The wallpaper here hasn't been refreshed since this bar opened in 1928. Take a seat at the bar, ask the guy next to you what he's drinking and order the same thing.

49 GIANT RAINSHELTER

(Sat and Sun) This marketplace hosts an exotic market on Saturday and a big traditional market ('vogelenmarkt') on Sunday. In 2008 the square was partly covered by a rainshelter. It's huge, (23 metres high) and transparent. Everyone has an opinion on it: some think of it as a masterpiece of modern urbanism, but the market stall owners at the sides are mad because they still get rained on since the rainshelter's too high.

50 COFFEE WITH A VIEW

(Every Day / Lunch and dinner) In the foyer of the **BOURLA**, they serve tasty coffee, but that's not so important. The Bourla is a breathtaking theatre building. Take a look at that painted dome ceiling: chances are that once you look down at your table, your coffee's gone cold.

LOCAL TIP

51 THE OLDEST BAKERY IN TOWN

(Tue to Sat) On Saturday morning you can easily stand in line here for 20 minutes. **BAKERY GOOSSENS** has been here for 123 years and is the city's oldest bakery. Their secret: not moving with the times. Their speciality: a roggeverdommeke (brown bread with raisins).

52 DANCING PIGS (VEGAN) FOR LUNCH

(Mon to Sat / Breakfast & lunch) **LOMBARDIA**'s a complete mad-house! Plush pigs dance at the windows and you can drink a Pulp Friction (juice) with a Beastly Boy (bread). Have a Rabbit Ice (vanilla and carrot, vegan-guaranteed) to finish off. Their small cups of spicy ginger-tea are legendary. Big American companies are trying to buy the original - and top-secret - recipe, but until today, owner Alain is refusing the big bucks. World domination is not far away, but for now, this is the only place where you can have one.

53 COFFEE WITH GRANNY

(Every Day / Breakfast, lunch and dinner) Have a coffee with the Antwerp grannies at **DESIRE DE LILLE** and see how their purple hairstyles go surprisingly well with the creamy-beige interior.

54 HIP SHOPPING STREET

The **KAMMENSTRAAT** is a favourite shopping spot of young hipsters. Pay a visit to Fish&Chips: it sells funky clothes & accessories, and some vintage too. Usually there is a dj playing live music and you get to the shoe department in the basement by sliding down a tunnel chute. Big chains, smelling the success of the small and edgy stores here, are trying to open stores in the Kammenstraat as well. They usually have to close their doors after less than a year. Which makes the punks at **FANS** (selling spiked stuff with skulls since 1978) smile viciously.

55 CURIOSITY STORE

All the clothes that our grandparents have worn between puberty and retirement, lie assembled at **EPISODE**. Mohair sweaters with bat sleeves, sponge shorts, moon boots, army sweaters, sleeveless sweaters, flared trousers, all for boys and girls. The shoe department is quite popular as well, but you'll have to be lucky: these ultra-lovely blue snakeleather boots might just be one size too big or small for you. The high hipfactor of this curiosity store is reflected in the prices: you'll easily pay € 20 for a nostalgic T-shirt.

42 SMALLEST MUSEUM

(Every Day / Lunch and dinner) Frituur **MAX** is one of the last fanatical supporters of fries in bags instead of boxes. You can even become a member of the National Association in Defense of the Pointed Paper Bag. Upstairs, there is a tiny fry museum with the craziest fry-bag designs.

43 CHEAP PHOTO PRINTS

(Mon to Sat) **FNAC** offers prints for € 0,45 per picture (from memory card or USB).

44 THE FARMER'S TOWER

The first skyscraper on the European continent was finished in Antwerp, in 1932. It is called 'DE BOERENTOREN' (farmer's tower), because the Farmers' Union was the main sponsor, but also because many thought it was a plump monster of a thing. Today, we all love it. A couple of years ago, the city's official poet even wrote a love-poem, in which de Boerentoren admitted to be madly in love with the Cathedral. Too bad: you can only view the fantastic city-sight if the bank that owns the place invites you.

LOCAL TIP

45 IN LOVE WITH SANDWICH

(Mon to Sat / Lunch) The guy running **DIKSMUIDSE BOTER-KOEKEN** is madly in love with his round bread. If he's got time, he'll give you a fifteen minute lecture on it's origin (imported every night from the Belgian coast, if you wonder). The location's a bit weird - take the escalator to the basement of the ugly shopping center - but it's worth the trip: only € 3 for a giant vegetarian sandwich. There's a special guestbook for international travellers who get there through this map. Go sign it!

46 BIGGEST SHOPPING STREET

The **MEIR**: international chains such as H&M, Zara, Mango, Esprit and Mexx sell the same clothes here as everywhere else in Europe. Have a look at the impressive façades above the shop windows. The rent stores pay for these historic buildings is so high (between € 30.000 and € 50.000 a month!) that almost all of them make a loss rather than profit. That's why we only find chainstores here: they compensate with profits from their other stores.

37 CRAZY MARKET

Life can be logical sometimes: the Friday Market takes place every Friday (09.00 to 13.00) on the Vrijdagmarkt (Friday Market). All the goods are sold by auction. Be careful not to scratch your head or to wave at your sweetheart on the other side of the square: unknowingly, you might have just bought a desk or a motorcycle. The price we pay depends entirely on the number of those interested: stereo set + dining room furniture for € 2 or a computer for € 1 are no exceptions, but you don't know what you're buying until you've actually bought it. Anyway, buying here is not what it's all about: just observe the spectacle and have a cappuccino in one of the cosy seats at **DE ROSCAM** (Tue to Sun).

38 SWEET AND SALTY PANCAKES

(Closed Thu / Lunch & early dinner) The salty pancakes as well as the sweet ones are delicious at **T. KOEKEBAKSE**. Prices start at € 3 for sweet pancakes and max € 9,50 for salty pancakes or bagels. They serve a luxurious brunch with bubbles as well (€ 14,50).

39 JENEVER

(Every day) At **DE VAGANT** you can taste 200 (!) different tastes of jenever (the local gin), from the classical heavy grain stuff to fashionable flavours such as chocolate, walnut and vanilla. The menu provides a list of all synonyms for jenever, going from 'drop' to 'ass-licker', flip, foezel and 'camel's back'. If you are from another planet, you can report new words at the bar.

40 FOLK MUSIC

(Wed to Sat) Folkies hang and/or jump around almost every day in **WED HEKSENKETEL**. Depending on the concert, you pay an entrance fee or not. Good vibes from both locals and world travellers.

