

Mechelen makeover..... 6

A conservative Catholic town for 450 years, Mechelen is now turning into a cool place where hip, young people want to live. We look at a festival that celebrates the city's past and future.



Tourism in trouble..... 7

It's bad news for the Flemish tourist industry as the coast sees a drop in visitors. Business trips are also in decline, but city breaks remain popular.



One Daan thing..... 8

Daan's new album *Manhay* is named after the village in the Ardennes where he lives. It's less about word-play and more about emotions, he tells our critic.



AB-solutely Fabulous

Ancienne Belgique is no ordinary music venue

PM DOUTRELIGNE

If you live anywhere near Brussels, chances are you have already been to the Ancienne Belgique. Maybe your neighbours regularly go there to check out new artists, or maybe their parents are still talking about that Adamo performance from way-back-when. For this is no ordinary live-music venue.

A native French speaker is interviewing a Brussels Fleming and a Ghent-educated Irishman for an English-language newsweekly; the conversation flows – in three languages, sometimes within the same sentence. This scene alone symbolises the very essence of modern-day Brussels.

The point is made even more obvious by the very location for this trilingual chat: the Ancienne Belgique, Brussels' legendary concert venue. A place which bears a French name, is owned by the Flemish authorities and has

become a Mecca for Belgian and international artists alike, in every musical genre known to man.

Earlier this year, the Ancienne Belgique (or "den AB", as it is affectionately known in Brussels dialect) was elevated to the rank of "Grote Vlaamse Cultuurinstelling", literally "Great Flemish Cultural Institution", an honour it shares with, among others, Antwerp's MuHKA and the Flemish Opera. Not bad an achievement, considering that it hasn't always been plain sailing.

Previously known as "Le Vieux Düsseldorf" and "Bruxelles-Kermesse", the Ancienne Belgique saw the light of day in 1931 when it was bought by a businessman from Liege by the name of Arthur Mathonet. Since its inception, the AB has had to close on several occasions, for reasons ranging from noise pollution to bankruptcy to health

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© Cassandre Sturbois

"Nazi cows" from Flanders invade Devon

Attempt at super-race described as "really aggressive"

ALAN HOPE

A small herd of cattle – five cows and four bulls descended from the cross-bred species developed by Hitler's scientists – has been imported into England from a nature reserve in Tongeren. The Heck cattle will become prized exhibits at a farm for rare breeds of animal.

The cattle were developed by the brothers Heinz and Lutz Heck, both of whom ran zoos in Germany before the Second World War. Their dream was to recreate the aurochs, a breed of cattle described by Julius Caesar as little smaller than elephants, and said to be the breed featured in the Paleolithic cave-paintings of Lascaux and elsewhere. The brothers interbred animals from Corsica and

Hungary, Germany and Spain, and the famed Scottish Highland cattle, creating a beast that is smaller than Caesar's example, but bigger than other cattle.

There are reports that Heinz Heck, who was director of the zoo at Hellabrunn in Munich, began trying to reconstruct the aurochs breed as early as 1920, long before Hitler came to power. But the quest to recreate a mythical beast struck a chord with the Nazis' philosophy of racial purity, and they enthusiastically supported the work of both Heck brothers.

After the war, only a few creatures were left behind at Hellabrunn, from

which various populations have been bred down the years, including the ones at Tongeren, where they are useful for keeping control over the scrubby undergrowth, although a spokesman for the government's nature and woodland authority said they were "very aggressive" and not really suitable for public places.

The English farm where the nine now reside will try to breed them for a role in wild ecosystems, where they are self-sufficient. In addition, each cow produces its own weight in dung every year. "That is excellent for the whole food chain, from dung beetles upwards," farmer Derek Gow told *The Guardian* last week. ♦

Extra funding for arts despite crisis

Anciaux gives €10 million parting gift

ALAN HOPE

The arts sector in Flanders has been granted a total of €98 million in government subsidies for 2010, the region's culture minister Bert Anciaux announced last week. The figure represents an increase of €10.5 million, or 15%, more than the budget for 2008.

A total of 278 organisations received a structural subsidy for general operational costs, representing 30 more than the previous subsidy period, with 45 newcomers counterbalanced by the loss of 15 groups – including the Handelsbeurs concert hall in Ghent and puppet-human hybrid group Theater Taptoe. This year saw a pop group receiving a

subsidy for the very first time: Zita Swoon, led by Stef Camil Karlens, received €230,000.

The biggest winner in the latest round of subsidies is musical theatre, whose grants have gone up by a massive 79% - albeit from a low baseline. Musical van Vlaanderen gets €2.45 million for operations in Antwerp and Ghent, and Theater aan de Stroom in Antwerp, an actors' collective dedicated to repertory theatre, receive its first-ever subsidy of €400,000. The newly formed Publiekstoneel, set up by entrepreneur Geert Allaert and theatre director Dirk Tanghe,

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News in brief



© Wim Tellier/Beiga

A work by photographer Wim Tellier covering 800 square metres of the Zuiderdokken in Antwerp harbour (above). It is one of six photographs, each of which shows a sunbather. Tellier, a native of Antwerp, travels the world photographing people in exotic locations and has the rare distinction of having exhibited in Antarctica.

the novel by Dimitri Verhulst and will screen during the Directors' Fortnight. Altiplano by Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth, and Lost Persons Area by Caroline Strubbe are both part of Critics' Week, which received 900 applications this year, of which only seven were chosen – two of them Flemish.

by students. The campaign's logo, P-Man, shows a superhero figure in tights and cape, with the letter P on his chest. But a problem has arisen because the letter P looks strikingly like the logo of P Magazine, whose editor said: "We had expected a bit more tact from P-Man". The magazine does not envisage legal action. "We're convinced that, with the help of P-Man, this little problem can be sorted out in a friendly manner," said editor-in-chief Michael Lescroart.



The number of complaints of abuse of elderly people in Brussels is on the rise, with 42 logged since the Dutch-speaking phone line was set up in February. That represents an annual figure of 200 in the capital, compared to a total in 2007 for the whole of Flanders of 516. Most complaints come from old people in retirement homes who report to the anonymous line rather than risk reprisals by complaining to staff, the organisers said. Report line: 02.511.91.20, Monday and Wednesday from 9.00 to 12.30.

Last year was a record year for Flemish films, with total audiences of almost two million, or a market share of 10% nationwide and 15-20% within Flanders. The main attraction was Loft by Erik Van Looy, which sold over 900,000 tickets in 2008 and is still going strong. The most financially successful film of the year, including international sales, was the 3D animation Fly Me to the Moon, which made €32 million.

The city of Aalst will digitise 71,000 pages of newspapers dating from the period of the 19th-century labour activist and priest Adolf Daens. The papers, some 80 different titles, date from as early as 1836. The project will make the archive more accessible by putting it online and will also help protect some documents from deterioration.

FLANDERS TODAY

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An actress and a priest have been voted Brussels Citizens of the Year by a committee set up to promote and defend Brussels dialect. Father Dirk Vannetelbosch organises a dialect service every year in the St Peter church in Jette, as well as conversation tables in Koekelberg. Gaby Geysens, born in Limburg, now lives and works in the city, where she plays regular roles in the Brussels Volkstejoeter (People's Theatre).

Three Flemish films have been selected for the Cannes Film Festival which starts on 13 May. De helaasheid der dingen (known in English as The Misfortunates) by Felix Van Groeningen is based on

The Flemish Chiro youth movement last week celebrated its 75th anniversary in the presence of some distinguished former members, including Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters. The movement was originally Christian but in recent years has become more secular, and now has a membership of around 96,000. During a festive breakfast last Sunday, 400,000 pistolékes were served to members seated at tables measuring 75 kilometres in total. Other former members include singer Luc De Vos, actress An Swartenbroekx, comedian Urbanus and sex-educator Goedeke Liekens.

The Catholic University of Leuven has run into trouble with its campaign to stamp out plagiarism

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Dance, film and musicals share €98 million

→ Continued from page 1

which aims to bring popular theatre to a wider audience sought €2 million in support, but the advisory committee decided not to recommend any award.

Anciaux assured the sector, meanwhile, that the increased funds made available for pop music and musical theatre would not lead to cuts in the more classical theatre and music sectors. And indeed both sectors saw their total subsidies go up by €2.1 million in total.

For Anciaux, this is likely to be the last chance he gets to demonstrate such largesse. The regional elections take place on 7 June, and the minister recently left his Spirit party to join the socialist Sp.a. They, however, have not offered him a place on any list that would

guarantee him a winnable seat. In the next Flemish government, someone else will be writing the cheques.

The business magazine Trends was scathing about the minister's legacy after 10 years of culture management. The fact that the entire budget for culture has doubled over the past decade to €451 million was, the magazine said, "the only bright spot in the dark policy palette" of the minister. His policy on allowing the region first refusal on important works at risk of being exported could have deprived Flemish art of international attention, Trends said. And his time in office has too often been marked by blunders, such as the €60,000 given to promote the Eurovision chances of pop singer Kate Ryan in 2006, who failed to even make the final.



Zita Swoon is the first ever pop group to receive a government subsidy

Arts subsidies in figures

- 364 requests for funding
- 278 successful applications
- 11 advisory committees
- 45 organisations subsidised for the first time
- 15 lose their subsidy
- 200 jobs created as a result, according to the culture minister
- 33% of theatre bills paid for artist wages
- €2 million extra in indexation increase, not included in €10.5 million increase

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

80,000

free plastic sacks handed out by Bayer to vets and pharmacists to be passed on to dog owners, along with information on the health dangers of animal faeces. Belgium's dogs produce about 96,000 tonnes of poop a year – about the weight of a cruise ship.



€1.5 billion

lost every year in tourism income due to Brussels' failure to develop a profile as a city of culture, according to a study group of the Flemish liberal party Open-VLD.

28.9%

of Flemish people name shrimp as their favourite seafood, according to a study carried out for the European Seafood Exposition. Nearly one in three Flemings eats seafood once a week or more, compared to a national average of around one in four.

€600,000

cost of sending eight-strong military teams to accompany six Belgian ships which are due to pass through the pirate-infested waters of Somalia in May alone, according to proposals revealed in De Morgen. The decision to provide military cover for ships is still being discussed.

900

prisoners released early under electronic surveillance – which employs an ankle-bracelet to monitor a person's movements. The government aims to extend the system to cover 1,000 people, in an attempt to ease pressure on prisons.

€250

fine for late payment of insurance for non-medical care of the elderly. The Flemish Region has written off 60,000 such fines and the 13,000 people who have already paid the fine will be reimbursed. The government has decided the fines system is unwieldy and uneconomic.

€102 billion

fall in collective wealth in Belgium following the economic crisis that started last year. The figure comprises a loss of €90 billion in the value of savings and investments and an increase of €12 billion in debt.

700

trucks and three months' work to remove a pile of construction waste illegally dumped on three lots of farmland in Hoegaarden. The 17,500-tonne pile is five metres high and follows several years of dumping.

