

Windfall for Leuven 7

The European Investment Bank has for the first time granted funds to health care in Belgium with a €325 million gift to the University Hospital of Leuven. The cancer, maternity and paediatric departments will all benefit



Recreating 9

It's the time of year when the provincial family recreation parks come alive again, with free walking trails and zoos, plus low fees for swimming pools and row boats. The first in our five-part series takes a look in Flemish Brabant



Seeing stars 10

Flanders is veritably bursting with Michelin stars, the standard bearer of culinary excellence. C-Jean in Ghent is one such; the young chef tells us how he got – and keeps – his star



Cobblestone heroism



On Easter Sunday, cycling madness will descend upon Flanders, amid hundreds of thousands of fans

ANJA OTTE

The sound of helicopters hovering above. That to me is the sound of the Ronde van Vlaanderen, or Tour of Flanders. Being from south-east Flanders, where the annual cycle race from Bruges to Meerbeke enters its decisive phase, hearing these rotors always brings butterflies to my stomach because it's the first sign of the riders approaching.

Like many people, this reminds me of my childhood, when every family gathering seemed to include watching one or other bicycle race.

This sentimental attachment to the Tour of Flanders stretches far beyond my family and the area of Oudenaarde, Geraardsbergen, Brakel and Zottegem. It is something millions of Flemish people, of all ages, can relate to. With the exception of some mountain stages in the Tour of France, nowhere else do so many people turn up to see cyclists live.

In the past decade, people from abroad have also discovered the charm of the Tour of Flanders. "One-fifth of the participants in the amateur Tour, which takes place the day before the real event, come from abroad. The tour has become a monument, not just for the Flemish, but for the entire world. That is why we are taking steps to get it recognised by Unesco as Immaterial World Heritage. Apparently we stand a good chance," says Rik Vanwallegghem.

Vanwallegghem, who was a cycling reporter for two decades and has written a dozen books on the subject, is the director of the Tour of Flanders Centre in Oudenaarde, south of Ghent, a visitors' centre that includes a museum, temporary exhibitions, a brasserie and a shop. With plenty of cycling maps, information and even showers on hand, it makes the perfect starting point for cycling enthusiasts.

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Cardiologists foot the bill for last-chance procedure

Valve replacement technique is not covered by Belgian insurance

ALAN HOPE

A group of 13 cardiologists at Middelheim hospital in Antwerp paid €640,000 out of their own pockets for heart-valve replacements for 32 heart patients because the procedure is experimental, not covered by health insurance and only has a slight chance of success.

Narrowing, or stenosis, of the aortic valve is one of the most common heart problems faced by older people, with an estimated 4% of those aged over 65 affected. The solution is replacement of the valve, requiring open-heart surgery.

For the patients at Middelheim, that was no longer an option, given their age and condition. Instead, the surgeons decided to implant the so-called percutaneous aortic valve (PAV), which is brought into the heart through an artery after being introduced through a simple puncture in an artery in the groin.

➡ continued on page 3

Bleeding in the street? €250, please

A woman in Aalst who left behind a bloody spot on the ground after a cycling accident has been sent a bill by the municipal insurer – because the fire brigade had to be called out to hose her blood from the roadway.

Georgette Van Den Bossche and her husband Jozef Uyttersprot, both in their 70s, were setting out to cycle along the Dender river in August last year, when Van Den Bossche skidded on cobblestones and fell, striking her head on the ground. She lost consciousness and, bleeding heavily, was taken to hospital. She sustained two fractured fingers as well as cuts and bruises and remained in hospital for eight days. During that time, the Aalst fire brigade turned up to

clean up the roadway, a job taking an estimated 20 minutes. Last week, Georgette received a bill from Ethias, the municipal insurer, for €250.

"They're making a mountain out of a molehill," Uyttersprot said. "If they'd told me the road needed to be cleaned, I'd have taken my handkerchief and mopped up the blood. They know nothing of humanity or feelings; everything comes down to procedure."

The couple are considering taking legal advice to fight the payment order. "But then, on the other hand, I think I might as well pay," says Uyttersprot. "Then we can put it behind us."





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News in brief

Six suspected members of the **Kurdish separatist organisation PKK** were released last week from custody by a Brussels court. The five men and one woman were among eight people arrested in raids across Belgium on 4 March. They were accused of extorting money from Kurdish-owned businesses and recruiting young people for terrorist training camps. The PKK is listed as a terrorist organisation by the EU and the UN. Two other suspects remain in custody.

The intelligence services last year notified justice minister Stefaan De Clerck that they had two members of the federal **parliament under surveillance**, the minister has revealed. State security has responsibility for terrorism, counter-espionage, dangerous sects and ideological extremism. According to De Clerck, the surveillance involved the private activities of two members, whose names have not been revealed.

Two men posing as buyers held up an **Antwerp jeweller at gunpoint** last week, stealing a single diamond worth €230,000. The attack is likely to increase anxiety in the diamond district, following assurances given by the interior minister and the city authorities that they would work to improve security in the area. Earlier this month, a diamond dealer was held with his family for 18 hours until he handed over stones worth an estimated €4.5 million. The incidents are not thought to be related.

Half of all owners of houses or apartments sell or rent their properties without having the required **energy performance certificate (EPC)**, it was revealed last week. The EPC has been required since 2008 for house sales and since last year for rentals. Drawn up by a recognised expert, it provides an energy profile of the property. In spot-checks on 2,568 owners by the Flemish Energy Agency, 1,208 could not provide a valid EPC. Only 72 of the owners in question were sanctioned, receiving a fine of €500.

Motorists whose vehicles have been **damaged by potholes** have lodged 569 claims for damages with the Flemish government in the first two months of this year alone. In 2009, 853 claims were made, and the government paid out €313,000. "The Flemish region needs to get busy on devel-

Wildlife invaders banned



© Pierre Fobani

Twenty exotic species – eight plants, eight mammals, two fish, one amphibian and one bird – will be banned by the federal government from October because they represent a threat to native wildlife and habitats.

The dangers of the grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) are well known: the beast decimates young trees and other plants and takes over the habitat of the native red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*). Others are less famous: Reeves' Muntjac (*Muntiacus reevesi*) is, like the Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*), a handsome, doe-eyed creature. But they both destroy trees by eating away their bark, leaving them exposed to disease.

The American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) has a body up to 15 centimetres in length, with another 25cm in the legs. He is a member of the *Ranidae* family of so-called true frogs. But he also carries the chytrid fungus, which does him no harm at all but which is fatal to other amphibians. And while his legs are considered a delicacy in the southern states of the US, he has a voracious appetite of his own: bullfrogs have been known to consume bats, birds, other frogs and small rodents – anything, in fact, that will fit into his capacious mouth.

On 1 October these and other animals will be illegal in Belgium, and any discovered will be killed and the carcass destroyed. The list also includes a number of plants, such as the South American water primrose (*Ludwigia grandiflora*) and the South African sour fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*), which were introduced as exotic species at garden centres, but which have now moved into the wild where they are considered invasive weeds.

The list in full:

Mammals Raccoon dog, American mink, Grey squirrel, Reeves' Muntjac, Thai squirrel, Pallas' squirrel, Sika deer, Coypu

Amphibian Bullfrog

Fish Round goby, Chinese sleeper

Bird African sacred ibis

Plants Canadian waterweed, Water primrose, Parrot feather, Sour fig, Egeria, New Zealand pigmyweed, South American water primrose, Water milfoil

oping more efficient management of the roads," said parliamentarian Liesbeth Homans, whose question to public works minister Hilde Crevits brought the figures to light. "The Region is now paying double: once to settle damages claims and once more to fix the roads."

Open-VLD party leader Sven Gatz plans to set up a **Belgian Beer Club** for members of parliament who have an interest in the nation's favourite tipple. "I sometimes get the feeling we take the richness, the quality and the diversity of our beers for granted,"

Gatz said. "But in an increasingly global economy, competition with other beer-producing countries is getting tougher." Gatz already has the cooperation of the Federation of Belgian Brewers and has called on his fellow members of parliament to show their support.

The national rail authority NMBS has launched a special website to offer **rail information** to users of internet-enabled phones. The site, m.nmbs.be, offers timetables and a route planner, as well as news about promotions, all in four languages. The service is free.

FLANDERS TODAY

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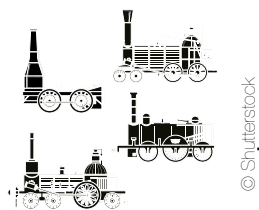
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Train celebration cancelled

The rail authority NMBS has cancelled plans to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the first Belgian passenger train in May, as a mark of respect for the victims of the Buizingen train crash. The first Belgian train ran from Brussels to Mechelen



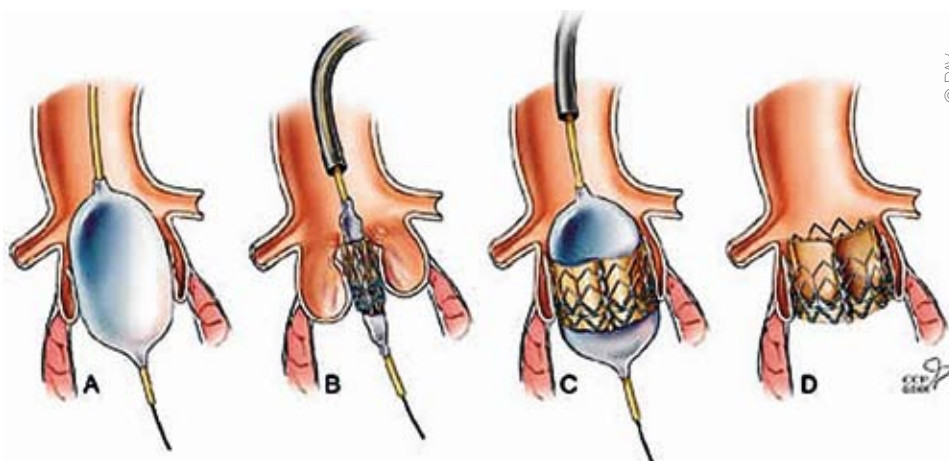
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“We can’t send people away to die”

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The normal valve used in open heart surgery that is reimbursed by the government costs between €1,700 and €2,000, whereas the PAV costs €20,000. In the rest of Europe, the cost would be covered by national insurance schemes, but in Belgium (and the US) it is not. The federal Knowledge Centre for Health Care (KCE) considers the treatment unproven: in France, nearly one in four patients died within six months of the procedure, a spokesman said, and one in eight within a month. In the case of the Middelheim patients, the PAV was a last resort, doctors admitted.