41 THE GREEN PLACE ISN'T GREEN

The **GROENPLAATS** ('Green Place'), with the statue of world famous painter Rubens in the middle, is not green but grey and bare. Old Antwerpians know why - they still talk about the 'green church yard'. In the old days poor people were buried here, and the rich in the cathedral. When burying here was no longer allowed, a layer of concrete was laid over the corpses.



ANTWERP... FLANDERS' MOST STYLISH CITY

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DOWN BY THE WATER

With the second largest port in Europe (after its rival Rotterdam), the city has developed and prospered over the years, and now handles more than 180 million tonnes of freight annually. It dominates the local news, not to mention the city's waterfront - and makes up a large slice of Flanders' economy.

Lisa Bradshaw

TGIFT

Thank God it's Thursday!

To say that Antwerp has many bars and clubs would be an understatement. You will not go thirsty on any street anywhere in the city, don't you worry. But the student favourites are grouped together near the central campus on Stadswaag (towards the river) and Ossemarkt (the other direction). Both squares pretty much define the student area in the centre.

Popular bars are 't Vervolg, Pool Planet and De Salamander, where loud music and beer are omnipresent. Many places serve "student food" and snacks as well. "I haven't been here that long, but so far Café d'Anvers is my favourite place," says Matt Beedle, 21, who came from the UK to study economics. "I do miss dressing up in fancy dress; people don't seem to do that around here," he says. (Note to Matt: check the Dusk to Dawn column on page 15.)

Whether in a recession or not, students are always looking for the cheapest option, and Antwerp is no different. But, being a centre of fashion, it's not the cheapest city in Belgium. That's why you'll find many students studying right at home - Belgium is, as you probably already know, famous for that lovely jenever liquor and for its beer. In Antwerp, order a "bolleke" to get the local De Koninck amber.

You'll soon discover which bars and clubs offer happy hours and free events, and Erasmus members can enjoy drink specials in the international student bar De Prof. Because a lot of local students leave the city on the weekends to head back to whatever small town they grew up in, Thursday is the big going-out night in Flemish university towns. Every Thursday in Antwerp, clubs like Café Local and Red&Blue dispense with the entry fee.

Besides socialising over beers, students find other ways to hook up. Matt joined hockey club Royal Antwerp HC, where he spends most of his weekends "playing hockey and meeting Flemish people." Last year's Polish exchange student Pawel Gutowski loved to bike in the region around Antwerp, amazed by the many well-marked bike paths. The city has a lot of green spots as well - squares and parks to relax or workout, also good for outdoor studying (when the sun comes back in about six months).

But being a student costs money: the UA website reckons about €500 a month. That's why many students look for a student job. Websites like studentjobweb.be are in English as well as Dutch and have helped many international students to fund their budgets. Spending a few months away from home can be expensive, and a bit of bad luck can make things worse. "I parked my car in the wrong place, and it cost me €230 to get it back from the police parking," says Pawel. "That's more than half the salary of one of my parents in Poland!"

Katrien Lindemans

STUDYING IN THE PORT CITY

You're young, and you like your universities that way, too. You've chosen well: the University of Antwerp (UA) is Flanders' youngest university. Although its roots go back to the 19th century, the university didn't really exist until a mere six years ago.

In 2003, three academic institutions in Antwerp fused: Universitaire Faculteiten Sint-Ignatius Antwerpen (UFSIA), Rijksuniversitair Centrum Antwerpen (RUCA) and Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen (UIA). Before becoming one entity, all three were already working closely together. The unification was based on the principle of active pluralism: to acknowledge and show interest in the vision of someone else.

This was necessary, since the RUCA was a free-thinking institution, whereas UFSIA was a Catholic one. The fusion of these different ideologies also gave a strong sense of autonomy to the different departments.

The UA has about 12,000 students spread over seven faculties and four campuses. Your first social experience may well be the bus that brings all students from the campus in the city centre to the other campuses and back again. Every year about 1,800 international students join UA, choosing Antwerp as their new student city.

International students can find a lot of information on the website of UA and on the special website Antwerpenstudentenstad.be. The many online groups on Facebook are also a great help if you're looking for a second-hand bike or somebody to drive you to Ikea.

As in most student cities, Erasmus Students Network (ESN) has an office providing information and organising events for all Erasmus exchange students.

www.ua.ac.be - www.esnantwerp.be

Katrien Lindemans

Sparky and fashionable

Lisa Bradshaw



Besides the port, Antwerp has two big claims to fame that have propelled it into the international spotlight: fashion and diamonds. Known as the "world diamond centre", Antwerp has been importing, cutting and selling diamonds since the 15th century, when, with its strong reputation for commerce and skilled tradesmen, it stole the diamond trade away from Bruges. Still a focal point of Antwerp, you can learn all you ever wanted to know at the Diamond Museum over on Koningin Astridplein.

www.provant.be

If you're going to sport diamonds, you'd better know how to dress: perhaps that's how Antwerp also became one of Europe's fashion capitals. People come from across the country and even over the borders to launch themselves into the designer shops that line shopping streets, both big and small. Six world-famous designers (known simply as the "Antwerp Six"), including Dries van Noten and Ann Demeulemeester, brought world-wide renown to the Fashion Department of the city's Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Find out about it all in the Fashion Museum on Nationalestraat.

www.modemuseum.be



Student hot spots

- 't Vervolg · Melkmart 9
- De Salamander · Ossenmarkt 2
- Café d'Anvers · Verversruil 15
- Café De Prof · Vekestraat 51
- Red&Blue · Lange Schipperskapelstr. 11
- Café Local · Waalse Kaai 25



The cover of our student guide was designed and drawn by Afreux, a group of three cool guys in Antwerp who design logos, posters, comics, brochures, press kits and other really neat stuff. Visit them at www.afreux.be.

© willemm flickr

Climbing the walls

Don't let the flat landscape stop you from rock climbing in Flanders, where modern climbing walls were invented

COURTNEY DAVIS

Flanders is ideal for rock climbing. Given the region's notoriously rainy weather and famous flat tracks of land that cyclists dream about, this might sound counterintuitive. But you don't need mountain cliffs to take part in this demanding, intriguing sport; it can be done indoors, dry and warm, at a gym.

Belgium has a wealth of indoor climbing and bouldering gyms in all five provinces, plus a number of classic gyms that have climbing walls. With cold, short days drawing near, it's a good time to head inside to get your blood pumping doing this hugely addictive and surprisingly popular sport.