Australia signs war sites agreement

The governments of Flanders and Australia last week signed an agreement to work together on protecting cemeteries and historic sites from the First World War. The Australian authorities also agreed to work with Flanders in developing projects to give young people an insight into the history of the 1914-18 war. The agreement was signed by the Flemish minister president Kris Peeters and the Australian minister for veterans' affairs Alan Griffin.

More than 300,000 Australians fought in the First World War in the region around Ypres in



West Flanders. The Australian Government has pledged to spend almost €11 million to pay for the renovation of war cemeteries and monuments that commemorate the Australians that died in the battlefields of Europe.



Lieutenant Pascale Van Leeuwen last week became the first woman ever to command a Belgian Navy warship, as she took over the minesweeper Lobelia at a ceremony in Diest. The ship and its new captain returned to port after a mission in the North Sea dealing with suspected explosives that had become tangled in the nets of fishing boats; the next assignment is a minesweeping mission in the Baltic, followed by a visit to the United States and Canada. Women were first admitted to the Navy in the 1980s, and, although most crews now include female personnel, Lt Van Leeuwen is the first to take a command position. "An historic event," she said. "Even if it has come rather late."

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

The Brussels clockwork

When a top banker's wife recently asked for peper in a Brussels restaurant, the waiter promptly offered her some sheets of paper. Not only did he not understand the Dutch for pepper, he also failed to grasp exactly what language this customer spoke.

This incident may be trivial, but it is one that most Flemings recognise only too well. It illustrates the difficult relationship between the north of the country and its capital. There is the language issue, of course, but there is more. Flemings do not feel very welcome in Brussels. Admittedly, they are also not very fond of the city, which they associate not just with arrogant waiters but with overcrowding, dirty streets, hectic traffic and crime. And, when it comes to politics – yes, that's a mess, too.

Over the past decades, the Belgian state has been reformed a good few times. Brussels was never a priority in this process. In fact, its institutions were often constructed as a bit of an afterthought. The result? Brussels is one region with two communities (Dutch and French speaking) and a jumble of institutions.

Pascal Smet (Sp.a), a Flemish politician in the capital, started off his Brussels career by denouncing the institutional chaos. Yet last week he fell victim to exactly that.

Smet, who is Brussels minister for mobility, hopes to introduce a public system of rental bikes called Villo! based on a model that is successful in Paris and Barcelona. But the commune mayors put their foot down. They have not been consulted, they say, and they fear the system will not bring in the taxes they had hoped. There is also an electoral element: why let Smet claim this success, so close to the regional elections?

In Flanders people roll their eyes at such a story. Typical Brussels, is what they think. Brussels politicians, including most Flemish ones, do not agree. Brussels politics is indeed hard to understand, they admit. But you do not have to understand how a clock works to realise that it does, argues vice-minister-president Guy Vanhengel (Open VLD).

In this case, though, there is no ticking to be heard and no Villo! bicycles to be seen on the streets. Pascal Smet is tearing his hair out. And so is his fellow socialist, Patrick Janssens, mayor of Antwerp, who gave his own sound bite on the Brussels clockwork mechanism. "How can Antwerp ever become Barcelona when Brussels refuses to be Madrid?"



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AB-solutely Fabulous

A history of Brussels in one long-running concert hall

→ Continued from page 1

and safety issues (in the aftermath of the tragic fire at the Innovation department store in 1967); the last renovation took place in the mid-1990s. Yet it's still standing proud on the Anspachlaan in downtown Brussels.

The fact is, when your wall of fame includes, among thousands of others, Edith Piaf, Iggy Pop, Jacques Brel, Kraftwerk, David Bowie and Charles Aznavour, and you're still going strong, then you must be doing something right.

"The days when Brussels was regarded as a mere pit-stop – the phrase isn't mine! – between Amsterdam and Paris for touring artists are over", says Jari Demeulemeester, who was promoted from artistic coordinator to general manager in 1988. "We've always prided ourselves on the service and visibility we offer to artists and promoters and now, when a band or their tour manager wants to organise a concert in these parts, they often inquire about our availability first."

And you can't blame them. For a start, the location of the AB is almost too good to be true: within walking distance of the Grote Markt and the Central Station, and three tram stops away from both the South and North stations. And, adds press officer Kevin McMullan, "because headline acts usually finish at 22.30, this makes it really easy for the public to get home, even if they have to catch the last train out of town". All too aware of the scarcity of parking places in the centre, the AB people have also devised a car-pooling platform on their brilliant (and completely trilingual) website, which can make your life considerably easier if you live outside Brussels.

Then there's the venue itself. The main hall, conveniently known as "The Hall", boasts a standing capacity of 2,000, which can be downsized to 1,200 or 750 (in which case the event will be billed

as "AB Flex" or "AB Box") and can also be converted into an all-seating venue. The sound and lighting facilities are, unsurprisingly, state-of-the-art and contribute further to making the AB a must-play venue for any artist who is serious about their craft.

Upstairs there's "The Club", with a standing capacity of 250, which usually accommodates budding artists, both local and international. Finally, there's the highly refreshing "Music Village" concept: free gigs by lesser-known (mostly) Flemish artists, every Thursday lunchtime in the AB's café-restaurant.

If, like the Italian football team Juventus, the Ancienne Belgique is often likened to a venerable "Old Lady", there is nothing ancient about its approach to new technologies. Many sell-out concerts – the recent Bloc Party gig springs to mind – are streamed live on the venue's website (in collaboration with the artists and their record labels), and more and more acts play stripped-down, acoustic sets and give short interviews for the site's ABTV section. These impromptu performances take place in an upstairs dressing room rearranged as a makeshift studio, adding to the intimate feel of the occasion.

Best of all, perhaps, are the recording facilities. Any artist who plays at the AB has the opportunity to leave with a professional (40-track digital format) recording of their set, for a small fee. Some bands use this option simply to keep a souvenir of a memorable night, while others go whole hog, work on the individual tracks and release the finished article as a commercial product. Recent examples include The Hives, Queens of the Stone Age, Iggy Pop and Arno. "A lot of bands don't really think about it", explains McMullan, "until they see the whole list [of commercial releases recorded at the AB] on the wall; then they will ask:



© Cassandre Sturbois

"Ahem, about these recording facilities...?"

In a way, the AB is extremely lucky. Its location, for example, but also the constant financial support by the Flemish authorities. And maybe the Belgian public is a particularly discerning one.

At any rate, Demeulemeester proudly recalls the moment a famous American promoter told him: "If you make it at the AB, you'll make it, period". Above all, the AB's greatest strength lies in its ability to forge real partnerships, however short-lived, with its artists and to innovate while

remaining respectful of its unique heritage. One eye on the past, the other on the future, and all of this in three languages: welcome to Brussels. ♦

→ www.abconcerts.be



Jari Demeulemeester was promoted to general manager in 1988

© Cassandre Sturbois

From the AB files

- **Bruno Coquatrix**, the legendary French concert promoter, first worked as an intern at the AB alongside Georges Mathonet (Arthur's son) before founding L'Olympia in Paris in 1955. (Funny how the notoriously humble Parisians never mention this.)
- American acts **The White Stripes** and **The Black Eyed Peas** both made their Belgian debuts in the smaller "AB-Club", playing to 100-odd people.
- Liverpool indie darlings **Echo & The Bunnymen** have a soft spot for the AB, trying to finish each European tour there whenever possible.
- The final of **Humo's Rock Rally**, Flanders' most prestigious pop-rock talent trek, takes place every two years in the AB. Previous finalists include dEUS, The Black Box Revelation, Das Pop and Admiral Freebee.
- British band **Asian Dub Foundation** recorded their alternative soundtrack to Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* at the AB - in one take and in real time, while the film was being screened above them.
- Bands seeking to **get a gig at the AB** can send a demo to Ancienne Belgique, attn. Programming Service, Anspachlaan 110, 1000 Brussels. Please do not bombard them with phone calls or emails, however, for it won't help you one bit.

Vision of a city

Mechelen stares down a 450-year history as the seat of Catholicism and figures out where to go next

REBECCA BENOOT

This year marks the 450th anniversary of the archbishopric in Mechelen, an occasion the city is recognising by throwing a three-month cultural festival. Dubbed City Visions, the festival, which runs until 21 June, looks back at Mechelen's colourful history. But it also focuses on the future by shedding light on the numerous renovation projects in this marvellous little city that is often underrated by both tourists and locals alike.

Mechelen is located in Antwerp province, almost exactly between Brussels and Antwerp. With its many shops, pubs and restaurants, it has a contemporary – even cosmopolitan – air. But once you take a walk through the narrow streets along the river Dijle, past numerous churches and preserved Gothic architecture, you can't help but be overwhelmed by its spectacular past.

During a brief period in the early 16th century, Mechelen became the capital of the Low Countries. This short but ambitious period was very important to the city's heritage as it produced many of the now-treasured Renaissance buildings, along with works of art and the overall poetic atmosphere.

Its history has also made Mechelen, with a population of about 80,000, the proud owner of 389 listed buildings and no

fewer than four mentions on the list of UNESCO world heritage sites: the St Rumbold's Cathedral, the Belfry, the Small and Large Begijnhofs and, finally, the Ommegang parade held every 25 years to celebrate the arrival of Emperor Maximilian of Austria. (The next one is in 2013.)

During the past decade, many young families have moved into Mechelen, attracted by the cultural vibrancy mixed with a provincial, small-town feel, turing it (economically speaking) into one of the fastest-growing cities in Flanders today. To make Mechelen even more alluring, the city has launched various renovation projects – some completed and some still in the works. A few of these have earned the city prizes for groundbreaking architecture, green spaces – and even cleanliness.

The biggest and most ambitious project to date is the renovation of the area surrounding the station, a building of which the *Mechlinians* (as they call themselves in the local dialect) are particularly proud, considering that the Brussels-Mechelen connection was the first railway line on the European continent.

But the station has actually been an eyesore for a while now. According to residents, not only are there a lot of traffic issues, but the buildings are old (some abandoned), creating an unsafe

atmosphere and not the ideal first impression for tourists. By 2020, however, this area will be completely modernised and easily accessible for commuters and pedestrians. By emphasising its prime location near the Dijle river and adding a lot more greenery, the city council hopes to create a more appealing entry point to Mechelen.

Bring on the festival

City Visions is a sweeping celebration of Mechelen's past, present and future. Despite half a century of change, the city (and

many of its inhabitants) remains true to its Catholic roots. With City Visions, Mechelen wants to offer its views on the last 500 years of spirituality, creativity and legend and discuss how to creatively and realistically incorporate these traditions into a fast-evolving future.

In order to contemplate Mechelen's place in the world (and confirm its place in our hearts), the city will host numerous exhibitions, parades, city walks, theatre, film, music and a wealth of other festivities during the next three months.

The vibrant "Bar-o-droom" will be at the heart of the festivities. Located in the Interior & Design Department of the Catholic University Mechelen (KHM), it will serve as a meeting point for visitors and locals. Not only is it a chic bar, but it's also a stage for music, dance and the city's most visionary film programme to date.