“It’s only logical that we should pay for valves ourselves sometimes,” commented Middelheim cardiologist Glenn Van Langenhove. “Not everyone has that much money, and we can hardly send people away to die.” ♦



The valve is introduced through the femoral artery to the heart, where a balloon is inflated (A) to open up the aorta. The new valve is then expanded (B) and set in place (C), where it can take over from the old valve and keep the aorta open (D)

© PAV

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Spirit of openness

Many Flemish people find it difficult to love their capital, partly because of an aversion to multi-cultural city life, partly because they remember the times when Brussels treated the Flemish as second-class citizens. These days, though, the roles are somewhat reversed, with Brussels standing a real risk of becoming impoverished.

The Flemish government sticks to the rule that it should provide services such as schools, child care, social and cultural provisions for one-third of the population of Brussels. This reflects a spirit of openness: the provisions are not just there for “ethnic” Flemish (they make up less than one-third of the population of Brussels), but for anyone who wishes to make use of them. The idea behind this is that it might result in a more positive attitude towards the Flemish and the Dutch language in general.

This “one-third rule” has brought great successes, such as the Ancienne Belgique, Brussels’ greatest rock concert hall. Another success story is Dutch-language education. The Flemish schools in Brussels are increasingly popular because of the quality of the education and the fact that it is the best way to learn Dutch at an early age – knowing Dutch being a prerequisite for many jobs. The Flemish schools in Brussels now welcome children of every background, to the point that pupils who speak Dutch at home have become a minority.

This spirit of openness requires a lot of money, though, at a time when the Flemish government has to tighten its belt. So when the news came that Brussels will need another 23,000 school places by 2015, minister for education Pascal Smet (sp.a) reacted that Flanders might not keep up at the same rate. Extra school capacity, Smet said, is “first and foremost the responsibility of the French-speaking community. Should we really finance the education of children whose parents do not have Dutch as their second, third or even fourth language?”

Now that is a tricky one. In Flanders many people would answer “no” to this. But then again, Flemish policy has worked in the past. The Flemish, in Brussels and elsewhere, are no longer looked down upon. Students who have gone through the Dutch-language education system are better off linguistically than those who went to French-language schools. The open spirit, in other words, may be just what Brussels needs at this moment.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



Last week the **Youth Research Platform** released the results of a survey on the attitudes of young people in Flanders.

17

the ideal age for first sexual contact, according to a large majority. The perfect age for entering the workplace is 22, leaving home 23, moving in with someone 24, getting married 25, having a first child 26, and retiring at 60

20%

never read magazines, and even more never read newspapers. 10% of those aged 26 to 30 never watch TV

70%

have committed a crime, in most cases illegal downloading and fare-dodging on public transport

84%

are a member of a youth, sports or hobby club

2.5%

have at some time had suicidal thoughts

1 in 5

of those under 18 is in a relationship. For those over 18, the number goes up to 2 in 3

60%

of those aged 22 to 25 are still living at home, compared to 17% of those aged 26 to 30. Boys tend to stay on at Hotel Parents longer than girls

→ www.jeugdonderzoekplatform.be

Fears over Post Office closures

Concerns have been expressed that the closure of post offices in Brussels could make it difficult for Dutch speakers. According to Ben Weyts, federal member of parliament for the Flemish nationalist party N-VA, replacing genuine post offices with the new PostPunten will take away the bilingual nature of the service.

The Post Office closed 25 of its 60 post offices in Brussels last year, and this year plans to close another 13. At the same time, they are introducing 76 new PostPunten, which provide a range of basic services and are located within other premises, such as supermarkets, motorway service areas and hotel lobbies.

While official post offices in Brussels are obliged to provide services in both languages, the staff of PostPunten are employed by private businesses, not a state-owned enterprise. According to Inge Vervotte, minister for state enterprises, the companies engaged to run PostPunten have to ensure they operate bilingually. But, according to Weyts – and confirmed by a straw poll carried out last week by *De Standaard* – that’s not always the case.

In one PostPunt close to the federal parliament, the owner was unable to speak Dutch and had to be helped out by another customer. A similar situation occurred in a supermarket in the European Parliament area. In a third attempt, the owner of the premises, unable to reply in Dutch, decided to speak only English.

“We’re losing the bilingual character of our state enterprises,” Weyts said. “You can’t even send your children to the post office now unless they speak both languages.” ♦



© De Post

EIB grants €325 million to Leuven

The funding will pay for a new intensive care facility and psychiatry centre

SAFFINA RANA

The Catholic University of Leuven and the University Hospital of Leuven is set to receive €325 million from the European Investment Bank (EIB) to build a centre of medical excellence at its Gasthuisberg campus. This is the first time the EIB has invested in health care in Belgium.

The loan will enable the hospital to bring together activities currently dispersed between several locations, create new departments and install the latest medical technology to provide acute and specialist hospital care and teaching and research facilities all at one site. As well as benefiting patients, EIB President Philippe Maystadt said the new hub “will act as a magnet site for third parties and satellite projects in innovative sectors.”

The first €40 million phase of the loan agreed in Leuven earlier this month will go towards the construction of a new 32,000-square-metre intensive care and critical services department, extending the number of the hospital’s operating theatres and dialysis facilities.

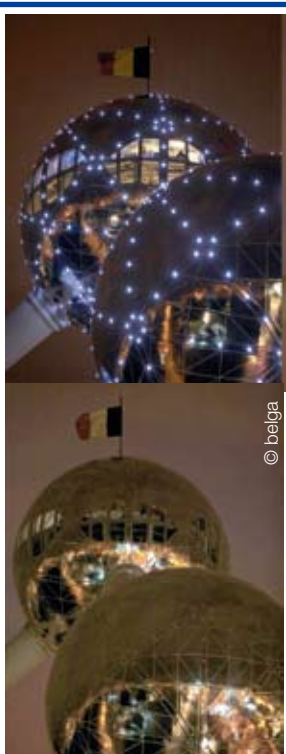
A new psychiatry centre with specialised

diagnosis and treatment facilities is also in the pipeline, as are a child psychology department and a school for hospitalised children. The existing cancer department will be expanded, as will the maternity and paediatric departments. The addition of new laboratories, a teaching auditorium and a nursery for staff will complete an extensive renovation of the existing research facilities.

The Pellenberg campus will be transformed to provide medium- and long-term rehabilitation while the university hospital campuses around the old town will offer residential care once their current activities have been re-housed in Gasthuisberg.

There are also plans to renovate the outpatient department, mortuary and hospital transportation tunnels. Work has already started to provide underground parking for up to 1,500 vehicles. ♦

→ www.uzleuven.be



© belga

Before and after photos of the Atomium in Brussels, which shut off its lights last Saturday to mark Earth Hour 2010, an event organised by WWF. Across the country 750,000 families turned out the lights for an hour in support of actions to fight climate change. More than 300 towns and municipalities took part, together with 671 businesses, including Samsung and Kinepolis. WWF Belgium called the response “a gigantic success”. Earth Hour was also marked in cities across the world and at monuments, including the pyramids, the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin and Trafalgar Square in London.

BAUNAT

Unveiling Inner Beauty



FLANDERS TODAY



Baunat, in collaboration with Flanders Today, offers you a revealing and fascinating tour of Antwerp's diamond jewellery district. You will get to know Antwerp as a world centre of diamond trading via a guided tour and learn everything about diamonds in the newly renovated diamond museum.

At the Baunat showroom, you will have an exclusive view on the "making of" process of high quality diamond jewellery. While tasting Antwerp's finest chocolates and a glass of Champagne, you can discover the exclusive handmade collections of Baunat. Furthermore, Baunat offers you a 5% discount coupon that can be used on all of our collections (valid for 1 year).

Date: Sunday 25 April 2010

Time: 14:00 to 17:30

Limited capacity

To sign up please send an email to info@baunat.com with subject «diamond tour» and mention your name and contact details.

Cost-cutting panic or investments in human capital?

In times like these, where we have to do more with less, there are two types of managers. **Those who cut costs** across the board, and **those who even now choose to continue to invest** prudently. Which type are you? The financial crisis and the uncertain economic situation are confronting managers with new challenges, but all too often they are also driving them to take decisions that are infused with panic and doom-and-gloom. But the ones who are forward-thinking and keep to their own course don't slam on the brakes – instead, they invest in the future.

Knowledge determines your competitive power

An organisation that wants to maintain and strengthen its competitive position in the global economy must be powered by a well-oiled knowledge engine. Your workforce is your greatest capital and lifelong learning is an absolute necessity. The acquired knowledge flows back into your company and your knowledge capital grows larger and larger, increasing your competitiveness. This will keep you competitive in the rapidly changing economic context. We call this 'learning with impact'.

Investing in training: costs versus benefits

Too often, training is still regarded as a cost instead of an investment. However, companies that view their personnel policy from a strategic standpoint continue – even when the economy becomes a serious challenge – to invest in training programmes for their most strategic employees. Investing in talent and training now guarantees you a significant jump on the competition when the economy gets going again.

Vlerick, your partner in tailor-made training programmes

Those who have participated in a Vlerick training programme are undoubtedly better prepared than other employees to take on today's challenges. Via in-company programmes – focused on the development of individual employees as well as on organisational development – Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School offers you a collaborative project fully tailored to your needs. Thanks to in-depth knowledge of both local and international economic environments and years of

experience in training management talent, the School can develop a specially adapted management training programme for every organisation, in each phase of its development, targeting the most diverse aspects of its business.

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Cobblestone heroism

The Tour of Flanders is a social event more than a sports event for most spectators

→ continued from page 1

The renovated “reality museum”, hosted in person by Freddy Martens, one of Flanders’ many cycling heroes, is a trip down memory lane for those in the know, and a good introduction to just what the tour mania is all about for everyone else. A short movie shows the tour from start to finish, including all the clichés: cycling heroes (often local boys), cobblestoned roads and surprisingly steep hills, the sound of motorbikes hooting to let the riders pass between hordes of spectators. The museum also has cycling memorabilia, like jerseys, trophies and bicycles, of course. Visitors can make their own front page of *Het Nieuwsblad*, with themselves as victors beating Tom Boonen and Peter Van Petegem, two former Flemish winners. Racing bikes let you experience the effect on the body of riding hard over cobblestones, and you can also try and keep up with Peter Van Petegem on one of the notorious hills. Some parts of the museum are specifically aimed at children, such as why women athletes can never beat Tom Boonen and just how much energy it takes to finish the Tour of Flanders (no less than 18 plates of pasta, apparently). “Like the Tour itself, we try not to get stuck in nostalgia,” Vanwalleghem explains. “We want to be a modern museum.”