Why it's so popular

Rock climbing doesn't just rely upon brute strength, which is why the sport – indoors and out – is becoming more and more appealing to women. In fact, the more climbers use their minds and think creatively, the better they are. The best rock climbers look like ballet dancers, moving slowly but fluidly. It's inspiring to watch a graceful ascent of a difficult climb.

The first outdoor climbing walls were developed in the UK in the 1960s, but the concept of an indoor wall with removable resin holds, which is now common worldwide, is in fact a Belgian invention, developed in 1986. The first public indoor climbing gym in the country, Terres Neuves, opened in 1987 in Brussels.

Much like a puzzle, a climber has to use his or her body to figure out a solution: switch feet, lean in another direction or simply practice a move until it becomes easier, and suddenly an unreachable grip is possible. In Flanders alone, there are nearly 9,600 members of climbing gyms, of which more than 3,000 are women and a few hundred under the age of 12.

Indoor climbing also offers an excellent challenge. It's a psychological thrill to figure out how to climb a route, and the physical aspect is equally satisfying. From toes to fingertips, climbing is a total body work out – one of the biggest calorie burners a gym can offer, at 600-900 calories an hour.

How it works

Rock climbing has its roots in mountaineering, where people had to get from point A to point B for a reason, not for a thrill. Mountaineering became a sport in the late 1800s, when people began to scale mountains for the challenge. This evolved into what it is today – free climbing, which is using the rock itself to climb up, putting one's hands and feet anywhere to propel yourself upwards. Any gear, like ropes, chalk and harnesses are used for safety, not as a means to ease the difficulty of the climb.

Rock climbing is based on following a certain path called a route – like a roadmap for the hands and feet. This path is graded for difficulty. Climbing up the back of one mountain could be a slow, steady ascent that a child could do, while climbing the same mountain on a different route can easily mean difficult and dangerous passages only a skilled climber could handle. Outdoor routes are often marked at the base of the climb with a colour or number to indicate degree of difficulty. But actual handholds and precise directions are based on the climber's instincts.

Indoor climbing routes are easier to see, as the entire path is marked in a single colour. Each country has its own method of grading; in Belgium, routes are graded using numbers starting from one and running up to nine. From level one to four, it's pretty easy, with one being a walk in the park that gives beginners the confidence they need.



From beginners to experts, Bleau in Ghent is an indoor climber's paradise

A climb rated four is still beginning level – not too much strength is needed, but it incorporates more height. After that, the grades start to get interesting. Once you get to five, you are climbing at a decent level, and instead of jumping along to six and seven, the levels start differentiating: 5a, 5b, 5c, then 6a, 6b, etc. Sometimes, routes even explain it further with a plus or minus, so, for instance, a 5c+ is a difficult 5c, and a 6b- is an easy 6b. This all might sound like gibberish, but, trust me, when you get your first 6a, you'll be ecstatic!

Getting Started

A great way to begin climbing is to go to a gym that has indoor climbing and take some lessons on the basics. A number of gyms offer free

lessons but charge for equipment rental, while others offer complete beginner packages. First, you learn how to read a route, how to use the ropes to spot the other climber (called "belaying") and how to trust your feet. Wall climbing requires a partner and focuses on agility, flexibility and endurance. Don't let fear of heights stop you; it can be overcome with practice.

The equipment you'll be given includes a harness, which goes around your legs and waist, special grippy shoes, chalk for your hands to work against the sweat, a rope for safety and a belay device, which controls the rope and climbers. Eventually, you will discover your own preferences and climbing level – and aim higher. Improvement comes surprisingly fast.

Bouldering

An alternative to both indoor and outdoor climbing is bouldering – climbing up and over big rocks. However, because there is a shorter distance to climb (a boulder is a lot smaller than a whole mountain), the routes tend to be more difficult and based on short bursts of energy and strength, rather than on endurance. But since bouldering is closer to the ground, it's less intimidating than outdoor rock climbing. Plus, you don't need a partner to belay you, and you don't need any equipment – just the right shoes! ♦

Heading outside

Belgium is lucky for two reasons:

- ♦ the Ardennes, especially around **Namur**, is packed with some great outdoor climbing routes, such as Freyr, a well-known Belgium limestone crag with nearly 600 routes.
- ♦ it's a relatively quick drive to **Fontainebleau**, south of Paris, where you find some of the best bouldering in the world.

Outdoor climbing is less easy than indoor climbing to try out, of course, since you need to have and know how to use the equipment. But after you've tested indoor climbing, you'll find climbing friends and can organise a group excursion. The BelClimb website lists a number of clubs to get you climbing outside and also spots for indoor climbing.

→ www.belclimb.net



Head south to find rock faces in Belgium

Try it now!

This weekend (23-25 October), head to Bleau, a bouldering gym in Ghent that is hosting a competition, with the top 50 climbing on Sunday. Watching is free, and it's a great way to see how the sport is done well.

→ www.bleau.be

Klimzaal Hungaria in Leuven has great beginner lessons, where you meet for 90 minutes every Friday for five weeks. It's a very reasonable €45 (plus €13 extra each week for equipment), and the next round begins on 22 October.

→ www.klimzaalhungaria.be

New Rock in Brussels offer one-on-one lessons for about €35 an hour.

→ www.newtoprock.com



A warm welcome to Belgium!

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© Koen Broos

Graindelavoix

MARIE DUMONT

They had it coming: after winning a spate of awards for previous recordings, Flemish early music ensemble Graindelavoix has been elected Young Ensemble of the Year by the Belgian Musical Press Union. The singers' collective, founded in 1999 by Flemish ethnomusicologist Björn Schmelzer, will receive the prize on 28 October after a concert that will unveil their latest repertoire: a series of yet unrecorded songs from the 16th century, devoted to Mary Magdalene.

In a recent radio interview, Schmelzer said he was surprised by these various honours. His work, he said, was way too "experimental" and "alternative" to attract the attention of all but a niche audience. True, his edgy and uncompromisingly brainy approach stands out like a sore thumb amid the slick and bloodless productions that seem to dominate the early music world today. What else would you expect from an ensemble that takes its name from the title of an essay by French critic and semiotician Roland Barthes?

In "Grain de la Voix", Barthes, a keen music lover and pianist in

his spare time, made the grain in a singer's voice a metaphor for the writer's physical mark on a literary work: "The grain is the body in the voice that sings, in the hand that writes, in the limb that executes," he wrote. Graindelavoix likewise insist on the personal imprint they leave on their music: they say it's as much an act of creation as interpretation.