To commemorate Mechelen's link with Catholicism, the major exhibition *Backlit Heaven* focuses on four-and-a-half centuries of faith in the Mechelen-Brussels archbishopric. Almost 300 works of art have been selected to portray the ongoing tension between popular devotion and religious authority, while at the same time trying to paint a clear picture of faith today. If you are looking for even more enlightenment, you can also follow the Backlit Walk that explores eight of Mechelen's beautiful churches, which contain several masterpieces by Rubens

and Van Dyck.

The internationally renowned MuHKA (Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp) has relocated to Mechelen for the duration of City Visions to host its *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. In five locations across the city, international artists try to answer an important question: does art serve a purpose in today's society? Through various transformations (material as well as spiritual), this exhibition introduces God to art and allows multiple visions of reality and of the future.

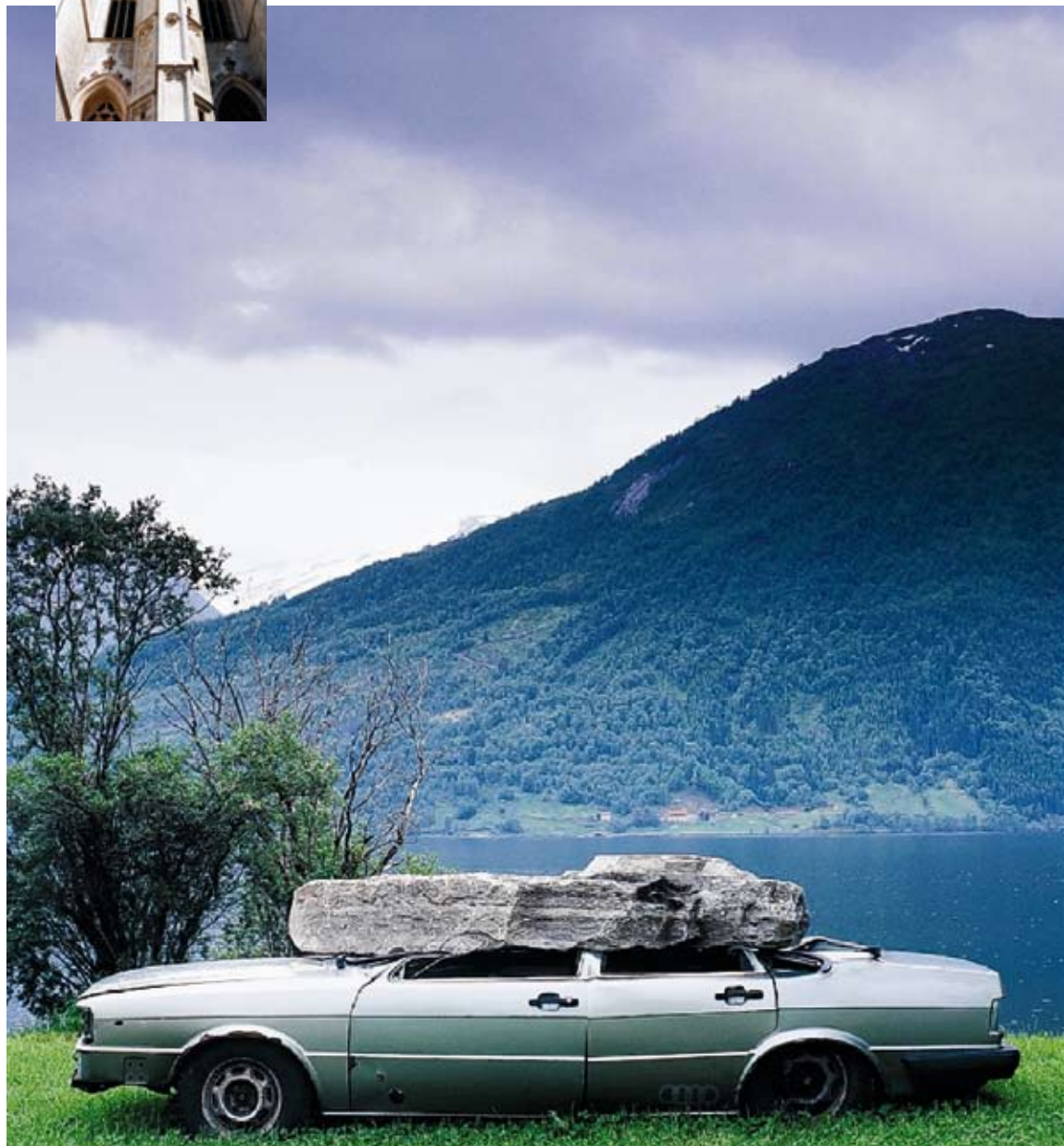
Contourlight is an atmospheric (and free!) evening trail that combines all the charms of Mechelen's historic centre with contemporary art lighting. Following the theme of past-present-future, international artists have conjured up a whole range of visions using every light source from neon to LED. Mixed with common streetlights, these installations lead you along the city's most prized locations.

But the absolute highlight of the festival is Mechelen's own St Rumbold's Tower. While climbing the 536 steps to the top, you are confronted with its unique history and the secrets behind the carillons. Ninety-seven metres above ground, you reach the sky walk that was installed for City Visions – offering a breathtaking view of Mechelen that extends to the Port of Antwerp and the Atomium in Brussels. ♦

➡ www.cityvisions.be



Climb the 536 steps of St Rumbold's for an unforgettable view



© Jimmie Durham



© Elisabeth Broekaert



© Frederic Van Overschelde

The devil on your shoulder: How does Mechelen incorporate its religious past with a contemporary cultural edge? That's the question at the heart of City Visions, which includes the exhibitions *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (top) and *Backlit Heaven* (above left)

Art cities and day trips only bright spot in tourism slump

Business trips and seaside visits fall, worse to come in 2009

The slump in the Flemish tourist industry that started at the end of last year is likely to continue throughout 2009, according to industry forecasts.

Growth in tourism in 2008 was only 0.7% as a result of the fall in bookings in November and December, holding the number of overnight stays down to 23 million for the year, Toerisme Vlaanderen (TV) said. The number of arrivals was in fact up 2.3%, pointing to a trend in which visitors come for shorter stays. However, among visitors from within Belgium, overnight stays were up just 1%. And TV pointed out that other destinations, such as Italy, France and Spain, performed much less well.

For the first 10 months of the year, there were 1.2 million nights booked in Flanders – 240,000 more than in the same period in 2007. In November and December, however, much of that gain was wiped out,

with a fall of 85,000 overnight stays compared to 2007. As well as Belgians themselves, the countries which supply the most tourists are the Netherlands (1.37 million), Britain (926,000) and Germany (659,000).

The coast suffered worst, with a fall of 6% in the number of hotel and camping nights booked. Apartment and house rentals are not included in TV's figures, but other sources suggest a decrease of around 6% in that sector. The number of people coming to the coast is falling less quickly than the number staying overnight, once again suggesting that habits are changing: people are coming just for the day more often, which may be bad for the hotel sector, but not so bad for the catering trade.

At the same time, cultural tourism taking in the Flemish "art cities" is holding its own. Contrary to the trend



Hotel stays and rentals at the coast were down by 6% in 2008

elsewhere, growth in overnight stays has been relatively strong in Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges, at 3.3%. The number of day visitors to those cities has also increased.

For 2009, Toerisme Vlaanderen foresees a continuation of the trends. The UN World Tourism Organisation has predicted negative growth for

2009 in Europe of between 2% and 3%, and TV confirms that forecast. "The first signals we are receiving are in line with expectations," a TV spokesperson said. "Business tourism looks like moving strongly backwards. Business hotels are having to work harder to stay afloat while leisure tourism is doing better." ♦

End of bundling ban in sight

The Belgian legal ban on product bundling – the practice whereby one product may only be obtained on purchase of another – is breathing its last after a decision last week by the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg that the ban breaches EU trade rules.

The ban has been in force for 70 years, but hit the headlines again last year when Apple launched its iPhone here, available only through mobile phone operator Mobistar. In other countries, sale of the iPhone goes hand-in-hand with the sale of a subscription plan, which usually results in the iPhone costing much less than the €500 officially charged.

The case was originally brought to Luxembourg by the motoring organisation VAB, which complained about an offer at Total gas stations of three weeks free breakdown assistance for every 25 litres of petrol bought. The VAB claimed the offer broke the law; the court ruled that the law is itself unlawful.

Enterprise minister Vincent Van Quickenborne, a strong supporter of scrapping the ban, immediately said he would see that the law is brought into line with European rules.

Not everyone is in favour of

abolishing the ban, however. Ivo Mechels of the consumer organisation Test-Aankoop pointed to disadvantages in the system where bundling is allowed. "In the Netherlands an iPhone cost only €80, easily six times cheaper than in Belgium. But whoever bought one was obliged to take out a subscription for €45 a month for at least two years," he said.

Examples of product bundling:

- Car dealer Cardoen offered a small car to every purchaser of a new, larger model.

- A man in the Netherlands offered a free aeroplane to whoever bought his hard-to-sell house in IJburg, east of Amsterdam.

- A free book given away with *Humo* and a free CD with *De Morgen* led to complaints from booksellers and record shops.

- The European Parliament protested at printer manufacturers who make their customers pay for expensive ink cartridges made for particular machines. No action was taken.

- Products which together form a whole are allowed to be bundled by the law. Examples have included trousers and a jacket forming a suit, kitchen cupboards and appliances, but not a tennis racket and tennis balls. ♦



The sale of the iPhone was the most recent case of the bundling ban in action

Criminals "use banking crisis as smokescreen"

Criminals are using the banking crisis as a smokescreen to cover up their illegal money-laundering activities, according to the head of the federal agency in charge of monitoring the financial sector. Jean-Claude Delepière, director-general of the Financial Intelligence Processing Unit (CFI), said that criminals have taken advantage of the increased number of account transactions caused by unease in the general public over the banking situation. The criminals have used this situation to cover up their own money-laundering.

Last year the unit received 15,554 notifications of suspect transactions from the various institutions that report financial

data. These were principally the banks, *bureaux de change* and customs authorities.

The number of notifications was 27% higher than in 2007, when it was also up by about a quarter on the previous year. But the large rise in notifications did not lead to an increase in the number of charges brought, Delepière said. "In many cases, there are several notifications relating to the same case".

In addition, many transactions that are reported turn out to be legal. Customs authorities must, according to a law of 2007, conduct an inquiry into any cross-border movement of more than €10,000 – but those are not necessarily criminal. ♦

JOB LOSSES THIS WEEK

420

at Bosch windscreen wipers factory in Tienen. The company blamed falling demand in the car market.

800

at temp agency USG People, which operates Unique and Start People. The losses will be across the Benelux and are blamed on a 22% drop in income.

111

at Philips' lamp factory at Turnhout, following on from 300 contract workers let go earlier this year and 264 jobs cut in December last year.



THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air freight • CMB

CMB, one of Antwerp's leading shipping groups, is beginning to reap the benefits from its diversification into air transport. Last year, it acquired ASL Aviation, the air freight activities of the French post office. CMB has subsequently transformed ASL's fleet of seven Boeing 737 aircraft to carry freight during the night and passengers on daytime flights.

Auto parts • Bosch

Bosch, the Tienen-based affiliate of the German equipment company, is to slash 420 jobs at its windshield wipers and car parts production unit. The move is a result of the poor performance of the automobile sector.

Auto testing • A-Katsatus

A-Katsatus, the Finnish automobile testing and control specialist, has finalised its acquisition of the Antwerp-based Bureau voor Technische Controle (BTC). The company has six testing facilities and two driving examination centres. The move, which follows an earlier deal signed in Limburg last year, gives the company a 25% share of the country's auto control and testing centres.

Biotech • Galapagos

The bio-technology company Galapagos has signed a research agreement with the US-based Merck pharmaceutical company to develop anti-inflammatory products. The deal is Galapagos' sixth in recent months signed with some of the world's leading pharma groups.

Construction • BESIX

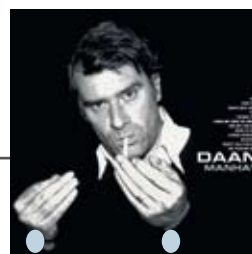
BESIX, one of the country's largest building groups (which generates up to 50% of its turnover in the Middle East) is confident that its existing construction programmes in Abu Dhabi and Qatar will more than compensate for the marked slowdown of its activities in Dubai.

Consultancy • Amaze

The British-owned technology and marketing consultancy Amaze has opened an office in Brussels, its first in continental Europe.

Property • sales

The Flanders property market showed surprising resilience last year, with prices dropping by only 1.1% on average compared to 2007. In addition, the number of deals fell by just 0.4%, according to the Federation of Notaries. West Flanders suffered most, due to a significant drop in the number of upmarket sales at the coast. In Brussels, property values increased 2.8%, while the number of sales contracts was down 7%. For the first quarter of this year, the federation claims that activity has already bounced back to pre-crisis levels.



Doubt is his religion

The new album *Manhay* shows a new, no-frills Daan

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Daan (born Stuyven, but he dropped his surname with his first solo outing 10 years ago) receives me in his studio in Elsene, which is loaded with instruments: keyboards, a grand piano and, most impressively, nearly 70 guitars, neatly arranged, filling almost two walls.

Thanks to albums like *Victory* and *The Player*, Daan, born near Leuven 40 years ago this autumn, has become famous for his electronic-laden pop songs. But his new outing *Manhay* marks a new departure.

Daan, lighting his first of many cigarettes: "At first I wanted to have something very pure: a bit of piano, my voice upfront and, depending on the songs, different instruments at the back of the mix. The complete opposite of what I used to do." He smiles: "I didn't succeed. Some of the songs are quite dense, but that's fine with me. Admittedly, I'm a bit afraid of recording a really intimate album, fearing it might end up too gloomy."

Having made his way through the Flemish music scene in a number of bands since the late 1980s (most notably Dead Man Ray, which went on indefinite hiatus in 2003), Daan's words and voice – sometimes low and smooth, other times electronically screechy – were already famous before he went completely solo.

Not only Daan's voice but also the lyrics are a different story altogether on *Manhay*, named after the hamlet in the Ardennes where the musician lives half the time, alternately with Brussels. "On the previous albums, the lyrics were the grated cheese on the spaghetti. Now they're the pasta itself." Since the lyrics were going to be more prominent, they should be more relevant, figured Daan. "Less word-play, more emotions," he says. "Simply stated: more personal."

And that was harder to achieve? "Yes. Yes." He laughs, but it's a lukewarm smile. "It's dreary, difficult and exhausting. Once I get going, it's okay, but it often takes me two days before I can launch myself into the writing process. But when it's finished, I feel liberated and ecstatic because I've been able to get things out of my system."

Things? No need to be vague here, since, for the first time, the themes of his songs are crystal clear. That doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with Daan's older lyrics, a



All confidence – on stage, that is: Daan tours throughout April and May

cocktail of puns, piercing irony, some surrealism and, at times, very persistent rhyming.

Listening to the new single "Exes", that last characteristic is still present: "A road's as good as all its exits", sings Daan. Let me guess, he can only fully engage himself in a relationship if he knows there's a way out?

"If I really was certain of myself, I wouldn't make music. I'm trying to create an ideal world"

The answer follows before I've ended my sentence. "Indeed. But that song's about more than that. For instance, I hate being a passenger in a car. Even if it's not necessary, I prefer driving my own car. It's a real drag being somewhere without having my car nearby. Or my bicycle, for that matter. I always need an escape plan." He hesitates, his lips curl into a subtle smile, and he continues: "I wouldn't call it pathological – more a healthy form of survival instinct. Sans toit ni loi."

But the obvious is also true.

"Nothing in life is as complex as a relationship; it can go wrong in thousand ways," he says. "Knowing that I will be able to escape, if necessary, helps me feel like the pressure is off and makes the relationship last longer."

Might be true, but he's singing in the same song: "Like a missile that ain't guided / I was following

nights stands."

But on a more serious note: "Some periods in my life, I had to keep myself from, uh, what you just quoted. But when I'm in a relationship, I can control my impulses perfectly. I'm not a destructive guy."

No? I ask in my purest innocent tone. He struggles to find his words and lands on his feet with a joke. Grasping for his cigarettes, he desperately cries: "I'm not destructive. Another cigarette! Quickly!"

Still, isn't his obvious *joie de vivre* hiding a destructive side? He ponders the question. "If so, [this destructiveness] is born out of anger for life's finiteness. But I find that an ultra-cynical trait. So instead of letting myself be intimidated by finite limits, I defy them. And that behaviour sometimes backfires."

Daan has the reputation for being arrogant. "I see perfectly why: my album covers are haughty, on stage I am presumptuous. It's the image I paint of myself." But on a one-on-one basis (and I've interviewed him more than my fair share over 20 years), he never strikes me as arrogant.

And, interestingly, in the single "Decisions", he reveals a completely opposite image: "I

don't like decisions / My doubt is my religion / Uncertainty my God".

"Do you really think it's a coincidence I'm trying to look self-assured? Well, it isn't! If I really was certain of myself, I wouldn't make music. I'm trying to create an ideal world, something that surmounts me."

That might be less the case on this album, he admits. "But guess what? I always thought it hilarious that people bought the caricature I was presenting. I remember the first shows, in 2004, when I dressed in a white suit, with sunglasses and one black glove. It contrasted immensely with my period in Dead Man Ray, when I sometimes played with my back to the audience. I was fascinated to discover that it could be done otherwise."

But I don't really get it: why wouldn't he make music if he were more self-confident? "Because then I wouldn't question, I guess, the state of things. If you perfectly know who you are, then there's no need to examine yourself. All creative impulses are born out of chaos and uncertainty. If you're self-assured, you'd better become a sportsman." ♦

➡ www.daan.be

Jazz meets classical

Jef Neve's concerto launches in Ghent

ALAN HOPE

Throughout musical history, from the Baroque period onwards at any rate, composers have been fascinated by the interplay between a single instrument and the orchestra, giving rise to the "concerto". The word means "working together", oddly because the main characteristic of the genre is that one of the instruments is not playing together with the rest. The soloist plays with the orchestra, but is not of the orchestra.

Because many composers were also virtuosi, or wanted to attract the attention of the virtuosi of the day, the concerto became a means for composers to showcase their own or others' talents. Some, like Schumann, declined to include vulgar virtuosity, but most, like Tchaikovsky and Liszt, saw the box-office benefits of including some pyrotechnics.

Jef Neve is a virtuoso pianist, but in the jazz world. Nevertheless, he's now composed a piano concerto which will premiere in De Bijloke in Ghent on 1 May, before being performed in Brussels the following day.

"It's something of a childhood dream of mine to write a concerto," he explains over the phone from his rehearsal room, where he's working on the piece before beginning rehearsals with Michel Tabachnik and the Brussels Philharmonic (Vlaams Radio Orkest). "I had classical training as well as jazz training at the Lemmens Institute [in Leuven]. I've always been a lover of piano concertos, and I even composed some short ones when I was 12 or 13. I've played in concert by Beethoven, Mozart, the Paganini Variations by Rachmaninov and George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue", which is a sort of concerto."

The inspiration to compose the new work, though, came from outside. About two years ago, De Bijloke

approached him about composing a concerto. "I thought it was a fantastic opportunity to do something I'm not usually busy with," he says.

De Bijloke has links with the VRO, and Michel Tabachnik leapt at chance to collaborate. I reached him at his hotel in Denmark, where he's been conducting the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra before returning to Brussels for rehearsals with Neve. "It's part of our mission to help to discover and to perform new Flemish music," he says. "We've played quite a few creations of works by Belgian composers. I didn't know Jef's work before, but I believe we should be open to different waves. I am familiar with work by Steve Reich and Philip Glass, for example."

Looking at the score, his first impression is that the work is written along "traditional" lines. Neve is able to explain further:

"The first movement is a sort of homage to all the composers who inspired me, like Beethoven and Rachmaninov, and even Tchaikovsky, in a way." It's written in conventional sonata form, he explains, with a statement of the first musical subject, development of that idea, the introduction of a conflicting or complementary subject, then recapitulation of the original theme.

"In the second movement, my musical language comes through, but it's very classic. There's little improvisation; every note is written down." The second movement of the classical concerto is normally a slow movement, and he adheres to that tradition. "Then the third movement is *con fuoco* – full of fire," he says.

"He's adapted his ideas so as to give the orchestra the maximum opportunity," notes Tabachnik.

"I've never been so nervous,"



© Alex Vanhee

Neve admits. "Jazz is what I do for enjoyment, it's not like work. I'm never stressed. But here I have the feeling I really need to deliver a performance. It's an enormous challenge that takes different sorts of preparation. So I've been studying the work for hours, and also relaxing, doing some sport and meditating a little."

It remains to be seen whether a classical crowd will appreciate the jazz man's work, and whether his jazz fans will like him against an orchestral setting. "I expect the public also to be open," Tabachnik declares uncompromisingly. "Most works by most composers never get a chance to be performed at all, especially when they require the massed forces

of an orchestra." That makes it even more of an occasion, he says.

"I hope the work will be interesting enough for people to be able to find enough of me in it," Neve says.

Incidentally, the main exception to the defining characteristic of the concerto explained at the top of this article was a Concerto for Orchestra by Béla Bartók, in which the orchestra is at one and the same time the soloist. Strange as the idea may seem, it has to be heard to understand the extent to which Bartók succeeded. As luck would have it, that's possible: Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, together with Wagner's overture to *Tristan und Isolde*, bracket Jef Neve's piano concerto on both evenings. ♦

Jef Neve and the Brussels Philharmonic

1 May, de Bijloke, Ghent
2 May, Flagey, Brussels

→ www.brusselsphilharmonic.be

CULTURE NEWS

Paul Huvenne, director of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, has been appointed to the governing board of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Prior to taking up his post in 1997, Dr Huvenne was director of the Rubens House in Antwerp and curated the main exhibition for the 1993 City Culture events.