Sexing it up

So what is it that makes this race different from all others? “In Flanders, cycling is almost like a religion, and the Tour of Flanders is like celebrating high mass,” says Vanwalleghem. “It is a popular event, in every sense of the word. It transports people to a different dimension for a day, away from everyday worries.”

The Tour of Flanders is tied into social life as much as – or more than – into sports. “Like all great sports events, be it the American Superbowl or a Saudi camel race, the Tour of Flanders is founded in history,” continues Vanwalleghem. “It’s in our genes.”

“In Flanders, cycling is almost like a religion, and the Tour of Flanders is high mass”

Moreover, side events also preoccupy the Flemish during the Tour of Flanders. “There are window-dressing competitions; children make drawings about the race in school; politicians are eager to be seen at the tour, and cycling jargon has seeped into our language,” says Vanwalleghem.

While the interest in casual cycling dwindled to the elderly for a while, in the past 20 years it has become trendy again. “In the 1980s, one fellow journalist could not believe that I reported on cycling, what with having a university degree and all,” says Vanwalleghem with a smile. “The Americans have changed all that. Greg Lemond and Lance Armstrong brought in big money and a new look. Suddenly there were flashy helmets and sunglasses – even the bikes became sexier.”

The bike gods

Then there is heroism. In Flanders, we love our Flandriens. “Flandriens used to denote almost illiterate riders, with enormous strength. Now, it describes a



The Flemish Quick Step team's Stijn Devolder works his way up the punishing Wall of Geraardsbergen, about 16 kilometres from the finish line in Meerbeke, a suburb of Ninove. Devolder went on to win the 2009 race, hanging onto the title he won in 2008

style of riding: always on the offensive, with no hiding or cowardice,” Vanwalleghem explains. Tom Boonen and Stijn Devolder, both double winners, are typical examples, but there are also non-Flemish Flandrien-type riders, such as the Norwegian Thor Hushovd and the German-Australian Heinrich Haussler.

“People here have a fundamental respect for Flandriens. Anyone who has ever ridden a bike in heavy weather – and who hasn’t in Flanders? – can identify with them,” continues Vanwalleghem. “Flandriens also have an authenticity about them. No matter how much talk there is of doping, you cannot fake a victory in the Tour of Flanders. Eddy Merckx did not win because of doping; he won because he was the best.”

But being the fastest rider in the Tour of Flanders is not enough. “Cycling is an individual sport but practiced within a team. It therefore requires a lot of emotional intelligence, too,” says Vanwalleghem, launching story upon story about how one champion exploited a love rivalry between his two competitors and how another lost a race because he had insulted a teammate the night before.

Location, location, location

The landscape also adds to the Tour of Flanders’ reputation. “It’s hard to get lyrical about a football pitch, but place like Koppenberg, Oude Kwaremont, Bosberg, Berendries and Muur van Geraardsbergen have become almost mythical,” says Vanwalleghem. “This makes this whole area more attractive. You can find green and hilly places all over Europe, but you can only cycle along the same roads as the tour riders here.”

So invite over the neighbours or take to the country roads of East or West Flanders – maps of the routes

are available on the tour’s website. “Whether people watch it along the route or at home on TV, they rarely do so on their own,” says Vanwalleghem. “The race also gives you something to talk about with complete strangers. Politics as a topic often gets awkward, and talking about football might even get you into a fight. Cycling on the other hand always makes for a good chat, no matter who your favourite is, because all the enthusiasts in the first place support the sport itself. You can never do wrong with asking ‘Who do you think will win?’”

So who does Vanwalleghem think will win? “Tom Boonen. He is the man to watch.” ♦

→ www.rvv.be

Tour of Flanders visitors’ centre

Markt 43, Oudenaarde

→ www.crvv.be

THE TOUR OF FLANDERS IN FIGURES



85%
of the Flemish are proud of the Tour of Flanders

700,000
people watch it along the route. Roughly half of all spectators are under 40, while about 40% percent obtained a higher education degree

7%
of all spectators spend more than a day in the area, resulting in a total spending of €14 million

100,000
people a year visit the Tour of Flanders visitors’ centre in Oudenaarde, East Flanders



Flemish cycling legend Freddy Maertens guides you through the Tour of Flanders centre in Oudenaarde

Working in the black

Illegal workers in service trades cost millions in lost tax revenue

ALAN HOPE

The number of cases of infringement on social protection laws, when employers are found to be employing staff illegally, fell last year by 2%, it was announced last week with figures from the Social Inspection and Investigation Service (SIOD). The worst offenders remain the catering and building industries.

Most infringements by far took place in the catering trade – hotels, restaurants and bars, as well as take-aways – which accounted for 46% of all “positive checks”. Those are cases where inspectors determined that a breach of employment regulations took place.

The catering industry recently received a major concession from the government – the reduction of VAT from 21% to 12% – which was supposed to be countered by an effort on the part of the industry to reduce *zwartewerk*, or black work, the term used to denote illegal and undeclared employment.

The catering industry openly admitted it would not, with only a few exceptions, be passing on any savings to the client. Instead, they would consider the lower rate of VAT as a way to decrease expenses. Employers in catering, as in every other sector of the economy, complain that high social charges in Belgium work against employment. The contributions an employer has to make towards an employee's social insurance are a disincentive to taking on staff. Employing people in the black is generally seen, like tax avoidance, as a victimless crime: the boss gets a worker, the worker gets a job, and only the treasury is left wanting.

Who “pays” for illegal workers

In fact there are a number of victims: businesses who stay within the law suffer from unfair competition; the resources of the social protection safety net are under-

funded; the worker is left unprotected if he or she gets ill or has an accident at work. Finally, diners are unwittingly paying to be served by staff who may have no training, working for an employer who cares little about the law, an attitude that may extend to health and safety rules.

It can even be claimed that black work in the catering industry forms one of the tentacles of organised crime. It is well known that restaurants are the favourite workplaces for placing illegal immigrants who have travelled here through the hands of human traffickers. Trafficked immigrants work long hours, sleep on the premises in often miserable conditions and are often prevented from leaving on pain of being turned over to the authorities.

Defenders of the trade, however, point out that were it not for the widespread avoidance of social charges, not only would

there be far fewer restaurants, but those that remained would be considerably more expensive.

Part of the deal on the reduction of VAT was the introduction of “intelligent cash registers”, which would make black work a thing of the past. Waiting staff would have to log in, and the cash register would keep track of hours and transactions. While some staff – dishwashers or cleaners, for example – are not directly linked to the cash register, restaurants would effectively no longer be able to take in black income, meaning it would be all the more difficult to make black payments to staff. The computer logs would be open to the scrutiny of social inspectors at any time.

Not surprisingly, parts of the catering industry are reluctant to introduce smart cash registers, which are admittedly expensive and which will have an even greater effect on future earnings than the

price alone. The system is not expected to be in effect before 2013.

Industry representative Horeca Vlaanderen supports efforts to combat social fraud, according to its director-general Luc De Bauw. Most employers would prefer to do everything legally, he says, but circumstances have made it difficult.

“Black work comes to the surface mainly at peak moments,” De Bauw explains. “Right now, for example, it's terrace weather. Businesses have to find extra staff quickly to serve the increased number of clients, and that's when we discover that occasional workers are ready to lend a hand but don't want to be taxed in the normal way.”

If there were more flexible rules for occasional workers, he said, black work in the catering industry would be less of a problem. ♦

► www.meta.fgov.be/siod

Signs of social fraud

How would you know if your local trattoria or brasserie were involved in illegal employment activities? Here are two tell-tale signs:

• **Good deals for cash.** Some restaurants will let you pay for lunch with a credit card but make you pay cash if you come back for dinner. That's because business people at lunchtime often eat on expenses and require a receipt. That makes it impossible for the restaurant owner to avoid declaring the income. In the evening, however, customers are less demanding. If the diner pays cash and nothing goes through the till, the tax-man need never know.

A fixed-price menu might also be offered at an attractive price, but only for cash. One restaurant even offered a free bottle of wine to couples who paid cash. The trick of operating separate prices for cash is not confined to the restaurant trade; a hotel might offer low-price midweek deals, cash only. Most readers will have come across this deal also being used by garages, builders and even white-collar professionals like doctors and lawyers.

• **Lack of VAT receipts.** Every customer has the right to a VAT receipt, which ought to be proffered without being asked for. In reality, the opposite is usually true; you can have one if you ask for it, though the staff may have trouble finding the receipt book. Every official receipt written out is money that has to be declared. Most middle-sized restaurants can avoid a lot of tax by failing to declare income. Larger restaurants or chains don't have the opportunity or don't bother taking the risk. Snack bars and the like are taxed according to a forfait and don't gain from you paying cash.

In restaurants in business or office areas, on the other hand, where most diners are on expenses and where the VAT receipt is the rule rather than the exception, it's possible for customers to take their pick of the VAT receipts left lying by those who don't need them. Professionals eating in the Schuman area of Brussels know this: you might eat lunch for €50 but leave with a found receipt for four diners worth €200 to turn in on an expense report.

SOCIAL FRAUD IN FIGURES

35,741

inspections carried out in 2009 by the SIOD, up 13% on 2008

€68 million

in unpaid social security charges recovered

6,755

offences discovered, slightly fewer than in 2008

8 in 10

of the offences discovered concern black work

33%

of the checks concerned the construction industry, which delivered fewer breaches (17%) than average (26%)

State pension reform paper released

Federal minister Michel Daerden calls for employer-provided supplementary pensions

ALAN HOPE

The federal government last week approved the new Green Paper produced by federal pensions minister Michel Daerden, which calls for a strengthening of the so-called "second pillar" of pensions policy – the supplementary pension provided by some employers to boost the state pension received by everyone.

The Green Paper, entitled "A Future for Our Pensions", sketches the background of the current situation before asking a series of questions regarding the sustainability of the present situation, opportunities for modernising and simplifying the system and the financial viability of the policy.

"What comes to the fore above all else is the extreme complexity of our pensions system," said the Green Paper task force in a statement. There are three main groups of pensioners: employees, public service workers and the self-employed. Within that are a variety of rules on retirement age, calculations and conditions of payment. On the one hand, the task force says, the differences within the system allow for the special characteristics of each sector to be taken into account. On the other hand, the system allows for different approaches to the same situation, which does not add to transparency.

The Green Paper is intended to be a basis for reform of the pensions system, but prime minister Yves Leterme, accompanying Daerden for the launch of the document, stressed that his government will not be bound by a calendar. On the question of raising the retirement age to 63, something Darden has previously suggested, Leterme told the VRT politics programme *De zevende dag* that any change would be for the long term. However, he considered that asking people to work a few years longer was "perfectly feasible."