If all this sounds like abstract, academic hair-splitting, rest assured that Graindelavoix's music is anything but. With its gritty and diversely inflected voices, it bristles with arresting effects and ornaments, some of which recall the pungent polyphonies of Sardinia and other traditional communities. You would never have thought these dusty old compositions could sound so earthy and intensely alive.

Graindelavoix's fourth release, *La Magdalene* is a collection of works inspired by Mary Magdalene, the object of much discussion and devotion in the early Renaissance after a French humanist contented that she had never actually existed but was a compound of three historical figures merged into one.

The programme's centrepiece is a mass by Nicolas Champion, a now forgotten but immensely talented composer from Liège.

The ensemble recorded the CD in an Antwerp church that was erected roughly at the same time as the music was composed. No doubt the rich and strange harmonies of Champion's mass will also work their spell amid the old stones of Brussels' Kapellekerk. ♦



28 October, 20.00

OLV ter Kapellekerk
Kapellemarkt, Brussels

→ www.graindelavoix.be



MORE EARLY MUSIC THIS WEEK

Lucidarium ensemble → Amuz, Antwerp

Ensemble Dialogos → De Bijloke, Ghent

International Organ Week → across Brussels



Antwerp

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 22 ABBA The Story, musical show
OCT 23 Lily Allen **OCT 24** Massive Attack

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63, www.petrolclub.be
OCT 23 22.00 Integrated 2009 Afterparty
OCT 24 21.00 Little Dragon + Hairglow + Guy-Ohm
OCT 29 21.00 Skye + Steppe

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060, www.sportpaleis.be
OCT 23-NOV 7 20.30 Night of the Proms 2009

Borgerhout

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00, www.trixonline.be
OCT 22 20.00 De Portables + Shash Shash + Star Club West

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 21 Eagle Twin, Sunn O))) **OCT 22** Huntsville **OCT 23** Pascale Picard Band. Franz Nicolay, Mark Eitzel **OCT 24** Sizzla. Dan Wilson **OCT 26** Bjorn Berge **OCT 28** Shantel & Bucovina Club Orkestar. Pictureplane + Health

De Kriekelaar

Gallaitstraat 86; 02.735.64.68, <http://dekriekelaar.vgc.be>
OCT 25 14.00 The Saddle Tramps

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15, www.cirque-royal.org
OCT 27 Alan Corbel + Miossec

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57
OCT 23 Oxmo Puccino. Dez Mona **OCT 24** Handsome Furs **OCT 25** Zak Laughed **OCT 26** The Drones. Just Jack **OCT 27** The Invisibles + Micachu & The Shapes. Miossec **OCT 28** Brendan Benson **OCT 29** Anis, chanson. Karkwa

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
OCT 25 20.00 Massive Attack **OCT 28** 20.00 Sean Paul

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be
OCT 22 20.00 Dez Mona

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootsstraat 9; 011.23.13.13, www.muziekodroom.be
OCT 22 20.00 Hairglow

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be
Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 22 Daedalus + Tim Exile + Kelp
OCT 27 Heath + Pictureplane **OCT 29** Student Night Live: Absynthe Minded

Leuven

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 21 Nouvelle Vague **OCT 29** DJ Vadim + Breakestra

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)

Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00, www.kursaalostende.be
OCT 25 Demis Roussos

DON'T MISS

Festival of Liberty

22-31 October

Théâtre National Brussels

This great little annual festival uncovers, celebrates and decries all things freedom – or the lack thereof – with music, debates, performances and, above all this year, film. More than 40 international films will screen, most with French and Dutch subtitles and none ever before seen in Belgium. Other highlights include *A Prsence*, a series of spontaneous performances that occur during other events on the evening of 23 October, and a concert by Malian singer and women's rights activist Oumou Sangaré (pictured), "the songbird of Wassoulou", on 22 October.



→ www.festivalvandeervrijheid.be



The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45, www.themusicvillage.com
Concerts at 20.30:
OCT 21 Wardo **OCT 22** Bal Tabarin **OCT 23** Jojoba **OCT 24** The Mardi Gras Jazzband **OCT 28** Joy Adegoke **OCT 29** Graham Walker Quartet with Guy Cabay

Sint-Pieters Woluwe Cultural Centre

Charles Thielemanslaan 93; 02.773.05.81, www.art-culture.be
OCT 23 20.30 Fabien Degryse Trio

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be
OCT 22 20.00 Lidlboj + Marc Ribot & Ceramic Dog **OCT 29** 20.00 Huntsville

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43, www.ccstrombeek.be
OCT 29 20.30 Living Roots

Heist-Op-Den-Berg (Antwerp)

CC Zwaneberg

Berkenstraat 1; 015.25.07.70, www.zwaneberg.be
OCT 22 20.30 Living Roots

Mechelen**Cultuurcentrum**

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00,
www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
OCT 24 20.15 Here we Gong - Pascal
Schumacher Quartet

**Antwerp****Zuiderpershuis**

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,
www.zuiderpershuis.be
Concerts at 20.30:
OCT 21 Mitsoura (Roma music) **OCT 23**
Oswin 'Chin' Behilia (Caribbean) **OCT 24**
Mamar Kassey (Nigeria)

Brussels**Art Base**

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,
www.art-base.be
OCT 26 20.00 Silvia Abalos & Cantango,
Argentinian tango

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
OCT 24 15.00 Musical journey to pre-
Hispanic Mexico with Luiz Marquez (ideal
age six), plus workshop for children in
French and Dutch (three to five)

Maison du Peuple

Sint-Gillisvoorplein 37-39; 02.217.26.00,
www.maison-du-peuple.be
OCT 23 20.00 Queimada: Wim Claeys
& Bruno Letron, Quintet à Claques, A
Contrabanda

Theatre National

Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.41.55,
www.theatrenational.be
OCT 22 20.30 Oumou Sangaré. 22.00
Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orkestra **OCT 23**
21.00 Asian Dub Foundation. 22.30
Primitiv. 23.00 Nathan 'Flutebox' Lee &
The Clinic **OCT 24** 21.00 Grand Corps
Malade. 22.45 Tangawissi **OCT 29** 23.00
La Chiva Gantiva

**Aalst****CC De Werf**

Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12

OCT 22 20.00 Maria Friedman sings
Sondheim

Antwerp**Amuz**

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28,
www.amuz.be
OCT 22 21.00 Lucidarium ensemble,
poetic and musical traditions from 16th-
century Yiddish culture
OCT 25 13.00-16.30 Help, there are kids
in the concert hall! Music workshop for
children with Jewish songs 15.00 Huelgas
Ensemble conducted by Salamone Rossi