Brussels Kaaithheater last week inaugurated its new long-awaited KaaiCafé, run by celebrity chef Lut De Clercq. The café intends to establish close links with agricultural producers in the nearby Pajottenland. De Clercq achieved worldwide renown cooking for rock royalty as the in-house chef at the Ancienne Belgique.

Panamarenko, the Antwerp-based artist and inventor, last week gave his name to a VLM aircraft at a ceremony at Antwerp airport in Deurne. The decision to name the Fokker 50 after Panamarenko was the result of a poll of readers of the magazine *Airliner World*.

Peter Goossens, chef of the celebrated Hof Van Cleve in Kruishoutem and scourge of contestants in the television show *Mijn Restaurant!* has been ranked in 26th place in the TOP 50 list of the world's best restaurants by *Restaurant* magazine. This is two places higher than last year and the only Belgian represented.

Hollywood wunderkind JJ Abrams has snapped up the big screen rights to the story behind the 2003 **Antwerp diamond heist**. JJ Abrams will produce and possibly direct the movie. It will be based on an article in this month's *Wired* magazine by Joshua Davis that reveals how a band of Italian diamond thieves broke through 10 layers of security under the Antwerp Diamond Center – including infrared heat detectors, Doppler radar, a magnetic field, a seismic sensor and a lock with 100 million possible combinations – and made off with at least \$100 million worth of loose diamonds, gold, jewellery, and other spoils. The crime was thought to have been carried out by Leonardo Notarbartolo, who was arrested in February 2003, but released from prison this month. Abrams, 42 is the creator of hit TV series *Alias* and *Lost*, and the director of *Mission: Impossible III* and this summer's hotly anticipated *Star Trek*.



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Defending the coast

It's Sea Week at the Flemish Coast, which means a lot of eco-friendly activities

DENZIL WALTON

Morecheeba must have visited the Flemish coast at some time. Their song "The Sea" could have been written in Blankenberge:

*"Flocking to the sea
Crowds of people wait for me
Sea gulls scavenge
Steal ice cream
Worries vanish
Within my dream"*

Plenty of people are certainly expected to be flocking to the sea between 24 April and 10 May, as it's Sea Week at the Flemish Coast. Yes, you're right, 17 days is a very long week. But that's one of the benefits of visiting the coast. Not only do your worries vanish; you lose track of time.

Sea Week is an annual event where attention is focused on the ecology of the coast, to help people understand that, while the coast is there to be enjoyed, it's still a unique and exceptionally fragile ecosystem. The sea, beach and dunes must be treated with respect and care to ensure that the coast remains a viable habitat for the animals and plants that make it their home, as well as for future generations of human visitors.

During the weekdays of Sea Week, the younger generations will be out in full force. Thousands of school children will participate in hundreds of educational workshops and projects.

For the rest of us, the weekends have been set apart. The busiest is expected to be the holiday weekend of 2-3 May, with a host of events for young and old organised in all of the coastal towns. De Panne, Bredene and De Haan are transformed into Sea Villages with vibrant information stands and maritime-related activities. Boat excursions are available from Blankenberge and Ostend. The fish market in Nieuwpoort opens its doors, as does a seashell exhibition in Bredene.

As the oldest and largest nature reserve on the Flemish coast, De Zwin is particularly busy, especially on 2 May with its Open Day. A marked footpath takes you through the reserve to over 20 stopping points. At each one there is something to see, do, eat, drink, or simply think about.

Activities for children include an environmental treasure hunt, checking out water bugs under a microscope, and a puppet show with an eco message.

You can buy products made from plants and herbs growing in De Zwin, such as Zwin tea, Zwin soap and Zwin hand cream, or sample local delicacies like apple beer.

For a more energetic day out, you can join a guided walk through the reserve or grab a seat at the bird observation post to see what waders you can identify through a telescope. You could equally check out the bats in the local bunker,

or even watch a demonstration by local sheep dogs. Numerous information stands are dotted all over the reserve, and experts are on hand to explain any questions you might have about the flora and fauna of the coast.

At the end of the day, you will probably be thinking of a meal involving fish. Some 34 restaurants along the seafront are offering a special Sea Week Menu, the objective of which is to promote sustainable seafood.

The sea is a marvellous source of food, but it's not inexhaustible. Sustainable fishing involves causing as little damage as possible to the environment and fish stocks, while taking into account the economic importance of the sea for the Flemish fishing industry. During Sea Week, the diner will be guided towards eating the right types of fish. Restaurant owners and chefs will be on hand to give advice and background information to the discerning fish-eater.

If you're not able to get to the coast and are wondering what's on the list of recommended seafood, it includes Alaska pollack with the Marine Stewardship Council label; North Sea pollack; sea bass from Nieuwpoort; herrings; sprats; sardines from the Netherlands or France (but not from the Mediterranean); shrimps with the Purus label; and mussels cultivated off the Flemish coast.



Sea for yourself

Saturday 2 May

Zeebrugge, 9.00 Nature walk around Heist Bay

Westende, from noon onwards

Follow the shrimp fishermen on horseback

Koksijde, 14.30

Sand, sea, wind and chalk. All of which adds up to wind painting

Oostduinkerke, all afternoon Horse & cart rides along the beach

Nieuwpoort, 14.30 Guided walk in the IJzermonding nature reserve

Ostend, 19.00 Tango lessons on the promenade

Sunday 3 May

Middelkerke, 6.00 An early morning nature walk in the dunes

Oostende, all morning An opportunity to collect litter along the tide line

Bredene, all morning Seashell exhibition, Turkeyenhof museum

Blankenberge, at intervals throughout the day

A sea trip on the shrimping boat Jacqueline-Denise

De Haan, 14.00 Looking for amphibians in the Zandpanne nature reserve

De Panne, 14.00 Donkey rides for children along the beach

→ www.weekvandezee.be

Tyre tracks

DEVE MEYER



Small-town Flanders

Tongeren

Tongeren is a well-preserved hilltop town in Limburg province and the oldest settlement in Belgium. This was the area of Ambiorix, who won celebrated victories against Julius Caesar in the first century BC, and is commemorated by a splendid statue on the square in front of Tongeren's famous basilica.

This ride starts at the train station, following Stationsweg towards the town centre. At the intersection, cross the road and turn left onto the bike path, descending along the restored city walls that enclose the old town.

At the base of the hill is a worn brick city gate, the 14th-century Morenpoort. Pass underneath the arch and turn left onto the quiet bike path that runs inside the walls. A modest canal where swans drift is lined with restored buildings and small flower gardens - a tempting spot for a rest.

At the intersection with the main road, turn left. Pass the mini golf on your right and the basketball courts on your left. Looking back, you get the first good view of Tongeren; perched on top of the hill, the basilica tower rises above the tiled roofs.

Follow the signs for path 116, which runs along the canal and passes through a residential area, eventually coming to a hippodrome. Horses and jockeys are often training here. Switch to path

117, and you eventually return to the hippodrome along a small canal.

This residential area mixes modern and traditional styles, with futuristic houses dotted among the classic red Flemish roofs. Then it's back to Flemish countryside on cycle path 128.

Now follow the signs past several farms and take path 129 to climb up to a ridge. The fields spread below you on either side, with a beautiful view of Tongeren opening up on the right. Here you gain a sense of space that can be hard to find in the flatter areas of Flanders.

The path now descends among a cluster of houses, passing a small, restored 13th-century church. Take path 107 reach a busy road, and then turn left to get back to the quiet country lanes. Now follow routes 107 to 111 and then 112, passing through more farmland and up a steep climb to the (aptly named!) town of Berg (hill).

Beyond Berg, the route becomes a dirt road, wending through the close moorland of the De Kevie nature reserve,

a far cry from the expansive hilltops passed earlier. Bird calls echo as the path runs along below an arcade of trees.

Pass under the railway line and back into the residential area, again following path 116. On returning to the intersection with the basketball courts, retrace your earlier route, with the courts on the right and the mini golf to the left.

Follow the path back along the city walls. You can either return uphill to the train station or follow signs to the centre to enjoy a beer on one of the café terraces next to the basilica.

Distance:

18 kilometers for the loop

Difficulty:

Moderate. Tongeren is on a hill, and the ride climbs and descends around it

Time:

A little over an hour



Galerie Trouvailles in Antwerp attracts shoppers with taste (left); Version Originale in Brussels is a place to drop off last season's clothes (below left); Maasmechelen Village makes bargain shopping seem upscale

Cheap chic

Outlet shopping takes a turn for the luxurious

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Don't think for a second that true fashion lovers will give up on their favourite designers just because there's a recession.

In Flanders, fashionistas are still showing up at the numerous sample sales thrown by fashion agencies and Belgian designers. They are prepared to stand in line for hours, strip down to their underwear in front of everyone to try on a dress and carry bundles of cash with them to pay for the discounted clothing.

If you are among the, say, less adventurous bargain hunters, there are other ways to shop designer, and they are infinitely more luxurious.

Welcome to the chic outlet world

Desirée Bollier is the mother of

a phenomenon: boutique outlet shopping. Outlet malls have long been known for their name-brands at discount prices and for being located a bit off the beaten path. High-end designers have traditionally been absent from what they consider a low-class shopping affair.

After gaining experience in luxury fashion retail at Laura Ashley and Ralph Lauren, Bollier became the CEO of Value Retail. This British-based company specialises in the development and operation of high-end outlet villages.

The first one was opened in 1995, in Bicester near Oxford, and is now a standard against which all other outlet villages are measured. It houses an interesting mix of British and international brands, such as Alexander McQueen, Matthew Williamson and Valentino.

Flanders has its own outlet at Maasmechelen Village, where the offer is not yet on the level of Bicester Village, but is steadily improving. Because of its strategic location in eastern Limburg province, Maasmechelen also lures shoppers from the Netherlands and Germany.

"Because we have to cater to three different countries, this location is a very complex and rich one," says Bollier. "It's somewhat of a melting pot between different cultures." Belgian brands are already well represented, with names like Essentiel, Scapa, Chine and Rue Blanche, though Bollier expresses her wish to attract high-end designers like Dries Van Noten and Véronique Branquinho.

"We offer our shoppers the luxury of not having to trade down during this difficult period," Bollier says in trying to explain the success of

designer-oriented outlet villages. "In good times, we're nice to have; in bad times, we're a must-have. Our business is somewhat contracyclical, but when the economy was thriving, we were already doing well. And now, during the crisis, we're still doing well."

Maasmechelen Village might be the only outlet centre in Flanders, but it is not the only one attracting Flemish shoppers. Close to the southern border of the Netherlands, the MacArthurGlen group opened up Designer Outlet Roermond, and in Roosendaal you'll find the Rosada Factory Outlet. Both are also conceived as villages, where brands can rent shops to sell their stock from past seasons.