At the same time, on another TV station, Daerden repeated his support for a proposal to raise the state pension to €1,450 net per month. According to some figures, 21% of those who have to subsist on the state pension alone are living under the poverty line. ♦ ➔ www.pensioenconferentie.be



Construction complaint forum off to flying start

A programme set up by the Flemish economy ministry to take complaints about quality of building work received 54 emails on its first day, minister Vincent Van Quickenborne revealed last week. The complaint email address was set up after pressure from the VTM home makeover series *Red mijn huis* (Save My House).

"A first look gives the impression that these are serious complaints involving large sums of money," Van Quickenborne said. "Complaints vary from contractors who fail to keep appointments to works that are never carried out, all the way to contractors who vanish off the face of the earth with advance payments." The complaints received will be examined by a panel of 12 experts, and follow-up given to the

more serious cases. An important aspect will be to examine a contractor's suitability for the job in terms of having the necessary resources, manpower, registrations and authorisations. The panel will have the power to bring in the various governmental inspection services that regulate the construction industry. "In that way we hope to shake out the small group of contractors and companies, the cowboys who are ruining the industry," Van Quickenborne warned.

The Building Union, which has a seat on the panel, advised potential home-builders and renovators to take an informed approach from the beginning. "Use your common sense: sign a binding contract with a professional contractor," said Anja Larik of Bouwunie. ♦

Complaints email address: redmijnhuis@economie.fgov.be

Leuven students take top prize in Battle of Talents

A quality sensor for food products developed by a group of six doctoral students from the Catholic University of Leuven has won this year's Battle of Talents, a competition to attract virtual investments. The group and their SenseWell sensor convinced a panel of MBA students that they were the best prospect in the competition and attracted over €30 million in virtual investments. The Battle of Talents runs from the start of the academic year and is open to students and researchers from all universities and colleges in Flanders. Would-be entrepreneurs form teams, employ talent from the ranks of registered players and receive help in developing their business plans. At the same time, MBA students from Flemish institutions evaluate the enterprise teams as potential investments.

At the final, held in Antwerp last week, the teams had to defend their product and business plans in front of their investors. SenseWell managed to defeat seven other finalists, to win €10,000 in cash, a software package designed for start-up companies and a green VW Polo. In all, 550 groups from across Flanders entered the initial stages of the game last October. ♦

➔ www.biw.kuleuven.be

Business confidence up

Confidence of business leaders in the economy rose in March almost to the levels of August 2008, just prior to the start of the financial and banking crisis. The enterprise confidence index, compiled from a poll by the National Bank of 6,000 business leaders across the country, is now up to -3.6, from a level of -7 in February. In February last year the index hit its nadir at -31 points.

Analysts welcomed the rise as "hopeful" and "positive" news, but they also counselled caution. "It is still too early to speak of a sustainable recovery," one analyst told *De Morgen*. "The consumer has to be reawakened, and companies need to start investing again. One swallow does not make a summer."

The upward trend was spread across all sectors, but most prominent in business-to-business services. But while confidence is rising, the underlying economic indicators, such as the level of economic activity and the jobless total, are still in crisis.

The National Bank takes a monthly poll of business leaders in manufacturing industries, construction, trade and business-to-business services. They are asked about production and sales, employment prospects, market demand and inventory. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Airlines • US Airways

US Airways will launch a Brussels-Philadelphia daily service on 7 April. Meanwhile, Icelandair will start operating a twice-weekly flight between Reykjavik and Brussels as of 4 June.

Bakery • La Lorraine

The Ninove-based La Lorraine bakery group, which operates the 200 Panos sandwich bars and 81 DeliWay fine bakery outlets, will develop its activities in Central and Eastern Europe. The move is part of a €35 million investment programme that includes the construction of additional production capacity in Antwerp to supply supermarkets.

Electronics • Punch

Punch Graphix, the producer of Xeicon digital printers, has received a takeover offer from the Dutch NPM Capital investment fund. The offer values the company at €164 million – 64% more than the company's stock market valuation.

Energy • Fluxys

Fluxys, the gas transport and network management company, has been sold by Electrabel to the public Publigas holding company for €636 million. The move is part of a package of demands by the EU competition authorities to allow Electrabel's parent, Suez, to merge with Gaz de France in 2008. Fluxys' portfolio also includes stakes in the Zeebrugge gas terminal and the Interconnector gas pipeline between Britain and Zeebrugge.

Energy • Seastar

Seastar, the wind-farm operator controlled by Ostend-based Electrawind, has won a concession to build a 41-windmill park on the Thornton bank, 30 kilometres off the Flemish coast, at a cost of €800 million. Of the six official concessions put up for tender in the North Sea, five have already been attributed. Only one remains on the market, with Electrabel in the running to seize it.

Metals • Bekaert

Bekaert, the Zwevegem-based steel wire and cord producer, last week inaugurated its third technology centre in Pune, near Mumbai. The new facility will allow the company to further strengthen its leading position on the market for steel cord used in vehicle tyres.

Shipping • P&O

British shipping group P&O will relaunch its night freight ferry service between Zeebrugge and Dover on 7 April to meet growing demand. The company suspended the line in 2002 because of fierce competition from Eurotunnel. Passengers will be taken on the ships at a later date.



Boogie nights

After changing the landscape of live concerts in Belgium, Paul Ambach steps down from Live Nation – and onto the stage

MARC MAES

He brought us Michael Jackson, the Rolling Stones and innumerable other bands that would not otherwise have found their way here. It was Paul Ambach who put Belgium on the map of major concert tours. So impressive was his portfolio, that, in 2001, he was able to sell it all off to Live Nation.

Forty years after Ambach, 61, started life as one of the country's very first professional concert promoters, he's stepping down. Or rather, he's stepping onto the stage to spend more time as his alter ego – Boogie Boy.

Music is in fact a thread that works through the Ambach family: in 1900, Ambach's grandfather, a piano tuner and Klezmer musician, travelled through Poland playing weddings, celebrations and bar mitzvahs. During the Second World War, his father survived the holocaust by singing as a tenor in the Lyon opera house. Next May, Paul's son Nathan will release his debut album, while daughter Marilyn is a gifted composer.

"I have always been into the roots of rock 'n' roll and blues," says Ambach. "But when I heard Ray Charles for the first time on the radio – the 1958 'Live at Newport' concert – I knew that that was the music I wanted to play."

It was at Antwerp University, where he earned a translation degree, that Ambach started playing music and staged his first concerts. Inspired by American concert promoter Bill Graham's "Blues at the University" concept, Ambach invited John Lee Hooker to Antwerp. "It was a huge success," he says, "and followed by Muddy Waters, Freddie King and Buddy Miles. Because Hooker came solo to Antwerp, Ambach "put together a backing band, with me playing the piano – I also accompanied Muddy Waters and BB King. Boogie Boy was born."

Before Boogie

In 1970, when the Beatles announced their break-up and The Who were recording *Live at Leeds*, Ambach launched GEMco, a concert promotions company. "The word 'promoter' didn't even exist at the time," he smiles.

GEMco's first show was a James Brown double concert, at the Deurne Arena in the afternoon, followed by a late show in Brussels' Vorst Nationaal. "But the big bang came in 1973," says Ambach, "when the Rolling Stones had to cancel their Paris shows [due to Keith Richards' conviction for drug possession]. We organised three shows in Brussels and Antwerp – my entry to live rock 'n' roll." After that breakthrough, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Genesis, Supertramp and a wealth of other big bands came to Belgium courtesy of Ambach.

Ambach teamed up with a swimming pal, Michel Perl, to launch promotions company Make it Happen. "I was the traditional promoter, with a personable attitude towards the artists, and Michel was a fierce negotiator – so we made a strong team."

In those days, says Ambach, a concert promoter "was the 24/7 companion of the stars, taking care of them. Those were really privileged moments, the time I spent with these big acts, from Robert Plant to Mick Jagger. They'd all say 'Hello Paul!'"

Ambach cites the Frank Sinatra show at Vorst in 1975 as the highlight of his career. "We didn't have the money, but Sinatra's management was very cooperative – he was the world's most wanted artist."

From backstage to onstage

As the company evolved, so did Ambach's blues career. The name Boogie Boy was inspired by the Blues Brothers; he replaced "blues" by "boogie" (also a 12-bar type of music). Ambach toured Europe with BB King and played stages from London's Ronnie Scott's to the Hague's North Sea Jazz Festival. "I have always been the artist close to the audience – without an agent, manager or marketing – exactly the opposite of what other people in show business do," notes Ambach. "But I speak 'music' and negotiate in six languages."

Ambach plays about 10 shows per month during the summer. "I never went into organising summer festivals myself; I prefer-



Paul Ambach, aka Boogie Boy, channelling Ray Charles

red playing with the Kinks at Werchter!" he laughs.

In 2001, 30 years after Paul Ambach pioneered the concerts business, Make it Happen was sold to multinational SFX, which later became Clear Channel and Live Nation, together a concert promotions empire. "I had the feeling that the whole concert business was becoming very industrialised," Ambach says, "very professional but without the personal touch. It was no longer so much about people as about money and settlements. A new era was coming, and I decided to jump ship."

Though he stayed at Live Nation as a consultant until just last month. "Now I want to have some time off for my family and get Boogie Boy on track, follow the path I took with the *My Tribute to Ray Charles* DVD. I want to be available for the audience, for the concerts... back to basics!"

With "The Boogie Boy Show", Ambach pays honour to legends like Ray Charles and BB King. Besides having a booming voice that sounds like it was born in New Orleans rather

than Flanders (and caused Fats Domino to nickname him "Little Ray", after Ambach's mentor, Ray Charles, he pounds the piano with the energy of a 20-year-old. When Ambach roars "Let the good times roll!", they do. ♦

Boogie Boy will play at festivals across Belgium this summer. Check the website for his upcoming shows

→ www.boogieboy.be

Thanks, Keith

Belgium finally got its big rock 'n' roll break in 1973 when the Rolling Stones had to cancel their Paris shows because of Keith Richards' conviction on drug charges. Ambach managed to pick up the slack, booking the band in Brussels and Antwerp, and a Belgian concert industry was born.



Soul divas meet in Sportpaleis

MARC MAES

Flemish pop singer Natalia and Sportpaleis CEO Jan Van Esbroeck announced last week that a third edition of "Natalia meets..." will take place in January, 2011. Following on her first two duo performances, this one will see Natalia (*far left*) onstage with superstar soul singer Anastacia (*left*).

With more than 200,000 tickets sold to "Natalia meets the Pointer Sisters" in 2006 and "Natalia meets En Vogue and Shaggy" in 2008, the 2011 edition is poised to become another highlight in Natalia's seven-year career, since she came in second in the 2003 *Idool* televised competition. Since then, Natalia has sold more than 400,000 albums and DVDs in Flanders.