Brussels**Bozar**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.
bozar.be
OCT 23 20.00 Orchestre National de
Lille conducted by Kirill Karabits, with
Plamena Mangova: Wang, Rachmaninov,
Shostakovich
OCT 24 20.00 Brussels Capital Orchestra
conducted by Robert Janssens, with
Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden, piano, La
Badinerie Choir conducted by Daniel
Lipnik and Choeur Enfants de Bruxelles
conducted by Philippe Lambert:
Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4, Robert
Janssens' Requiem Universel, Henri
Seroka's Pastorales (charity concert)
OCT 25 11.00 Koen Plaetinck, marimba:
Bach (Bozarsunday Good Morning) 15.00
Luxembourg Philharmonic conducted by
Hans Graf, with Lars Vogt, piano: Mozart,
Bruckner
OCT 29 12.30 Filip Suys, violin; Isabelle
Deschamps, violin; Mihoko Kusama, viola;
Taras Zanchak, cello; Svetoslav Dimitriev,
double bass: Dvorak, Martin

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,
www.demunt.be
OCT 22 20.00 Gerald Finley, baritone:
Schumann, Grieg, Ives, Barber
OCT 23 12.30 La Monnaie wind
ensemble: Stravinsky, Varèse

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Kapellekerk

Kapellemarkt; 02.507.82.00,
www.placedelachapelle.org
OCT 28 20.00 Grainedelavoix conducted
by Björn Schmelzer: works from the
cult of Mary Magdalene in 16th-century
Netherlands

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37, www.
kcb.be
Concerts at 20.00:

OCT 22 Jonathan Biss, piano:
Mendelssohn, Kurtag, Mozart, Schubert
OCT 27 Haydn Philharmonic conducted
by Adam Fischer, with Gabor Boldoczki,
trumpet: Haydn, Mozart
OCT 28 Parkanyi Quartet: Haydn, Bartok,
Beethoven
OCT 29 Royal Conservatory Gala Concert
to mark the start of renovation work on the
conservatory's buildings

Schaarbeek Gemeentehuis

Colignonplein; 02.240.34.99,
www.culture1030ecoles.be
OCT 22 20.00 Eben piano ensemble: Erik
Satie's Parade, Saint-Saëns' Le Carnaval des
animaux

Ghent

Conservatorium
Hoogpoort 64; 09.269.20.74,
tickets@debijloke.be
OCT 25 17.00 Duo Mythos with Myriam
Graulus, flute; Tomoko Honda, piano:
Murail, Debussy, Denisov, Boulez,
Messiaen, Mochizuki

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92,
www.debijloke.be
OCT 23 20.00 Ensemble Dialogos
conducted by Katarina Livljanic, Ensemble
Kantaduri conducted by Josko Caleta:
Byzantine liturgies from Dalmatia
OCT 24 20.00 Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen
conducted by Etienne Siebens, with Ning
Kam, violin: Beethoven, Bartok, Borodin

Leuven**Institute for Ireland in Europe**

Janseniusstraat 1; 016.31.04.30,
www.louvaininstitute.com
OCT 23 19.45 The Harp that Once, the
story of two harps through song, poetry
and drama featuring Glynis Casson and
Cormac de Barra (charity concert)

Meise**GC De Muze**

Brusselsesteenweg 69; 02.272.00.29, www.
demuzevanmeise.be
OCT 24 20.00 Viviane Spanoghe, cello

Ternat**CC De Ploter**

Kerkstraat 4; 02.582.44.33,
www.ccdeploter.be
OCT 23 20.30 Jos Van Immerseel and
Claire Chevalier, piano: Schubert

**Brussels****De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,
www.demunt.be
Until NOV 3 15.00/20.00 Stravinsky's The
Rake's Progress staged by Robert Lepage.
Lawrence Renes conducts La Monnaie
Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, with
singers Sally Matthews, Rosemary Joshua,
Mark Padmore, Tom Randle

Ghent**Vlaamse Opera**

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.
vlaamseopera.be
OCT 23 20.00 Wozzeck by Alban Berg
with the Flanders Opera Symphony
Orchestra conducted by Martyn
Brabbins, and Choir conducted by Yannis
Pouspourikas, staged by Guy Joosten with
Gabriel Suovanen and Noëmi Nadelmann

**Brussels****Kaaithheater**

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.
kaaithheater.be
OCT 22-24 20.30 Do Animals Cry, dance/
theatre choreographed by Meg Stuart

Theatre 140

Eugène Plaskyalaan 140; 02.733.97.08,
www.theatre140.be
OCT 27-29 14.30/20.30 Cie Melting Spot
in Deng Deng! Hip-hop (Chad)

Leuven**30CC - Schouwburg**

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.32.03.20,
www.30CC.be
OCT 21-23 20.00 Ultima Vez in
NieuwZwart, by Wim Vandekeybus

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,
www.stuk.be
OCT 26-27 20.30 Kunst/Werk in
Extraction by Marc Vanrunxt with Eva
Kamala Rodenburg

**Antwerp****Stadsschouwburg**

Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900,
www.musichall.be
Until OCT 25 The Sound of Music
(musical, in Dutch)

Berchem**CC Berchem**

Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20,
www.ccberchem.be
Performances at 20.30 (in Dutch):
OCT 21 Het huis van Bourgondië in
Ramskapelle **OCT 23** Philip Paquet/
Braakland/Zhebilding in Weer over naar
jou (Back to You) **OCT 24** Cie Lodewijk/
Louis in Kolonie, De jacht op de verloren
paling (The hunt for the lost eel)

Bruges**Het Entrepot**

Binnenweg 4; 050.47.07.80,
www.het-entrepot.be

DON'T MISS

**Character Beer
Festival**

24-25 October
Palace Hotel
Poperinge

This popular annual festi-
val in West Flanders brings
together small brewers from
Belgium and northern France
to the little town with a lot of
hops. Since the Middle Ages,
Poperinge has been at the
centre of production of those
little flowers, without which
there would be no beer. And
then where would Belgium
be? Poperinge is also home to
the Hops Museum, which has
a special Hops and Beer Night
on 30 October. Much tasting
guaranteed at both.