And, finally, designers are coming around. In fact, in recent years, the attitude towards outlets has changed dramatically. "Brands used to dump their stuff in remote areas, but today there are no more remote areas because the consumer travels extensively," Bollier explains. "Labels had to figure out a new and elegant way to dispose of excess stock, and that's how they came to us. Today, it's part of their business strategy."

Still, it's a strategy that is keen on preserving the high-end image of the brand: last season's items might be discounted, but they are housed in the lush surroundings of an outlet boutique.

Outlets and the city

Next to the new outlet villages in remoter areas, independent outlet boutiques are popping up in bigger cities. In Brussels, Version Originale is located near shopping hotspot Avenue Louise, where many expensive brands have their flagship stores.

Version Originale has the same allure of an exclusive boutique, but offers nearly new second-hand clothes and excess stock instead of high-priced collections. Vintage Chanel jewellery is showcased next to Gucci sunglasses, while in the racks you'll find the likes of Dries Van Noten and Ann Demeulemeester.

Owner Véronique made a smart

choice in this location: "Women who shop at the nearby expensive boutiques come here to drop off last season's items they've worn once or twice," she says. "When they get money for those, they are ready to go shopping again!"

This way, Version Originale keeps the fashion cycle alive by offering fashionistas on a budget the chance to buy designer clothes, while helping those with expensive taste fund their shopping sprees. "It's kind of like recycling," Véronique says.

It also proves that outlet boutiques in the vicinity of regular boutiques don't pose a threat. Miguel Dheedene of Antwerp boutique Verso opened Galerie Trouvailles in the Nationalestraat, just a few blocks away from his original shop. "It was important to me for the outlet to be in the same style and environment as Verso," he says. "But the clientele at Verso wants the new collections right at the beginning of the season, while Galerie Trouvailles attracts people with less money, but equally good taste."

The popularity of outlet boutiques – and the way in which they are now accepted as equal to "normal" boutiques – is part of a process that has less to do with the financial crisis than with a new mentality, according to Véronique. "For years, consumers have been buying throw-away [low quality] clothes and have been pushed to buy new stuff all the time," she says. "Right now, people realise they have to consume differently – by buying quality."

The message is clear: instead of hurrying off to H&M or Zara, pay a visit to one of these boutiques. The luxurious experience and service are free. ♦

➔ www.maasmechelenvillage.be

➔ www.version-originale.be

Outlet shopping online

Discount shopping for designer clothing has never been this easy. Natalie Massenet, the founder of designer web shop Net-a-Porter.com, has recently launched TheOutnet.com, which carries last season's styles from Marc Jacobs, Rick Owens and Chloé, among many others. At PiuStyle.com, meanwhile, you have to be invited to enter the private sales of D&G, Versace or Cavalli. The membership fee of €15 outweighs the advantages, though, since discounts can go up to 80%!

➔ www.theoutnet.com

➔ www.piustyle.com



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Toots Thielemans

ALAN HOPE

We cannot promise that, by the time you read this, there will still be tickets available. But if there are, waste no time in booking. On 1 May, international Labour Day, Toots Thielemans will perform, as is his custom, in the Zuiderkroon in Antwerp.

Toots – real name Jean-Baptiste Frédéric Isidor – is Belgium's most revered living musician, and certainly the most famous ever to have lived here for so long.

Toots was born in 1922 – he'll be 87 the day this paper comes out – just when Louis Armstrong was going from New Orleans to Chicago to join King Oliver's band, when the hits of the day included "Toot Toot Tootsie Goodbye" and "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans". Toots grew up in the Marollen in Brussels, where his parents ran a café. That's where he was first introduced to music, by the regular accordionist who played there. Such was the boy's fascination with the instrument that his father gave him one and bought him lessons.

The harmonica, which is a distant cousin of the accordion, had been around since about 1857, but it didn't become a feature of popular

music until about the time of the Second World War. Toots became interested in the sound from films featuring French bandleader Ray Ventura.

As a back-up, Toots also took up the guitar (inspired by fellow Belgian Django Reinhardt) and played it in Paris with the likes of Sidney Bechet, while also touring with Flemish singer Bobbejaan Schoepen, then at the peak of his fame.

Toots' biggest hit was "Bluesette", which featured him playing guitar and whistling. He was in fact, a professional whistler, in music as well as television commercials. One of America's most famous commercial jingles of all time was the Old Spice after shave tune – whistled by Toots.

But his name was made, if you don't already know, as a harmonica player – a discipline in which he did not so much push the boundaries as create them. The sound we associate with the instrument is practically his own. Iconic harmonica tunes like the *Midnight Cowboy* theme and "Moon River" (from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*) were played by him.

From live performances with Benny Goodman to Charlie Parker's All-Stars to the Boston Pops, and recordings with Ella Fitzgerald, Quincy Jones and Paul Simon, there is no great jazz or swing band or musician that Toots didn't play with over a 65-year career.

He's now a Baron, the highest honour this country can award, and just about the only one he didn't have. This year he was named Jazz Master by the National Endowment for the Arts in the US, but he goes on, performing continuously. Doctors say playing the harmonica is good for the lungs. They couldn't ask for a better poster boy.

1 May, 20.00

Zuiderkroon, Vlaamse Kaai 81 Antwerp

→ www.zuiderkroon.be



MORE JAZZ THIS WEEK

Boo Boo Davis → Muziekodroom, Hasselt

Mahé Parker → The Music Village, Brussels

Bai Kamara Jr → L'Archiduc, Brussels



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 29 Hagen Quartett with Lukas Hagen and Rainer Schmidt, violin; Veronika Hagen, viola; Clemens Hagen, cello: Beethoven **MAY 2** Budapest Festival Orchestra conducted by Iván Fischer, with Hilary Hahn, violin: Dvorák, Mozart, Rossini **MAY 5** Jan Michiels, piano: Ligeti **MAY 6** Isabelle Faust, violin; Alexander Melnikov, piano: Mendelssohn, Schubert, Szymanowski, Fauré **MAY 7** Cédric Pescia, piano: Couperin, Debussy, Messiaen, Schumann

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be

MAY 2 20.00 Duo Labèque: Debussy, Schubert, Satie, Ravel
MAY 7 20.00 Ensemble Explorations: Schubert, Boccherini

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

MAY 5 20.00 De Munt Symphony Orchestra conducted by Michael Schönwandt: Nielsen, Dvorak
MAY 6 20.00 Radu Lupu, piano: Beethoven and Schubert piano sonatas
MAY 7 20.00 deFilharmonie conducted by Jaap van Zweden, with Rudolf Buchbinder, piano: Mozart, Mahler

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be

MAY 6 20.30 Cardamome Trio: classical, jazz and world

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

MAY 2 20.15 Jef Neve, piano with Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachnik: Wagner's Tristan und Isolde overture, Neve's Concerto for Piano (world premiere), Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra
MAY 7 20.15 Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Bo Holten, with Luc Tooten, cello; Stéphane De May, piano: Previn, Nees, Fauré, Janacek, more

Protestantse Kapel

Museumplein 2; 02.507.82.00
MAY 4 20.00 Christophe Rousset, harpsichord: Rameau, Duphy, Pancrace Royer, Balbastre

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
MAY 4-9 15.00/20.00 Queen Elisabeth Violin Competition 2009: first round

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78/0800.13.700, www.debijloke.be

MAY 1 20.15 Jef Neve, piano with Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachnik: Wagner's Tristan und Isolde overture, Neve's Concerto for piano (world premiere), Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra

Hoeilaart

Maison de la Musique

Edgar Sohiestraat 33; 02.657.96.52, maisondelamusique@skynet.be
APR 30 20.00 Queen Elisabeth Music College soloists: Hrachya Avanesyan, violin; Feng Dan Fang and Dana Protopopescu, piano: Bach



Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be

Until MAY 10 15.00/20.00 Samson and Delilah by Saint-Saëns with the Flanders Opera Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tomáš Netopil and choir conducted by Yannis Pouspourikas, staged by Omri Nitzan and Amir Nizar Zuabi

Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be

APR 29 Little England: Scenes from a Small Island, opera scenes with Prima la Musica conducted by Leo Hussain, with soloists from the Queen Elisabeth College of Music

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15, www.cirque-royal.org

Until APR 28 20.00 Lucia di Lammermoor by Donizetti, with De Munt Symphony Orchestra conducted by Julian Reynolds and choirs conducted by Piers Maxim; staged by Guy Joosten



Antwerp

Arenberg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
APR 29 20.15 Flat Earth Society

Borgerhout

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
MAY 4-5 20.30 Peter Baierlein Quartet

Brussels

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78

APR 29 20.30 Pettersen/Ploug/Badenhorst Trio **APR 30** 20.30 The Bundle

L'Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52, www.archiduc.net

MAY 2 17.00 Bai Kamara Jr with Valve

MAY 3 21.00 Bernard/Emer/Lackner/Verbruggen

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; www.sazznjazz.be

Concerts at 20.30:

APR 30 LM3 + Jam session **MAY 2** Coco Royal **MAY 6** Alegria **MAY 7** Jam Session

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be

Concerts at 22.00:

APR 29 Chamaquiando, salsa **MAY 1-2** Robin Verheyen Quartet **MAY 4** Master Session **MAY 5** Big Band

MAY 6 Caribe con K - Los Soneros del Barrio **MAY 7** Teun Verbruggen Quartet

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Concerts at 20.30:

APR 29 Yves Vermeire Trio + guest Ben Dams **APR 30** Mahé Parker

MAY 1-2 Clare Foster & the New Look Trio **MAY 5** Jazz from Scotland: Ian Millar, saxophones; Dominic Spencer, piano **MAY 6** Ooh-bop-sh'bam' **MAY 7** Cristina Rosal & Paula Santos, fado

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be

APR 29 20.00 Robin Verheyen International Quartet with Bill Carrothers

MAY 5 20.00 The Magic ID & DelVitaGroup with Eric Vloeimans Maasmechelen

Kasteel Vilain XIII

Dreef 148; 089.75.57.61

MAY 6 20.00 Muhai Richard Abrams, piano



Antwerp

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060

MAY 2 20.30 Axelle Red

MAY 7 20.30 Beyoncé

Stadsschouwburg

Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900, www.musichall.be

MAY 1-3 20.00 Clouseau

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00, www.trixonline.be

APR 29 20.00 Bert Gabriels **MAY 1** 13.00 Hip hop programme with DJ Graazhoppa + Gus + Krewcial **MAY 3** 20.00 Andre Williams **MAY 5** 20.00 Phosphorescent + Krakow

Borgerhout

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be

APR 29 20.30 Whip & Geoff Farina

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 30 Les Cowboys Fringants

MAY 3 Sioen **MAY 4** Liam Finn

+ Eleni Mandell Solange **MAY 5** Themselves + De Predikanten.