"We spent quite some time looking for the right musical match," explains Natalia, "and the combination with Anastacia is perfect. I'm a big Anastacia fan myself, and I'm convinced that we will be able to bring a perfect repertoire mix."

Anastacia, who debuted with the single "I'm Outta Love" 10 years ago, is a huge seller in continental Europe with more than 14 million albums over the counter. In Antwerp, she will perform her own material and duets with Natalia. Tickets are on sale now.

→ www.nataliameets.be

Shangri-La of Flanders

Family recreation parks abound in Flanders, as you'll see in our latest monthly series. This April, check in on the provincial parks of Flemish Brabant

MELISSA MAKI

There are two things everyone knows about the Flemish. One, they are very family oriented. Two, it doesn't matter how cold it is, if the sun is shining, they head outside. These two passions come together in the wealth of family recreation parks you find from just outside cities to far out in the countryside, from little parks with a few caged animals to humongous forests with canoeing, restaurants and hectares of play structures.

We don't have to tell you that it's been a long, cold winter. Now that spring has finally sprung, parents are not hesitating to pack up the kids for a hearty dose of fresh air and vitamin D at the nearest rec park. The parks are run by the provinces, and every province has several to choose from. This week we begin a five-part series on these family recreation parks in Flanders, and our first is in Flemish Brabant, specifically, Provinciedomein Kessel-Lo. From pretty, winding pond paths to endearing barnyard animals, this is a quintessential recreation spot.

Kessel-Lo is a suburb of Leuven, and the Provinciedomein is only about a 20-minute walk from Leuven's train station. The provincial park has a sprawling 45 hectares of surface area as well as a number of ponds. This remarkable public area was carefully planned in the 1970s as a merger of three private parks.

Walkers and runners who are tired of pounding the pavement will enjoy the wide and gentle paths. In the park's centre, you can circle around two adjacent, picturesque ponds, complete with waterfowl, like ducks, geese and swans.

For those who like water sports, the park offers fantastic

options. The large pond has just opened for boating, and visitors can rent both paddle and row boats for a cheap €3.50 an hour. A smaller pond in the southwest portion of the domain rents electric boats for €2 per hour. The heated pool, which caters to kids under 12 with its wide slide and shallow depth, opens in May.

A number of imaginatively designed play areas in the park cater to children of all ages. The biggest playground has a steep slide and a ropes course to challenge older kids. Some ingenious tire swings that both swing and bounce induced a steady stream of giggles from my 18-month-old companion.

Visiting the park's resident animals also proves a fun activity for small children. A barn and grazing area in the southwest portion of the domain includes donkeys, goats, chicken and a small, white bunny.

The park's visitor centre, Het Ecocentrum Kessel-Lo, hosts hands-on activities for kids that encourage environmental literacy. They can learn about climate and the important role that bees play in the environment. The Ecocentrum also works to promote the domain's new management plan to the public. The plan includes special measures to protect and support native wildlife. Every month, an experienced guide leads a walk through the Lovenarenbroek, a wetland reserve and portion of the park that is typically closed to visitors in order to protect its fragile ecosystem.

Another unique educational opportunity for children from six to 12 is learning about traffic regulations. Kids can then put their knowledge to the test in the *verkeerspark* (traffic park) with bikes and go-carts.

Bikes can also be rented at the Provinciedomein. Within the park there is only one kilometre of bike path, but the park can serve as a starting or resting point for longer routes. One popular biking route, the 34-kilometre Horstroute, takes cyclists by the park as well as the 12th-century Vlierbeek Abbey and the



© Lander Loeckx

beautiful Horst Castle in Sint-Pieters-Rode.

After an active day in the domain, there are two fine options for eating and drinking. The Groene Lotus and Stille Waters are located in the park and both have lovely outdoor seating areas. The first is a bistro, the second more of a cafeteria that features the usual snacks. They both have a good selection of beer.

Provinciedomein Kessel-Lo is open all year during daylight hours, and access is free. ♦

Provinciedomein Kessel-Lo

Gemeenteplein 5, Leuven

→ www.vlaamsbrabant.be/kessello

You can walk from the Leuven train station in about 20 minutes or take bus 2 from the station towards Kessel-Lo to the Provinciedomein stop

MORE REC PARKS IN FLEMISH BRABANT

Provinciedomein Haalve Maan → in Diest features a huge outdoor pool that is surrounded by a white-sand beach, as well as a rowing pond, petting zoo, walking paths, mini golf and more. (The pool doesn't open until 1 May.) Hikers and bikers who want to spend more than a day exploring the area can find two budget-friendly cabins on site. *Omer Vanaudenhovelaan 48, Diest*

Provinciedomein Huizingen → in Beersel hosts a 55-hectare arboretum with walking trails, a large pool, mini golf, playgrounds and boating on the Huizingen castle lake. *Torleylaan 100, Beersel*

Provinciedomein Het Vinne → in Zoutleeuw features the largest natural lake in Flanders as well as playgrounds, farm animals and plenty of opportunities for nature walks and bird watching. *Ossenwegstraat 70, Zoutleeuw*

→ www.vlaamsbrabant.be/vrije-tijd-cultuur/provinciedomeinen



© comatose/flickr

Ding dong, Jekino calling • Flemish film distributor will bring its youth workshops to you

ALAN HOPE



jekino

We all know how hard it is to get kids signed up for *stages* and workshops during the school holidays, so why not have the workshop come to you? That's the possibility being offered by Jekino, the Schaarbeek-based children's film collective.

The deal is simple: you provide the space, which needs to be equipped with plenty of electrical sockets, a TV, a DVD player and a gaggle of children (maximum 15 usually). Jekino will show up with the rest of what's needed, including in some cases a portable cinema museum.

The contents of the package depends on the workshop.

For kids about six to 10, a one-day animation workshop includes monitor, digital cameras, laptops and other audio-visual equipment. A two-day workshop includes editing and a DVD of the final result.

For 10- to 18-year-olds, a three-hour workshop provides the "ABCs of Film", with cameras and film clips.

For youth workers and teachers, meanwhile, there is a one- to five-day tailor-made workshop on media education and the use of audio-visual methods in teaching.

The cost is generally around €150 for a half day or €300 for a full day. Most customers are institutions like youth centres, cultural centres and schools, explains Jekino's Sam Geuens, but if you've got the kids, they've got the workshop. They are mostly done in Dutch, but, says Geuens, "the teams of animators and monitors are freelancers, and the possibility exists to do a workshop in French or English."

Jekino also offers a film-hire service, from choosing the most suitable film for a group, to providing the film and the equipment required to show it. For films that are distributed by Jekino, like the recent animated hit *Brendan and the Secret of Kells*, there are also lesson packs provided.

→ www.jekino.be



© Jekino

C-ing is believing

Jason Blanckaert earned his Ghent restaurant a Michelin star two years ago and now puts his recipes online

COURTNEY DAVIS

Sitting across from me after the lunch service is over, the chef's posture manages to convey arrogance and boredom at the same time. He seems tired of the conversation. He doesn't like to describe his cooking style; he isn't involved in pricing so can't comment on the cost; nor does he have an opinion about the quasi-famous artwork in the dining room.

Perhaps he has gotten used to the attention that comes with earning a Michelin star. Already at 30, Jason Blanckaert is a chef who makes no apologies.

Blanckaert has been at the helm of C-Jean for a few years now, earning the 25-year-old restaurant a place on the culinary map of Ghent. This fine-dining establishment located near the city's belfry seats 30 at small, white linen tables, a wall of bottled wine separating the kitchen from the front. The lunch menu is just as small: three starters and three mains, listed on chalkboards.

The set lunch menu includes a starter, main and coffee at a very reasonable €35. Set dinner is €75 to €85. This is the beauty of the one-star Michelin restaurant – even if it's a splash out, it is an affordable one.

"There are two types of people: Those who want a big table, silver cutlery, crystal glasses, hordes of waiters," says Blanckaert, "and those who come here to get the same quality, but a different experience that is about the food." He avoids an à la carte menu in order to use seasonal ingredients. He has three guiding principles: local, wild, fresh.

As he talks about the food, he becomes animated, engaged. Here is the young, passionate chef I imagined.

From a young age, Blanckaert was interested in cooking and at 15 attended hotel school near his hometown of Poperinge in West Flanders. After graduation, he worked at the prestigious three-star Hof Van Cleve in Kruishoutem, East Flanders, for two years before coming to C-Jean.

Initially his dishes were imitations of his teachers', but now he's come into his own. His constant experimenting and quest for knowledge earned him the Michelin star in 2008, a feat that both surprised and inspired him. "I had no idea we had gotten a star until the phone started ringing after the book came out," he says. "I wasn't aiming for it; I was simply making good dishes."

Star power

Many chefs find as much stress as euphoria in being granted a Michelin star. The pressure to keep it – or increase it – is intense. But Blanckaert is confident. And he has no desire for two stars. "I don't want to change the restaurant style. I just want to be a good one star," he says. "I think I'll be able to keep it; my cooking has evolved and improved since I first got it."

His dishes are a testament to the well-earned star. Take the *amuse bouche*, complimentary with the *aperitif*: a large spoon held a bite-size scoop of creamy foie gras with an ice-cold curl of beet. Next to this was a raw mussel on top of a square of toast, which had a smoked, meaty flavour to it. Divine.



C-Jean, service for 30 under the watchful eyes of an iconic photo

The starter featured an ingredient list that took longer to read than to eat. Rectangular cubes of pork belly, mussels, red onions, parsley root, foie gras, silver onions and broth (poured tableside) created an aromatic and visual dish. At three bites, it was tiny, but tasty.

The main was a combination of egg and fish that also included mushrooms, cauliflower foam, thickened *beurre blanc* and capers. The egg managed to meld the otherwise uncomplimentary ingredients.

"I takes classics and re-envision them. This," he says, referring to my egg plate, "was like a hollandaise sauce, which is very common for fish. So of course it would work." It more than worked; it was a Hail Mary of flavour. Tried individually, the ingredients were well cooked but unremarkable. Together, it was utterly satisfying, blending various flavours, textures and colours.

"These dishes are not for the average palate, but that is what makes us different from an average restaurant in Ghent." Blanckaert is not, as I came to realise, trying to sound arrogant. He is merely single-minded.

Flemish Foodies

Blanckaert has joined fellow Michelin-starred chefs Kobe Desramauts of In de Wulf in Dranouter and Olly Ceule-

naere, formerly of Withof in Brasschaat and now in search of a restaurant in the Ghent area, to launch www.flemishfoodies.be.