→ www.hotelpalace.be

→ www.hopmuseum.be

OCT 24-25 20.00 Theatre Festival
featuring two productions by young
directors: Darkdroom and Musicpiece

Brussels**KVS Box**

Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12,
www.kvs.be
OCT 22-31 15.00/20.30 Compagnie
Cecilia in The Broken Circle Breakdown
featuring The Cover-Ups of Alabama,
musical theatre by Johan Heldenbergh,
Mieke Dobbels (in Dutch with French
surtitles)

Kaaithheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.
kaaithheater.be
OCT 29-31 20.30 De parade in Mayerling
by Rudi Meulemans, staged by Hilde Wils
and Meulemans (in Dutch)

The Warehouse Studio

Waelhemstraat 69a; 0492.64.16.60,
atc.theatreinbrussels.com
Until OCT 24 20.00 The Yellow Wallpaper
by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, adapted and
staged by Caraig McGregor (in English)

Leuven**30CC - Schouwburg**

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.32.03.20,
www.30CC.be
OCT 27 20.00 Abattoir Fermé in
Galapagos, written and staged by Stef
Lernous (in Dutch)

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,
www.stuk.be
OCT 29-30 19.30-23.30 Abattoir Fermé
in Chaostriologie, staged by Stef Lernous
(in Dutch)

**Aalst**

Network: Centre for Contemporary Art
Houtkaai; 053.70.97.73,

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www.netwerk-art.be

Until NOV 7 Time as Activity: video art and installations by international artists

Stedelijk Museum 't Gasthuys

Oude Vismarkt 13; 053.73.23.40

Until DEC 23 Leerlooierij Schotte: Heden versus Verleden (Present versus Past), photos of an abandoned tannery before its reconversion, by Henk van Rensbergen.

Antwerp

Cathedral of Our Lady

Handschoenmarkt (03.213.99.51)

Until NOV 15 Reunion: from Quinten Metsys to Peter Paul Rubens, masterpieces from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts return to the Cathedral

Contemporary Art Museum (MHKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60, www.muhka.be

Until NOV 8 Lonely at the Top: A Larger Europe #1, art from republics of the former Soviet Union

Until JAN 3 Textiles: Art and the Social Fabric, installations, sculptures, film, flags and banners

Until FEB 26 Collectie XXIV: presentation of the museum's permanent collection, following the museum's renovation

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55,

www.extracity.org

Until OCT 25 Guy Tillim: Avenue Patrice Lumumba, examination of modern history in Africa against the backdrop of its colonial and post-colonial architecture by South African photographer Guy Tillim
Until OCT 25 Lieven de Boeck: Dictionary of Space, Part II, letters and drawings from the 19th century to the present day

Havencentrum Lillo

Scheldelaan 444, Haven 621;

www.havencentrum.be

Until DEC 14 Tabula Scaldis: Tafereel van de Schelde, panoramic drawings and other documents take visitors on a tour of the River Scheldt from end to end

Mode Museum

28 Nationalestraat; 03.470.27.70,

www.momu.be

Until FEB 21 Delvaux: 180 Years of Belgian Luxury, history of the famous leather goods house

Rockox House

Keizerstraat 12; 03.201.92.50,

www.rockoxhuis.be

Until NOV 15 A Gift to God, private patronage of religious art during Antwerp's Golden Age

Bruges

Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse

Dijver 17;

www.uitvindingvanbrugge.be

Until APR 25 De uitvinding van Brugge: De stad van Delacenserie (The Discovery of Bruges: The City of Delacenserie), the 19th-century architectural facelift of Bruges, thanks to local architect Louis Delacenserie

Brussels

Archief en Museum voor het Vlaams Leven te Brussel

Arduinkaai 28; 02.209.06.01,

www.amvb.be

Until OCT 31 Herinnering & Migratie: Erfgoed van nieuwe Brusselaars (Memory and Migration: Heritage of New Brusselaars): film, documents, texts and poems record the experience of Brussels' immigrants

Argos: Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03,

www.argosarts.org

Until DEC 19 Actors & Extras, contemporary artists explore the contrast between the work of actors and extras in cinema

Atomium

Heysel Park; 02.475.45.75,

www.atomium.be

Until DEC 13 Africa. Fast forward, joint

exhibition at the Atomium and Central Africa Museum, Tervuren, on the African continent today

Autoworld

Jubelpark 1, www.autoworld.be

Until OCT 30 The golden age of automobile photo-journalism, tribute to photographer André Van Bever

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Until JAN 3 Portraits of Artists: 80 Years of the Centre for Fine Arts in Pictures

Until JAN 24 Son of Heaven, 50 centuries of Chinese power and glory with some 250 masterpieces from China's most prestigious museums

Until JAN 10 The State of Things, works by some 50 contemporary Belgian and Chinese artists, selected by Luc Tuymans and Ai Weiwei (europalia.china)

Until JAN 24 Still Life, works by 13 contemporary Chinese photographers

Until JAN 24 Architecture as Resistance, photographs, plans and models illustrating the work of Chinese architect Wang Shu

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60,

www.designflanders.be

Until OCT 25 Visual Voltage, art, design and energy with works by Swedish designers Steven Dixon, Nils Edvardsson, Tina Finnäs, Front Design and Tore Nilsson (part of EU Swedish presidency and Design September)

Hallepoort

Zuidlaan; 02.534.15.18

Until OCT 25 Archeologie om de hoek (Archaeology around the corner), archaeological finds in Brussels over the past 20 years

Horta Museum (Winter Garden)

Amerikastraat 25; 02.543.04.90,

www.hortamuseum.be

Until OCT 31 Jean-Charles Detallante, sculpture

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70

Until NOV 14 Flesh, drawings by Dany Danino, sculpture by Hughes Dubuisson and ceramics by Sofi Van Saltbommel

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57

Until NOV 22 Controverses: Een juridische en ethische geschiedenis van de fotografie (Controversy: A Judicial and Ethical History of Photography)

Museum of the National Band of Belgium

Wildewoudstraat 10;

rini@rinihartman.nl

Until DEC 13 Rini Hartman: 8 Visions of Hope, solo exhibition by the Dutch artist on the eight themes of the UN Millennium Development Goals

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49,

www.tour-taxis.com

Until MAR 28 It's our Earth 2! From Kyoto to Copenhagen: Interactive exhibition exploring the effects of climate change on the natural world

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33,

www.wiels.org

Until DEC 6 Ann Veronica Janssens: Serendipity, installations by the contemporary Belgian artist

Woluwe-Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre

Charles Thielemanslaan 93; 02.773.05.81, www.art-culture.be

OCT 21 Rwandan objets d'art, photographs (benefit exhibition; www.ahazaza.org)

World Bank Brussels

Marnixlaan 17; 02.552.00.32

Until OCT 31 In the Eyes of a Woman: Roma Portraits, the lives of various Roma communities seen through the eyes of female photographers

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23,

www.museumdd.be

Until NOV 29 Absence is the Highest Form of Presence, film and visual art works by Robert Gober, Julião Sarmento and Luc Tuymans