Peaches + Drums of Death **MAY 6** Tom Russell

Belle Vue Café

Henegouwenkaai 43; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be

MAY 2 20.15 Whip + Will Johnson

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

APR 29 20.00 Paolo Conte

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89

MAY 2 23.00 Resident night: DJ Pierre

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,

www.cirque-royal.org

MAY 7 20.00 Grails + Woven Hand

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32, www.botanique.be

APR 30 20.00 Mud Flow. The Big Pink. Karin Clercq + Liben

MAY 6 20.00 Clare & The Reasons + Broadcast

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34, www.recyclart.be

MAY 2 23.00 After Party with TV Buddhas, Mochipet Live + DJ, Cobra Killer

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be

APR 30 21.30 Erno

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be

Doors open at 19.30:

MAY 1 20.00 Surge of Fury +

Arkangel + E Town Concrete

You Night Club

Duquesnoystraat 18; 02.639.14.00, www.leyou.be

MAY 1 We Love Heaven: music by Milo & Nick Seltzer **MAY 2** French Kiss special: Gregg's Birthday, music by Joss & Mister Cosmic **MAY 3** Gay & Friendly Tea Dance: music by Greg & Simon Lesaint **MAY 7** You'nivrsity: music by Milo & Fred Hush

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be

APR 30 20.00 Sioen

MAY 2 20.00 Per Gessle

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be

APR 29 22.00 François Breut **APR 30** 20.30 Volta (concert/performance, Nacht van de arbeid) **MAY 1** 20.00

Great Lake Swimmers + Marissa Nadler + Alaska in Winter **MAY 6**

22.00 Styrofoam **MAY 7** 21.30 Eleni Mandell

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be

MAY 7 20.00 Boo Boo Davis

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be

APR 29 20.00 Flying Lotus + The

Gaslamp Killer + Samiyan

Leuven

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03

APR 29 20.00 Yevgueni

MAY 5 20.00 Jasper Erkens



Brussels

La Soupape

A De Wittestraat 26; 02.649.58.88

APR 30 21.00 Photis Ionatos

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be

APR 30 21.30 Erno



Bruges

Cultuurcentrum

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be

MAY 6 20.00 Deutsche Angst - Lamentatio - Extraction, solo works choreographed by Marc Vanrunxt



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

MAY 6-9 20.00 Societas Raffaello Sanzio in Inferno, based on Dante's La Divina Commedia (in Dutch)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be

APR 29 20.30 Broccoli Théâtre in

Gembloux (in Dutch)

Bruges

Magdalenazaal

Magdalenastraat 27; 050.44.30.60

APR 29 15.00 Kopergieterij &

Dschungel Wien in Love, staged by

Eva Bal and Ives Thuwis (six and up; in Dutch)

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Until MAY 27 Mort de chien (Het haar van de hond) by Hugo Claus, staged by Philippe Sireuil (in French with Dutch surtitles)

Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis Broekstraat 107; 070.660.601, www.ticketnet.be

MAY 5-16 20.00 Accent Productions in Someone Who'll Watch Over Me by Frank McGuinness, directed by Liz Merrill (in English)

La Maison Blanche

Sint-Jobsesteenweg 606; atc.

MAY 5-9 20.00 American Theatre Company in Riverside Drive by Woody Allen, directed by Christine Marchand, plus other drama, music and improv comedy (in English)



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

Until MAY 3 Architectuur als grens (Architecture as border), works by Brussels-based architects Kersten Geers and David Van Severen

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70

Until JUNE 20 Sergei Eisenstein: The Mexican Drawings, 1930s sketches by the master Russian filmmaker during his stay in Mexico

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00

Until JUNE 7 Erwin Olaf: EyeCandy, retrospective of the Dutch

photographer's cutting-edge work

Until JUNE 7 Yang Fudong: East of

Que Village, video installation

Until SEP 13 Photography in

Belgium during the Interbellum

Modemuseum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70, www.momu.be

Until AUG 16 Paper Fashion, the use of paper and related materials in modern and contemporary fashion

and 1960s paper dresses from the

Atopos collection

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09

Until MAY 10 Camiel Van Breedam: Collages 2002-2008, recent works on paper by the contemporary Belgian

artist

Until JUNE 14 Goya, Redon, Ensor:

Grotesque paintings and drawings

Zilvermuseum Sterckshof

Cornelissenlaan; 03.360.52.52

Until JUNE 21 Van Kempen, van

zilvermid tot fabrikant (from

Silversmith to Manufacturer),

silverware by the Dutch designers

since the 19th century

Classical & New Music

Bruges

Arentshuis

Dijver 16; 050.44.87.11

Until SEP 27 The Museum of

Museums 2009, installation by

contemporary Flemish artist Johan

van Geluwe

Groeningemuseum

Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43

Until JULY 21 Charles the Bold:

The Splendour of Burgundy, Flemish

Primitive paintings, armour,

tapestries, manuscripts, fine gold and

silverware that were stolen from the

Burgundian court in the 15th century

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Brussels**Atomium**

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, www.atomium.be

Until MAY 24 Bi-Polar: From South to North, current research and expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.stripmuseum.be

Until MAY 17 Czechriculum Vitae, Czech history and legends in comic strips by contemporary Czech artists
Until JUNE 7 20 years of Manga in Europe, Japanese comic strips

Belvue Museum

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25, www.belvue.be

Until MAY 31 Boy or Girl...Destiny for a Lifetime? Belgium 1830-2000, the evolution of perceptions of masculinity and femininity in Belgium

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33

Until MAY 30 Bibliotheca Durantiana: Bookbinding by Modern and Contemporary Artists

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Until MAY 3 A4 - Louise Herlemont: Sans object, installations and photographs

Until MAY 17 Monumental installation by contemporary Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan (part of Turin Festival)

Until MAY 17 United Artists of Italy, 150 portraits of Italian artists (part of Turin Festival)

Until MAY 24 From Van Dyck to Bellotto: Splendour at the Court of Savoy, paintings from Turin's Galleria Sabauda, with works by Flemish masters, including Brueghel, Rubens

and Van Dyck (part of Turin Festival)

Until JUNE 30 N.i.c.h.e. 360

architekten, scale models by Jan

Mannaers and Stephane Beel

Until SEP 13 Portraits of Artists: 80 Years of the Centre for Fine Arts in Pictures, portraits of Victor Horta, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Magritte, Braque and Léger, among others

CCNOA

Blvd Barthélémy 5; 02.502.69.12, www.ccnoa.org

Until JUNE 14 Terence Haggerty: wall painting by the British artist

Until MAY 24 Eric Tillinhast, installation

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50

Until JUNE 21 Carmen Hoyos-Hoy: Virevoltante/Wervelend, installation

Espace Architecture La Cambre

Flageyplein 19 ; 02.642.24.50

Until MAY 31 Tel Aviv's White City, early 20th-century architecture in the Israeli capital, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten

IJzerenkruisstraat 99; 02.552.40.43

Until JUNE 13 The World of Roger Raveel, paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

Folklore Museum

Eikstraat 19; 02.279.64.36

Until JUNE 21 BrusselSe Orgels, didactic exhibition on organs

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80, www.fondationpouurlarchitecture.be

Until OCT 18 De tijd van de boetiek

(The Time of the Boutique), window shopping from 1800 to today

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70

Until JUNE 6 Dorothée Van Biesen, textiles

Until JUNE 6 Romina Remmo, paintings

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71;

02.515.64.22

Until MAY 30 Paul Delvaux, a selection of works on paper by the 20th-century Belgian artist (1897-1994)

Until MAY 30 L'Oeil de la rue, drawings and prints by Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen (1859-1923)

Until MAY 30 Jacques Guilmot, sculptures by the recently deceased Belgian artist

Plan B

Kazernestraat 37

Until MAY 9 Aan Tafel/A table, 21 artists' interpretations on the title in preparation for the Zinneke parade 2010

Royal Army Museum

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33

Until MAY 3 Tribute to Pierre de Caters, first Belgian aviator

Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11

Until AUG 30 Vegetal City, how to reconcile city and nature, the vision for a sustainable future by Belgian architect Luc Schuiten

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11, www.fine-arts-museum.be

Until JUNE 30 Brussels Comics:

Frames of Reference, 20 contemporary Belgian comic strip artists and works by those who have influenced them

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 25; 02.502.44.24

Until MAY 14 MicroMega, the Art of Wonder: works by contemporary Italian artists

Stadhuis

Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50

Until MAY 10 DeKadence: The Bohemian Lands 1880-1914, paintings, drawings, sculptures and photographs

Deurle**Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens**

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23

Until MAY 31 Wade Guyton,

monochrome images on canvas by

the contemporary American artist

Until MAY 31 Peter Buggenhouts, sculptures and installations by the Belgian artist

Until MAY 31 00 Picture This! Francesco Gennari, installation by the Italian artist

Ghent**Design Museum**

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99

Until JUNE 1 Connections, a selection of 100 textile objects from the 15th century to today

Until JUNE 1 Cool Dozen+, 13 chairs and 13 textile objects by Finnish designers

Until JUNE 1 Henry van de Velde, book designs by the Belgian architect (1863-1957)

Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark;

09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be

Until JUNE 21 Emile Claus and Rural Life, paintings by the Belgian Impressionist (1849-1924) shown alongside works by his contemporaries, including Alfred William Finch, Léon Frederic, Constant Permeke, Constantin Meunier and Henry Van de Velde

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele**Kunst (SMAK)**

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be

Until AUG 2 Dara Birnbaum retrospective: The Dark Matter of Media Light, video installations redefining what it can mean to be a woman in a fast-evolving world

Until AUG 23 Beyond The Picturesque, interpretations of landscape in contemporary art, with works by Marcel Berlangier, Damien De Lepeleire and Jan Kempenaers, among others

Until MAY 31 Kunst Nu (Art Now): Where I'm Likely to Find It, installation by Satoru Eguchi

Knokke**Hotel Approach**

Kustlaan 172; 0496.62.50.00,

Until MAY 24 Kunst ontmoet Kunst 14 (Art Meets Art 14): group show of paintings and sculpture
Knokke-Duinbergen

Lagunahal

Krommedijk 57; 050.63.04.30, www.fotofestival.be

Until JUNE 7 Still/Moving/Still, slide projection of photographs by Belgian and international photographers
Knokke-Heist

Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord

Meerlaan 32; 050.63.04.30, www.fotofestival.be

Until JUNE 7 International Fotofestival, local and international photography show and competition, plus installations on the theme of the relationship between still and moving images

Machelen-Zulte**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00

Until JUNE 14 Objectschilderijen, works by various artists
Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)

Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75, www.speelgoedmuseum.be

Until SEP 30 Cowboys and Indians

Ypres**Ikob**

Loten 3; 087.56.01.10

Until JUNE 21 Angebot + Nachfrage: Bring It All Home, paintings by contemporary Dutch artist Loek Groothans and installations by 20th-century Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers



Beaufort 03 - Art by the Sea: Third edition of the contemporary art triennial

Until OCT 4 at Ostend's Kunstmuseum aan Zee, plus outdoor installations along the Flemish coast
070.22.50.05, www.beaufort03.be

Brussels**Brussels 2009 BD Comic Strip:**

Exhibitions, events and installations
Until DEC 31 in several Brussels museums and other venues
www.brusselscomics.com

Festival Court Metrage: Short film festival with more than 250 films from Belgian and international filmmakers

APR 30-MAY 10 at Cinéma Vendôme and other venues
www.courtmetrage.be

May Day: celebrations with free concerts and entertainment for all the family,
MAY 1 13.00-20.00 at Rouppeplein and Stalingradlaan
www.abvvbrussel.be

Psstival: Amateur arts festival organised by Zinnema with a week of activities including the Erfgoeddag celebration (Heritage Day) on 26 April

Until MAY 3 at venues across brussels
www.wak.be

Royal Palace Greenhouses: annual opening of the royal greenhouses to the public with many rare plants and flowers on display

Until MAY 10 on Koninklijke Parklaan, Laeken
www.monarchie.be

Sri Lankan Seafood Festival:

Taste the island's specialities, which combine the curries of India with the coconut-infused cuisine of South-East Asia

APR 30 at the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, Wolvengracht
02.227.31.70, brussels@radissonsas.com

Groot-Bijgaarden

Spring in Groot-Bijgaarden: Floral exhibition with 300 varieties of tulips and other spring blooms

Until MAY 7 at the park and castle of Groot-Bijgaarden, Isabelle Van Beverenstraat 5
0494.47.72.56, www.kasteelgrootbijgaarden.be

Hasselt

SuperStories: Contemporary art, fashion and design triennial with more than 100 works by Belgian and international artists and designers
Until MAY 10 across Hasselt
011.29.59.77, www.superstories.be

Martino Gamper: The British furniture designer discusses his work
MAY 5 20.00 at Z33, Zuivelmarkt 33
04.221.09.09; www.z33.be
Mechelen

City Visions: Large-scale programme of events, exhibitions and projects devoted to the question of spirituality in contemporary society and the future of the city in recognition of the 450th anniversary of the seat of the archbishopric
Until JUNE 21 across Mechelen
www.stadsvisionen.be, 070.22.28.00

Ostend**European Brass Band**

Championships: National champion brass bands compete for the European Championship. The contest closes with a gala concert by the European Youth Brass Band, the Belgian Brass Ensemble and last year's winner, the Cory Band from Wales

CAFE
SPOTLIGHT

EMMA DAVIS

Le Tour
du MondeEdith Cavellstraat 35
Brussels

Movie-star style

I'm perched on the Chesterfield sofa with a gin and tonic in my hand brought to me on a silver platter. Frank Sinatra is crooning in the background, tucked in corners are relics from the past, and I feel like I'm on an old-fashioned movie set.

This is Le Tour du Monde en 80 jours (Around the World in 80 Days), opened last summer in a manor house in Ukkel and steeped in colonial style. You'd think it had been here since the early 1900s. It's like an expats clubhouse, and I do wonder if Phileas Fogg might drop by.

Aside from the Chesterfields, there are divans of Indian origin, rich tapestries, sculptures and finely carved, grand wooden doors. I knew I should have thrown on a long evening dress and put my date in a tux.

"My inspiration came from Victorian Britain, the British Empire," says owner Joël Buchet. "I was also thinking about the old Hollywood movies, characters like Sherlock Holmes and novels like those by Jules Verne."

The bar, which is open evenings until 1.00 Tuesday to Saturday, mostly attracts the 30- to 50-year range. It's not reserved for diners from the attached restaurant, although the menu there is equally appealing with dishes from around the world.

Tour du Monde is perfect for an after-dinner digestive, when you will be served by a kilted man with a beard and wild hair.

If you're a lightweight like me, you'll need more than 80 days to get through the menu of cocktails alone. There are more than 100 on the menu. The selection of single malt whiskeys and rums will see me through at least another few weeks after that.

I've booked my sofa for the foreseeable future.

→ www.letdm.be

DON'T MISS

Docville

2-9 May
Across Leuven

If you are already into documentaries, you've probably heard of this excellent festival. If not, this is the event that can convince you. Now in its fifth year, Docville culls the best of documentary film from across the world, whether about the global financial crisis, beat-generation poets or the value of hair in India. This year's attention-grabbers include *Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden* from director Morgan Spurlock (of *Super Size Me* fame), who set out on a journey across the Middle East to find the man the American military cannot, and *The End of Poverty*, which offers fascinating answers to simple questions about how the world's riches can be so unevenly divided.

→ www.docville.be



FACE OF FLANDERS

DEREK BLYTH AND ALISTAIR MACLEAN

Deportees

The 18,522 faces of Jews and gypsies deported to Auschwitz

Some weeks ago, on the park railings facing the royal palace in Brussels, the BELvue Museum displayed an extraordinary collection of many hundred faces from the past. Remarkably, none had been defaced. Most of the photographs were taken in the 1930s and were attached to identity cards, yet here they were each blown up to poster size. They all looked ordinary, yet they fascinated. You could try to imagine what they were planning to do on the day the photos were taken. Some men wore high collars, others bow ties; some women had their best hats on, others looked washed out. Nearly all looked as if they were city dwellers.

These ordinary people had been rounded up in 1943 and kept in the Dossin barracks in Mechelen. From here they would be transported to Auschwitz. Half of the 70,000 Jews living in this country would make that journey. Those pictured at the Warandepark were to be aboard the Transport XX train.

But three young men had other ideas: on 19 April 1943 Youra Livchitz, Robert Maistriau and Jean Franklemon cycled the 40-odd kilometres from Brussels to Boortmeerbeek, situated on a bend in the rail track, a short distance from Mechelen. Here they swung a red lantern in the twilight to stop the train and managed to free 231 of the 1,631 penned in the cattle wagons. Over 100 avoided recapture. Dozens made their way to the station at Boortmeerbeek to join the morning rush of commuters travelling into Brussels.

The regulars recognised strangers and had no doubt heard about the transport train being held up. These ordinary people acted extraordinarily as one: when soldiers came on to the platform, they moved without a word being spoken to form a shield to hide the fugitives, thus allowing them to return to Brussels and, in many cases, safety. A monument on the platform commemorates that morning.

Looking at the faces along the park, you couldn't help wondering: "Did you escape?" or "Did they shoot you on the tracks?" The photos almost speak to you in reply.

Youra Livchitz was captured, tortured and shot; and Jean Franklemon was seized and sent to Sachsenhausen, survived and died in 1977. Robert Maistriau



was also caught, transported but survived – he died last year in Brussels.

The story of the only attack to free people on a Second World War transport train is wonderfully told by Marion Schreiber in her book, *Silent Rebels*. The Dossin barracks in Mechelen now houses the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance.

From Boortmeerbeek station you can follow a marked trail to reach the spot where Youra and his friends stopped Transport XX.

The Mechelen museum has now completed a 1,531-page, four-volume study that provides a unique chronicle of the deportations. The result of 14 years of painstaking research by the museum's research staff, *Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942-44* offers an account of the 28 separate train convoys that carried Jews (and gypsies) to Auschwitz camp. Two of the four volumes are filled entirely with photographs of the victims gathered from various sources,

mostly Belgian identity cards. There are 18,522 faces in all, covering all ages from the very young to the old and frail.

The researchers didn't manage to track down all the faces that passed through Mechelen barracks. About one quarter of the names are without photographs – mostly small children who had no identity card. The final volume fills in the gaps by listing all the Mechelen deportees – some 25,259 names in total.

The statistics are deeply sobering. Out of the 25,259 who left Mechelen by train, about two-thirds were killed in the gas chambers as soon as they reached Auschwitz. Others died later, and just 1,223 people – or less than one train load – survived the war.

Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942-44, is on sale at the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance, €170. Flemish culture minister Bert Anciaux has placed a copy in every Flemish library.

→ www.cicb.be



TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



golfen →

Saturday morning usually means time with the newspaper and its supplements. The headlines guide you as you flick through; the good ones should pull you up short. Well, the writer of this headline should feel proud: **Golfen zonder kleine d** – Playing golf without a small d. I immediately thought, "But there's no d in golf!"

By the time I had worked the headline out, I was into the article. It describes the efforts to open golf up in Flanders to a wider public through reasonable membership and green fees.

You can try your hand at golf on 10 May. Welcome to Planet Golf, organised at 31 clubs, offers you a free tryout and one month of lessons for €100. And if you do take up the sport, you will be one of quite a small number: only 31,500 golfers are registered in Flanders. Here the sport is still regarded by many as **een sport voor de rijke oude man die in een "koninklijke" club speelt** – a sport for the rich old man who plays in a "royal" club.

This is reflected in the number of public courses: one! Golf Puyenbroeck in Wachetebeke outside Ghent has nine holes and is the perfect place to start for those who are intimidated by grander courses. The logic for public courses is simple: **De overheid heeft openbare zwembaden; waarom geen golf terrein?** – The authorities have

public swimming pools; why not a golf course?

You might have expected more public courses in Flanders. After all, we are all being encouraged to **sportelen** – do a little bit of sport, which golf lends itself to perfectly.

Part of the trouble is that the Flemish authorities do not recognise golf as **een topsport**, which affects subsidies to clubs and players with potential. In fact, at present it is only classified as **een recreatiesport**; next year this will be upgraded to an **omnisport**, which still seems odd if you come from the home of golf as I do. Also, golf requires space, and in Flanders that is at a premium. Therefore, permits for new courses are hard to get.

Oh yes, and the headline, **Golfen zonder kleine d?** Mr De Decker is different from Mr de Decker: the small d tells you that the Mr de Decker is **van adel** – from the aristocracy or has been ennobled. So the event on 10 May is intended to make the ordinary Mr De Decker feel welcome at the tee.

The same spelling rule applies to Mr Van Achter and Mr van Achter. But you don't need to be too reverential to a Dutchman called van Achter: in the Netherlands they don't make this distinction. Talk about minding your pis and qis!

→ www.golfvlaanderen.be

The last word →→→

Straight talk

"The Flemish government must continue to invest in good communications with the citizen. Too many government services and employees don't realise how difficult and incomprehensible the government's affairs are for the ordinary citizen." Flemish ombudsman Paul Arteel in his latest annual report

Stilted Stilton

"The books are not at all literary, in fact they're cliché-riddled. I read them myself and they're no good. The only thing is that children like them." Ghent University researcher Céline Bleuzy on the success of the Geronimo Stilton craze sweeping Flanders

Training tots

"The method is more expensive and requires more effort, but the children are trained in only a few days." Spokesperson for an Antwerp University team that has developed a musical nappy to help children become potty-trained in five days

Hitler hunter

"The members of Hitler's family are ordinary people like you and me. Both outwardly and inwardly there's no longer any resemblance. And nobody has a moustache any more." Marc Vermeeren from Ravels near Antwerp, who tracked down 40 relatives of Adolf Hitler for a new book