The creators of the web venture (a writer/photographer duo) submit write-ups and stunning photos, while the chefs provide recipes. While it might seem odd for a well-known chef to give away his secrets, Blanckaert has an entirely different approach "That's the old school, Old French way of thinking," he says. "If everyone acts like that, there is no evolution. Share. Don't copy but build upon what is out there. The Spanish chefs had a revolution 15 years ago by sharing, and now they're top in the world."

He has had restaurants reproduce his dishes, but isn't mildly perturbed: "It's a rubbish restaurant. If you eat that dish here and then there, it's not the same."

This sort of confidence and honesty is no surprise to his friends. "Jason is impulsive, egotistical, but in the best possible way. If he has an idea, he works to make it perfect for himself, not for anyone else. He doesn't make any concessions." ♦

→ www.c-jean.be

→ www.flemishfoodies.be



Tiny but tasty lunch starter

The Lust Supper

When at C-Jean, you won't be able to miss *the* photograph. The only decoration on the entire wall, the enormous picture re-imagines the last supper. It is by Marc Lagrange of Antwerp and features his typical style of a bevy of beautiful women (and one man), all in various states of undress, gorging on food. Purchased three years ago, it was off-putting enough for a regular customer to stop coming (okay, he was a priest) and interesting enough if you want another excuse to make a reservation.



Arrogant or confident? Who cares. Jason Blanckaert can cook

Photos: ©Julie van Schooten

The one-star wonders

The exalted Michelin guide offers one, two or the coveted three stars to a lucky few restaurants across the world. Belgium has two three-star restaurants, 13 two-star restaurants and an impressive 86 one-star restaurants. For most diners, it's difficult to ascertain the difference in quality and presentation, which is what makes one-star restaurants so intriguing: excellent and unique cuisine and service, without the three-star price.

Besides C-Jean, here are two one-star restaurants worth your money.

IN DE WULF

In the middle of farmland in Dranouter, West Flanders, the landscape you see is transformed into the meal on your plate. In de Wulf's chef Kobe Desramauts is known as a chef passionate about local ingredients. He sources ingredients as natural as possible, gathering his own roots and herbs that would otherwise be called weeds. Highly creative menu options include pigeons from across the French border prepared with hay or tubers from down the road. You can fall in love with a meal, but don't get too attached as dishes rotate depending on what is in season. A set lunch is €45, and dinner options are €75, €95 or €115.

→ www.indewulf.be

DE JONKMAN

De Jonkman in the Sint-Kruis suburb of Bruges is a gem of a restaurant, run by husband-and-wife team Filip and Sandra Claeys. Chef Filip comes with credentials that are hard to beat, previously working in Bruges' triple-starred De Karmeliet and the Netherlands' triple-starred Oud Sluis. He employs a less dramatic approach, where product is king. The dishes are still beautifully presented and extremely creative, such as the grilled goose liver with an emulsion of mushrooms and marinated red beetroot on a layer of granny smith apple soup. De Jonkman is in a renovated Flemish villa (pictured below) with an almost magical garden, which further establishes the relaxed atmosphere for indulging in delicious and thoughtful food. A four-course menu is €70, and a five-course is €85.

→ www.dejonkman.be



© Kris Viegels



Stamps of approval

The tradition of Taiwan meets the quirkiness of Antwerp at this year's Mecca for stamp dealing

MARTIN BANKS

The world's most rare and expensive stamps can be found at Antverpia 2010, an event that Antwerp is re-staging after 80 years. It was in 1930 that the port city last hosted a national stamp exhibition.

Organisers are delivering a first-class event for stamp enthusiasts, not least because it coincides with the 120th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Belgian Federation of Philatelic Associations.

Philately focuses on the study of stamps, which is not the same as stamp collecting. The Belgian Federation is the world's oldest, having launched in Antwerp in 1890, and plans a series of special events at Antverpia – not least of which is the annual European Championship of Philately. Interest only increases from there: Birdpex, a world-renowned philatelic exhibition centred on the theme of birds, which is held every four years, will run alongside the two others. So essentially, everyone who's anyone in the world of stamps will be in Antwerp next week.

About 50 postal organisations and 100 stamp dealers from around the world will participate, with 2,000 frames of stamps displayed in four exhibition halls. Some 35,000 international visitors are expected at the event, where one of the most popular stamps on display is likely to be the famous "Termonde inversé", or "Inverted Dendermonde", said to be the most expensive stamp in Belgium. The 1920 stamp is part of a print run error, and the town hall of Dendermonde is pictured upside down.

The Belgian postal service has also issued a special set of stamps illustrating Antwerp's history and heritage for Antverpia. Considering the three events in one, Antverpia is a "Mecca" for stamp buffs, says event manager Frank Daniels. "We are very excited. Philatelists from all over the world will be converging on the city, and we want to give them a typically warm Flemish welcome," says Daniels. "It is a unique event and gives the general public the chance to have a glimpse at some of the rarest and most beautiful stamps in the world."

Each year, the Federation of European Philatelic Associations invites a country to the championship as a special guest; this year, that's Taiwan. Over the years, Taiwan has been hailed not just for its beautiful stamps that often depict indigenous wildlife, but also for its humanitarian assistance. Taiwan company Chunghwa Post will sponsor a charity sale of Taiwan stamps worth about €11,000. The proceeds of the sale will go to CliniClowns Belgium, a non-profit organisation that sends professional clowns to visit sick and hospitalised children. The organisation relies entirely on

public donations to continue its work. "Sending two clowns to a hospital once a week costs us about €12,500," says CliniClowns coordinator Valerie Van Gastel. "If we succeed in selling the entire collection, we can visit an extra 750 youngsters." The Taiwan stand will be a centrepiece of the exhibition. Its state-run enterprise Chunghwa Post will showcase decades of the island's postage stamps, particularly those featuring birds and endangered species. About 500 species of birds, 70 species of mammals and 3,000 species of fish inhabit Taiwan, affording abundant material for stamp design.

Patrick Wang of the Taipei Representative Office to Belgium says he hopes this will raise public awareness about wildlife conservation. He said that anyone visiting their stand will receive a free calligraphy of their name written in traditional Chinese characters. ♦



The famous wildlife of Taiwan and the famous funkiness of Belgium shine through in stamps at Antverpia

Antverpia

9-12 April
Antwerp Expo
Jan Van Rijswijcklaan 191

→ <http://antverpia2010.com>

Locals know better • A new Use-It office and map calls for a waffle binge

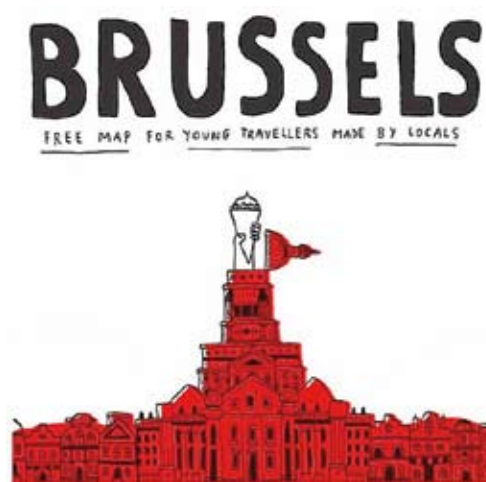
LISA BRADSHAW

The most beautiful thing about the city maps produced by Use-It Tourist Info for young people is how they cut to the chase. In their map of Bruges: "Never take pictures on the Markt. It's not because there are statues everywhere that you have to take pictures of every single one." And in Mechelen: "Choose the right football team." In the new edition of the map of Brussels, I was delighted to see: "Brussels is ugly, and we love it. ... So don't be surprised that we built a terrible apartment block next to an Art Nouveau jewel or a pseudo-classical monster in front of Central Station." Fortunately for Use-It, their new office is located next to De Munt opera house, a jewel rather than a monster. To celebrate their new digs and their new edition of the Brussels map, the tourist organisation is staging a Waffle Binge at 17.00 on 1 April. One local, one tourist in a waffle-eating face off. Who can eat the most in 10 minutes?

The local is "Pitch", one of Use-It's volunteers. "He's not very big, but he can eat like a horse," says Use-It's Nicolas Marichal, with confidence. "The tourist we still have to find because, you know, they don't stay very long. On the day, the biggest Australian or American who comes in, we'll ask if he wants to compete against Pitch." And one will surely come in. Use-It gets many visitors a day to its Brussels office, which provides maps and advice geared towards young people. "The difference between us and a normal tourist office is that we really do have young people here who know Brussels like the back of their hands," explains Marichal. "If you go into a normal tourist office and ask where you can go to find a drum-bass thing tonight, they won't know. But we will. Some people in Brussels tourist offices don't even live in Brussels; but we all do. And

locals know better."

The latest map of Brussels has something new: tourist walks that take you outside the centre and into the neighbourhoods, which Marichal says are unique among European cities. "In the North Station area, you have the Manhattan quarter, with skyscrapers and briefcases. Go to the next street, and it's the red light district. And if you turn the corner, it's one big Moroccan scene, the biggest North African shopping street in Brussels. All of those are just a street's distance from each other! Other cities don't rub shoulders like that." ♦



→ www.use-it.be



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Shaun Tan

REBECCA BENOOT

Australian author and illustrator Shaun Tan, renowned for his magical, often surreal drawings filled with powerful emotions and a dream-like atmosphere, finally enjoys his first exhibition in Belgium. The title of the exhibition at Hasselt's Literary Museum is *Een vreemd land* (A Strange Country), which just about sums it up.

Alienation is key to Tan's oeuvre, which he achieves by inserting fantastical beings into everyday surroundings. The multi-award-winning novel *The Arrival* (2006), a tribute to his father who emigrated from Malaysia to Australia, is the main focus. Through drawings, sketches and digital prints, viewers witness the evolution of Tan's touching story about a man who leaves his family in search of a better life for all of them. It's a wordless, moving memoir of dazzling sepia drawings.

Tan, 35, started out illustrating science fiction and horror stories for the small press, such as the Australian *After Dark* series for young people. He eventually both illustrated and authored several books including *The Red Tree*, *The Rabbits* and his latest, *Tales of Outer Suburbia*. He is currently directing a short film based on his book *The Lost Thing*. Illustrations from all of these are represented in *Een vreemd land*. Tan's books are simply gorgeous, inside and out. Both the scope and diversity of his tales and drawings are remarkable, mixing mythical children's stories with a mature graphic novel style. The melancholy atmosphere of his work creates emotional depth and a kind of bewilderment, drawing the reader into landscapes both bizarre and familiar, filled with enchanting characters and fresh fables.