Geel

Gasthuismuseum

Gasthuisstraat 1; 014.59.14.43,

www.gasthuismuseumgeel.net

Until MAR 31 God of Doctoort?, a collection of souvenirs from the former hospital and monastery

Ghent

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03,

www.smak.be

Until NOV 15 Raphaël Buedts, furniture objects

Until NOV 22 Nick Ervinck, GNI-RI sep2009 EITZOR, installations

Until NOV 22 Sculptural collections by various artists

Until DEC 6 Klaus Scherübel: Mallarmé, Het Boek, installations

Until DEC 6 Coming People 2009: Forwarding backyards, end works by students

Until JAN 10 Michel François, Faux Jumeaux (False Twins), photographs, videos and sculptures

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43,

www.ccstrombeek.be

Until DEC 10 Shot by both Sides, video installations by Pieter Geenen and Johan Grimonprez

Hasselt

Fashion Museum

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21,

www.modemuseumhasselt.be

Until NOV 8 In Her Shoes, trends and evolution of women's shoe design, from 1900 to contemporary designers

Kemzeke

Verbeke Foundation

Westakkers; 03.789.22.07,

www.verbekefoundation.com

Until NOV 15 Artificial Nature, outdoor sculpture and installations by contemporary Belgian and European artists

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28;

016.20.09.09, www.mleuven.be

Until DEC 6 Rogier van der Weyden 1400 | 1464 Master of Passions, work by the 15th-century Brussels city painter, the first exhibition in Leuven's new museum



Europalia China: Festival celebrating Chinese art and culture, ancient to contemporary, with more than 450 events
Until JAN 30 across the country
www.europalia.eu

Festival of Flanders: Major annual event encompassing seven festivals across Flanders, with dozens of cities staging hundreds of classical and contemporary performances and related events
Until OCT 30 across Brussels and Flanders
www.festivalvanvlaanderen.be

Opera in the Cinema: Opera performances on the big screen
Until MAY 1 in Kinopolis theatres across Flanders (Brussels, Ghent, Hasselt, Kortrijk, Leuven, Ostend, Antwerp and Bruges):
OCT 24 Aida by Verdi **NOV 7**

DUSK 'TIL DAWN



So hip it hurts

The hipper you look the better, as far as clubs in and around Antwerp are concerned. But dress code in the fashion-obsessed city takes on a totally different meaning this autumn. A new season of theme parties at Café D'Anvers on Thursday nights will kick off with all things ghoulish at a slightly early Halloween celebration on 29 October.

Angels and Demons follows on 19 November, then gather up all things glitzy for the Hollywood party on 26 November. Expect a happy mix of house, ragga, hip-hop and dance anthems – all for free. If that doesn't suit, don't linger, as Blue Flame Thursdays at Noxx boasts two rooms of pumping house and electronica, also all for free.

Halloween night proper in Antwerp is a serious dance

affair with some of the world's best DJs. Café d'Anvers offers up Detroit's Kevin Saunderson and Stockholm master of Assyrian techno, Aril Brikha on 31 October to celebrate its 20th birthday. Meanwhile, Café Capital will host dEUS frontman Tom Barman at the decks, with his high-energy mix of anything from rock to trance. With aficionados travelling from all over Belgium, The Netherlands and the UK, the atmosphere at both places is certain to be electric.

But if you've had enough of dance music, head on over to Petrol on Halloween night when bands Make the Girl Dance and Surfing Leons take the stage for a night of fun pop where nobody will blink an eye at your shabby chic.

→ www.cafe-d-anvers.com

→ www.noxxantwerp.be

→ www.cafecapital.be

→ www.petrolclub.be

Turandot by Puccini **DEC 19** Les Contes d'Hoffmann by Offenbach **JAN 9** Der Rosenkavalier by Strauss **JAN 16** Carmen by Bizet **FEB 6** Simon Boccanegra by Verdi **MAR 27** Hamlet by Ambroise Thomas **MAY 1** Armida by Rossini
www.kinopolis.be

Antwerp

Amperdans4: International dance and performance festival organised by wp Zimmer, Monty, Troubleyn/Laboratorium and Royal Ballet of Flanders

Until OCT 24 at venues across Antwerp
www.amperdans.eu

Murga Parade: Murga, by origin a Latin American tradition, is an annual parade in which musical groups, dancers and word artists take to the streets in costume
OCT 24-25 14.00 at deSingel, Desguinlei 25
03.248.28.28, www.murga.be

Brussels

50 Years Goethe Institute: Screenings, exhibitions, music and workshops to mark the 50th anniversary of the Goethe Institute in Brussels
Until OCT 26 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Brussels 2009 BD Comic Strip: City-wide festival celebrating Brussels-based comic strip artists and the rich history of the Belgian comic

Until DEC 31 across Brussels
www.brusselscomics.com

Freedom Festival: Multidisciplinary festival promoting human rights, with concerts, theatre, performances, exhibitions, screenings and talks
OCT 22-31 at Theatre National, Emile Jacqmainlaan 111-115
www.festivaldeslibertes.be

Ghent

I Love Techno: Massive techno party featuring Boys Noize, Dave Clarke, The Bloody Beetroots, Deadmau5, Laurent Garnier, Simian Mobile Disco, The Proxy, Chris Liebing, Fake Blood, Buraka Som Sistema, Speedy J, Surkin, Don Rimini, and Johnny D
OCT 24 19.00-6.00 at Flanders Expo, Maalttekouter 1
www.ilovetechno.be

Poperinge

Character Beer Festival: Free annual event that attracts Belgian beer lovers from all over the world
OCT 24-25 at The Palace Hotel, Leperstraat 34
0494.32.68.60, www.poperinge.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

LISA BRADSHAW

Andy Garcia

Film star returns to Ghent after 22 years: "I've come full circle"

Andy Garcia looks so like a movie star, you almost think he's putting you on. With round sunglasses, a beret, velvet jacket and smoking a cigar (Cuban), he seems as if he should be lounging poolside in Hollywood rather than sitting on the chilly banks of a canal in downtown Ghent.

And yet, despite his stature as a famous actor, none of the passersby really take much notice. Garcia has spent his professional career avoiding the flashbulbs of the paparazzi, keeping his personal life personal and focusing on independent projects he found appealing rather than high-profile studio blockbusters.

His latest film, *City Island*, is one of these and the reason he was in Ghent last weekend. At the International Film Festival of Flanders, he was given the Joseph Plateau Lifetime Achievement award before the screening of the film.

Garcia says he has now "come full circle": 22 years ago, he arrived at this same festival to present the film *The Untouchables*. It was his very first festival invitation as an actor. He tells me that being invited back to receive the prestigious award is "very touching."

He repeats the sentiment to a packed crowd at the cinema that evening. "Ghent is where I lost my virginity – in terms of film festivals," he joked. "It shows that you take one step at a time, and you keep doing your work, and you wind up back in Ghent."

Garcia was born in 1950s Havana and fled the Castro regime, which had confiscated his family's property, when he was just five. The family settled in Miami, Florida, where he studied acting before heading to Hollywood. He quickly landed small parts in TV and film, until he got his "big break" – the role of Agent George Stone in Brian De Palm's *The Untouchables*. His part in the film's climactic moment – a slow-motion scene on a staircase that served as an homage to the classic 1925 Russian film *Battleship Potemkin* – was star making, and the roles came fast and steady after that.

With nearly 50 films behind him, Garcia continues to bounce between big studio productions, like *When a Man Loves a Woman* and *Ocean's Eleven*, to smaller projects with which he feels a strong connection, like 1996's *The Disappearance of Garcia Lorca* (he played Lorca) and 2004's *Modigliani* (he played Modigliani).



© Daniel Fouray/Belga

"Sometimes they want to throw a big bucket of money at you, but you kind of say to yourself 'why do I want to be in this movie?'" he explains. "I've got to do something that I'm stimulated by. My nature is not to walk through something. If I'm not stimulated, I just don't belong there."

Still, he admits, it's a balance. "Sometimes you do something that might afford you the ability to do a *City Island*." The independent comedy was written and directed by Raymond De Felitta (who Garcia calls "the Italian Woody Allen") and stars Garcia as Vince, a working-class husband and father with two very big secrets. In fact, everyone in Vince's family is full of secrets – the revelation of which propels the script along until the end, when everyone's skeletons are ripped from the closet.

"Everyone has secrets; it's part of human nature," the 53-year-old actor says. "But I share all my secrets – everything I am is in everything I do. So my secrets are public. Every actor – at least the ones I value – is sharing their most intimate pains and joys and secrets in their work."

The Italian family in the film live on City Island, a little fishing village that is part of the Bronx borough of New York. A prison guard by day, one of Vince's secrets is that he's taking an evening acting lesson. It doesn't sound like much, but to

a tough guy like Vince, telling his wife he wants to be an actor is beyond embarrassing.

Does Garcia understand that feeling? "Of course!" he answers. "In the environment that I grew up in, to say 'I want to be an actor' or 'I want to go to Hollywood to work in the movies,' it's like saying you want to be a farmer on Mars. I mean, there is just no relationship with it. I was doing community theatre and stuff, but my family and friends saw it as a hobby."

Garcia has been married for 27 years and is the father of four – his eldest daughter also plays his daughter in *City Island*. (Her secret is that she is paying her college tuition by stripping at a club).

Garcia, also a pianist and percussionist, has only been back to Cuba once – for a benefit concert for Cuban refugees at Guantanamo Bay in 1995. He didn't leave the naval base. "Once in exile, always in exile," he says. "You can't escape that; it's always with you. My Cuban heart has a hole in it." He won't return to the island until the regime ends. "I've been critical of that regime, and I will be critical of it until it falls. I want my country – the country I was born in – to be free."

City Island opens in Belgium in February

→ www.cityislandmovie.com

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



© michel d'olier

K3 →

Ten years ago, the three Ks met for the first time: Karen, Kristel and Kathleen were brought together to form K3 (say "ka-dree"), Flanders' answer to the Spice Girls. Ever since, K3 has ruled the world of *kleuterpop* – toddler pop – in Flanders and the Netherlands with titles such as "Oma's aan de top" – "Granny's at the Top" – and "Jongens zijn gek" – "Boys are crazy".

The three Ks made the most of their success, but a decade years of wearing identical outfits took its toll, and earlier this year Kathleen announced that *zij wilde solo verder als zangeres* – she wanted to become a solo singer. The remaining Ks vowed to soldier on as a duo – until someone came up with the idea of finding a replacement via a TV talent show. That same day, Kathleen unceremoniously disappeared from Madame Tussauds in Amsterdam.

The TV show, *K2 zoekt K3* – *K2 seeks K3* – culminated recently with a million Flemings and twice as many Dutch watching the long drawn-out final.

I must confess to watching the show myself, though, believe me, it was by accident. The blonde hopefuls had been whittled down to three, who were put through their paces. The two Ks sang some of their repertoire with each one in turn, which left me with the strange feeling that something

was not quite right: as one paper put it, *alle drie zongen ze Karen en Kristel naar huis* – all three of them sang the boots off Karen and Kristel ("sang them home"). In fact, they sounded best when the three young ones alone sang together, if you see what I mean.

And the chosen one? Josje Huisman was the two Ks' choice. Josje is from Amsterdam and, apart from being launched into a hectic recording and touring career, is having to get to grips with Dutch as it is spoken in Flanders. She's taking elocution lessons to blend in with the Flemish Ks, which she will need, for example, to sing K3's latest "Bij de Politie" – "With the Police" – where she sang *politie* with a -ts- instead of a -ss- sound.

You can already hear J and K2: *de nieuwe K3-single ligt in de winkel* – the new K3 single is in the shops. It will be a mix of old and new songs with ex-K3er Kathleen being airbrushed away: *de zangpartijen van Kathleen worden vervangen door die van Josje* – Kathleen's singing parts are replaced by those of Josje.

At home we tried to join in – not with the singing but with the constant smiling. A couple of minutes of grinning exhausted us, but Josje, and the losers, couldn't stop.

→ www.k3.be

The last word →→→

Weeping virgin

"When I think how much it cost to do business out of Brussels, I get tears in my eyes. Our Brussels low-cost company was one of the toughest challenges." Virgin CEO Richard Branson, on doing business in Belgium

Barracks with bars

"I think it's a good solution. There are suitable locations. It still has to be discussed with the local authorities concerned." Defence minister Pieter De Crem, who plans to close 20 army barracks and turn some into prisons

Lotti lashes out

"There has been a sea-change in the press which I want no part of. Anything goes. Well, not any longer with me." Singing star Helmut Lotti, who says he will no longer cooperate with *Het Laatste Nieuws* newspaper and the magazines *Story* and *Dag Allemaal* because of their tabloid techniques

Woman wanted

"I keep on looking for the woman of my dreams." Alex Callier, Hooverphonic front-man, who still needs to find a replacement for lead singer Geike Arnaert one year after she left the band