Tan's books are accessible to all ages, but the themes are often quite socio-political. *The Red Tree* (2001), for instance, takes on loneliness and depression faced by a young girl, while *Tales of Outer Suburbia* explores how average people respond to very un-average occurrences. Tan often comes back to the same question: will you recognise the value of the unknown?

Een vreemd land

Until 15 May
Literary Museum
Bampslaen 35, Hasselt

→ <http://users.skynet.be/literairmuseum>

MORE DRAWING EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Johan Devrome → Roeselare Public Library

Authentic → Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp

Paintings are Drawings → Raveel Museum, Machelen-Zulte



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 31 20.15 Vaya Con Dios

CC Berchem

Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20,
www.ccberchem.be
APR 2 20.30 Nuff Said with Brazzaville
+ Murth Mossel + Suheir Hammad +
Ava Vidal

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAR 31 20.30 Luka Bloom
APR 3 20.30 Willeke Alberti

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63
www.petrolclub.be
APR 2 20.00 Freaky Age + Mint + Cole
Park

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345,
www.sportpaleis.be
APR 3 20.00 Back to the '90s with
Run-DMC, Snap!, Captain Hollywood,
Whigfield and Corona

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
MAR 31 20.00 Nathen Maxwell & The
Original Bunny Gang

Ardoois

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduwnet
APR 2 20.30 The Valerie Solanas (free)
APR 3 20.00 The Winin' Boys +
Bellevue Vision + Les Mecs du Nord

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 31 Claudine Muno + Josh Rouse

APR 2 Bloody Beetroots. 20.00 Stijn
Meuris **APR 3** Panic Cell + Life of
Agony + Aqme **APR 6** Nicolai Dunger
APR 8 Tape Tum + Marble Sounds +
The Bear That Wasn't

Atelier 210

Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98,
www.atelier210.be
APR 8 20.30 L.E.G. + Brain Damage

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
APR 3 20.30 SoundBits: Ben Sharpa +
K-The-I??? + Rzatz (free)

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 1 Pepper Seed + The Toasters
APR 2 Cebo + The Legendary Pink
Dots. Thee Silver Mt Zion Memorial
Orchestra. Goudi **APR 3** HUMb +
The Peas Project. Pablo Andres **APR 6**
Emmanuel & The Fear. Laura Marling

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
APR 2 21.00 Musik Oblik: Tribute
to Adolf Wolfli by Baudoin de Jaer +
Othin Spake

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
MAR 31 20.00 Jack of Heart + Chain
and the Gang + Spectrum

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
MAR 31 20.00 Maximilian Hecker

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 31 20.15 Luc De Vos
APR 1 20.15 Heaven 17
APR 5 20.15 The Sonics + The Wrong

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
APR 2 20.00 Steve Von Till:
Harvestman + AmenRa (acoustic)
APR 3 20.00 Eat Lions + Xzsander +

AGENDA NEWS

Humo's Rock Rally

School is Cool takes home top prize



It was an unexpected win by an underdog, which always satisfies the crowd and makes the jury look noble. So few people left *Humo's* legendary Rock Rally angry last Sunday after School is Cool won the top prize. The five-piece band was elegantly described by my concert companion as looking like "a bunch of brothers who decided to form a band and got their sister to join". They're not in fact family, but it's clear what she means: throwing away the shackles of the 20-year-old-emaciated-indie/pop/punk-boy look that pervaded the stage all day, these Antwerp dudes put on their horn-rimmed glasses, pull their t-shirts over their ample bellies and pound a folky sounding pop out of their guitars, glockenspiels and tiny drum sets. They took home a €10,000 prize. Even more money, however, went to one of those indie-pop-boy bands, as Willow won both third place from the jury and the prestigious Public Prize, earning a cool €13,000. (I voted for them myself.) Second jury prize went to Limburg rock band The Sore Losers (they weren't). **Lisa Bradshaw**

→ www.myspace.com/j.genard

The Boston Tea Party **APR 7** 20.00 Soil & Pimp Sessions **APR 8** 20.00 Mt Eerie + No Kids



Antwerp

Buster
Kasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
MAR 31 21.00 Playtime Session **APR 1** 22.00 Mo & Grazz **APR 2** 22.00 Marcelo Moncada Space Quartet **APR 7** 21.00 Playtime Session **APR 8** 21.00 Buster Jam

Ardoorie

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
APR 7 20.30 The Valerie Solanas (free)

Brussels

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
www.jazzstation.be
Concerts at 20.30:
APR 1 Jazz Station Big Band **APR 3** 18.00 Lorenzo Di Maio **APR 7** Anne Wolf Trio & Christa Jerome **APR 8** Karzapp' Quartet

Sazz'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78
www.sazznjazz.be
APR 1 20.30 Cruz Control
APR 3 20.30 Sazz 'n Jazz Quartet

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
MAR 31 Chamaquiando, salsa **APR 1** Arthur Kell Quartet (US) **APR 2** Les Chéris d'amour **APR 3** Jazzy strings **APR 5** Master Session **APR 6** Tuesday Night Orchestra **APR 7** Los Soneros del Barrio

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
MAR 31 21.00 FS Band
APR 1 12.30 Kamp Maria

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13,
www.muziekodroom.be
APR 8 20.30 Charlie Musselwhite

Leffinge

De Zwerver
Dorpsstraat 95; 059.70.08.22

www.leffingeleuren.be
APR 9 20.00 Charlie Musselwhite



Aalst

De Werf
Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12
www.ccdewerf.be
APR 2 20.00 Kadril

Kaai 17

Liefdadigheidsstraat 1; 054.32.14.47
www.kaai17.be
APR 4 13.00 Débora Rodrigues and João Escada, traditional fado

Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 9 20.30 Dastan Ensemble with Salar Aghili (Iran)

Brussels

Atelier 210
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
APR 7 21.00 What the Folk! Lena Deluxe

Piola Libri

Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91
www.piolalibri.be
APR 8 19.00 My Bubba & Mi, acoustic folk

Sazz'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78
www.sazznjazz.be
MAR 31 20.30 David and Christella

Theatre La Roseraie

Alsebergsesteenweg 1299;
02.376.46.45, www.roseraie.org
APR 2 20.30 White Russian and Sarsa Parilna, folk

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00
www.muziekpublieque.be
MAR 31 12.30 Broodje Brussel: Uxia Sennle & Sergio Tannus **APR 7** 20.00 Pancho Amat y Su Cabildo del Son (Cuba)

Dendermonde

Belgica
Kerkstraat 24; 052.220.26.40,
www.ccbelgica.be
APR 1 20.00 Tutu Puoane & Brussels Jazz Orchestra, tribute to Myriam Makeba

Ghent

Hot Club Reserva
Jan Breydelstraat 32; 0489.11.63.95
www.clubreserva.be
APR 8 21.00 Débora Rodrigues and João Escada, traditional fado (free)

Trepunt

Bij Sint-Jacobs 18; 09.225.36.76,
www.trepuntvzw.be
APR 5 21.00 Débora Rodrigues and João Escada, traditional fado (free)

Leffinge

De Zwerver
Dorpsstraat 95; 059.70.08.22
www.leffingeleuren.be
APR 3 20.00 Mintzkov + Isbells



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
www.amuz.be
APR 1 21.00 Il Gardinello conducted by Jan de Winne, traverso; Pluto Ensemble conducted by Marcel Ponselee, oboe; Marnix De Cat, countertenor: Bach's Saint John Passion

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
APR 3 20.00 Il Gardellino conducted by Jan De Winne: Bach's Saint John Passion
APR 8 20.00 Stéphane Degout, baritone; Hélène Lucas, piano: Schubert, Dvorak, more

Brussels

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
APR 3 20.15 Flemish Radio Choir conducted by Bo Holten: Stabat Maters by Pergolesi, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti

Musical Instruments Museum
Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30, www.mim.be
APR 7 14.00 Herman and Rosita Dewit: traditional Belgian music played on instruments made from recycled objects

Royal Museums of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.concertsdemidi.be
MAR 31 12.40 Da Vinci String Quartet: Beethoven, Smetana, Shostakovich

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be
MAR 31 20.00 Gryphon Trio: Schumann, Silvestrov, Beethoven

ULB Delvauxzaal

Paul Hégerlaan 20, Campus Solbosch;
www.orchestre-ulb.be
APR 1 20.00 ULB Orchestra conducted by Zofia Wislocka: film music by Beethoven, Bizet, Verdi, more

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78
www.debijloke.be
MAR 31 20.00 Compagnie Bischoff conducted by Romain Bischoff: Orlandus Lassus, Anthony Fiumara
APR 2 20.00 Ars4 string quartet with Ronald Brautigam, piano: Dvorak, Shostakovich, Brahms
APR 3 20.00 Ronald Brautigam, piano; Isabelle Van Keulen, violin: Beethoven, Brahms

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65,
www.handelsbeurs.be
APR 3 20.15 Maja Bogdanovic, cello; Julien Gernay, piano: Beethoven, Debussy, more

Sint-Pieterskerk

Sint-Pietersplein 9; 070.22.02.02
APR 5 15.00 Sara Mingardo, alto; Nuria Rial, soprano; Umberto Benedetti Michelangeli, conductor: Stabat Maters by Vivaldi and Pergolesi, Mozart overture

Leuven

30CC – Predikherenkerk
Onze Lieve Vrouwstraat; 016.23.84.27,
www.30cc.be
APR 2 20.00 Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Bo Holten: Stabat Maters by Pergolesi, Alessandro & Domenico Scarlatti



Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
APR 1 19.30 Les Talens Lyriques conducted by Christophe Rousset: Jean-Philippe Rameau's Plátée
APR 2 20.00 De Munt Symphony Orchestra and Choirs conducted by Julian Reynolds & Martino Faggiani: Bellini's Norma

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39 www.demunt.be
Until APR 3 15.00/19.00 Idomeneo, Re di Creta by Mozart conducted by Jérémie Rohrer, staged by Ivo van Hove (in the original Italian with Dutch and French surtitles)

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until APR 3 15.00/20.00 Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky conducted by Dmitri Jurowski, staged by Tatjana Gürbaca, with Tommi Hakala (Onegin) and Anna Leese (Tatiana) (in the original Russian with Dutch surtitles)



Antwerp

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.50,
www.deroma.be
APR 2 20.30 Dadada-Dan Tenko: Tentekomai, dance/theatre from Japan

Zuiderpershuis

DON'T MISS



Cherry blossom festival

4 April, 14.00-18.00

Japanese Garden

The annual O-Hanami Japanese cherry blossom festival takes place on Easter Day this year. Families are invited to pack a picnic and visit the cherry blossoms in full bloom in Hasselt, home to the largest Japanese Garden in Europe. In Japanese tradition, cherry blossoms herald the end of winter and bring strength and good health for the new year. (There is also a sake festival at the same time for those who need something even stronger.)
→ www.japansetuin.com

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 8 20.30 Go-Zarashi (a karma exposé), choreographed by Taketeru Kudo

Brussels

Kaaistudio's
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81;
02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
APR 1-2 20.30 Long long short long short, choreographed and performed by Alix Eynaudi and Agata Maszkiewicz

Kaaitheater

Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaitheater.be
MAR 31-APR 1 20.30 Damaged Goods and Eira in Blessed, choreographed by Meg Stuart

Théâtre Varia

Scepterstraat 78; 02.640.82.58www.varia.be
Until APR 3 19.30/20.30 To the Ones I love, choreographed by Thierry Smits



Aalst

De Werf
Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12,
www.ccdewerf.be
APR 3 20.00 An Nelissen in Obscene Fabels etc, directed by Peter Perceval (in Dutch)

Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
Until APR 2 20.00 Troubleyn in De dienaar van de schoonheid (The Servant of Beauty), directed by Jan Fabre (in Dutch)

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
APR 1 20.30 Te Gek?! music/theatre performances by Tom Kestens, Kris de Bruyne, Neeka, Gunther Verspecht and musicians from De Laatste Show. Hosted by Kristien Hemmerechts (in Dutch)

Monty



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Montignystraat 3; 03.238.64.97
www.monty.be
APR 1-2, 20.30 Dood Paard & Maatschappij Discordia in Plenty Coups & Sitting Bull (in Dutch)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 31 Théâtre Taliipot in Mâ ravan, music theatre (in English)
APR 7 20.30 Bad van Marie in Vasio-Levsky, staged by Peter Boelens (in Dutch)
Ardooe
Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduwnet
APR 1 19.30 De Horizon basisschool in Het zijn maar beesten! (They're Only Animals), music theatre (in Dutch)

Brussels

KVS Bol
Lakensstraat 146; 02.210.11.00
www.kvs.be
Until APR 3 20.00 Philoktetes, directed by Raven Ruell (in Dutch with French and English surtitles)

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,
www.cirque-royal.org
APR 1 20.30 Hair, musical (in French)

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5;
0900.69.00, www.capitolegent.be
APR 1-11 The Sound of Music, musical (in Dutch)

NTGent Schouwburg

Sint-Baafsplein 17; 09.225.01.01
www.ntgent.be
Until APR 2 20.30 Els Dottermans in Was will das Weib?, music theatre (in Dutch)



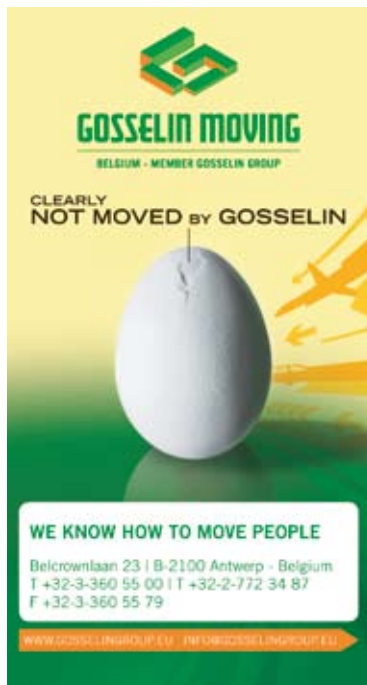
Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be
Until MAY 2 Animism, Part 1, installations, photos and film exploring the collective practices of humans and non-humans and the ensuing relationships
Until SEP 19 Art kept me out of jail, performance installations by Flemish artist Jan Fabre

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55
www.extracity.org
Until MAY 2 Animism, Part Two (see above)

Fashion Museum (MoMu)



Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70
www.momu.be
Until AUG 8 BLACK: Masters of Black in Fashion & Costume

Zilvermuseum Sterckshof

Hooftvunderlei 160; 03.360.52.51
www.zilvermuseum.be
Until JUNE 13 Delheid 1828-1980: From Michel to Climax, works from the Delheid Frères company, one of the 19th and 20th centuries' most important silver producers

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
Until APR 4 Congo Exists, photographs of daily life in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Bruges

Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse
Dijver 17; www.uitvindingvanbrugge.be
Until APR 25 De uitvinding van Brugge: De stad van Delacenserie (The Discovery of Bruges: The City of Delacenserie), the 19th-century architectural facelift of Bruges by local architect Louis Delacenserie

Brussels

Belgian Comic Strip Centre
Zandstraat 20; 02.219.18.80
www.stripmuseum.be
Until AUG 29 Moomin: Tove Jansson's Dreamworld, works by the Finnish illustrator and author

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
www.wittockiana.org
Until APR 24 Pierre Mertens: Andere vormen van process, 45 years of literature by Mertens

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
Until APR 11 Mexican Modernisms, overview of post-war Mexican architecture, plus documentary films and contemporary documents
Until APR 11 Mundos Mexicanos, 25 contemporary Mexican photographers
Until APR 18 Frida Kahlo y su mundo, works by the famous Mexican artist on loan from the Dolores Olmedo Museum
Until APR 25 Imágenes des Mexicano, portraiture and the history of Mexico
Until APR 25 El Horizonte del topo (The Mole's Horizon), video art
Until MAY 9 El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900, more than 40 paintings by El Greco

Cellars of Cureghem

Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24;
02.528.19.00, www.cureghemcellars.be
Until APR 18 Play Belgium, interactive and informational exhibition on the history, present and future of video games

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60,
www.designflanders.be
APR 2-MAY 22 Ceramic Unica, ceramic art by The Fuping Eleven; photographs by Lydia De Bock

Het Huis der Kunsten van Schaarbeek

Haachtsesteenweg 147; 02.240 34 99
www.culture1030ecoles.be
Until APR 11 Design: Een verhaal van context (A story of context), industrial design and objects by Loudordesign studio and D&A Lab

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32,
www.botanique.be
Until MAY 2 Alechinsky: prints by Belgian artist Pierre Alechinsky, with guest artist Kiki Crèvecoeur, engravings

Stadhuis

Grote Markt; 02.279.64.35
www.brussels.be
Until APR 4 20 Dresses for Europe: Fashion designers from Spain, Belgium and Hungary in dialogue with literature

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org
Until APR 25 Felix Gonzales-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form, retrospective of the late Cuban-born American artist
Until APR 25 Melvin Moti: From Dust to Dust, the contemporary Dutch artist's first solo show in Belgium

Ghent

Museum of Modern Art (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03 www.smak.be
Until APR 18 The Wandering Tuba Method, sculptures by Tamara Van San
Until MAY 16 Loek Grootjans: Leaving Traces, installations
Until MAY 16 Koen van den Broek: Curbs & Cracks, paintings by the Flemish artist
Until MAY 16 Collection FAKE?, interpretations of reality
APR 3-JUNE 16 Ed Templeton: The Cemetery of Reason, photographs, paintings and sketches
APR 3-JUNE 16 Electrified 02: Hacking Public Space, actions in public space

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
www.designmuseumgent.be
Until JUNE 6 Richard Hutten, furniture, interiors and objects by the Dutch designer
Until JUNE 6 The Scandinavian Touch in Belgian Furniture 1951-1966

Museum Dr Guislain

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95
www.museumdrguislain.be
Until MAY 2 From Memory: About Knowing and Forgetting, multi-disciplinary exhibition on memory and dementia in science and art

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31 www.ccha.be
Until APR 11 Yvan Theys: Verborgen schatten (Hidden Treasures), paintings by the late Flemish artist
Until APR 11 Marnik Neven: Moment, multi-media show of work by the Flemish artist
Until APR 11 Kumi Oguro, photographs by the Antwerp-based artist

Izegem

City Museum of Izegem
B de Pélchystraat 5; 051.31.64.46
www.musea.izegem.be
APR 3 to DEC 18 Shoe, Shoe,... Shoes! Shoe fashions of the 20th century together with shoes made in Izegem, the centre of Flemish shoe manufacturing, in the 1920s and '30s

Kortrijk

Museum Kortrijk 1302
Houtmarkt-Begijnpark; 056.27.78.50,
www.kortrijk1302.be
Until MAY 16 Miniaturen: Gras dat verder groeit (Thumbnails: Grass That Continues to Grow), group show with works based on poems and other texts by Flemish writer Jozef Deleu

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
www.rogerraveelmuseum.be
Until JUNE 20 Pictografie: Schilderijen zijn ook tekeningen en vice-versa (Paintings are Drawings and Vice-versa), group show

Turnhout

TRAM 41
Grote Markt 1; 014.44.33.98,
www.tram41.be
Until APR 30 China en het kaartspel (China and the Card Game), Chinese printing techniques and card games
Until MAY 2 De eerste onder zijn gelijken (The First Among Equals), cards, letters, books and prints from mediaval Latin schools in the Kempen region



Antwerp

4-Ever Young: dance party for 40-plussers with music from the '80s and '90s
APR 8 from 20.00 at La Riva, Londenstraat 52
03.225.01.02, www.midlifeparty.be

Bruges

Ars Musica Brugge: New music festival devoted to mathematics
MAR 31-APR 2 at Concertgebouw, 't Zand 34
070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be

Blues in Bruges: Free blues festival with cafe concerts
APR 1-5 across the city
www.bluesinbruges.be

Brussels

Balkan Trafik Festival: Multicultural arts festival from the Balkan countries, including dance from Macedonia, cinema from Romania, Sufi song from Bosnia and music from Albania
APR 8-11 at Bozar, 23 Rue Ravenstein
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Brussels Tango Festival: Sixth edition of the festival featuring dance workshops and tango ballroom dancing
APR 1-5 in venues across Brussels
www.brusselstangofestival.be

FAKE?: A conversation about art crime with Stan Lauryssens, Axel Poels and Sven Speybrouck (free)
APR 1, 20.15 at Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein
02.212.19.30, www.deburen.eu

International Circus Festival:

Performances from 30 Belgian and international companies
Until MAR 31 in and around Victoria Park, Koekelberg
070.660.601, www.pistesdelancement.be

Musik Oblik: music, film and visual art project exploring sound and vision
Until JUNE 27 at art)&(marges, Hoogstraat 312 and Recyclart, Ursulinenstraat 25
www.artenmarge.be

¡Viva México Festival!:

Multidisciplinary arts festival marking the bicentenary of Mexico's independence and the centenary of its revolution, with exhibitions, photography, performances and film screenings
Until MAY 24 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Deinze

Garden Fair: Plants, flowers, garden decor and furniture, plus horse-drawn carriage rides and kids' activities
APRIL 3-5 at Ooidonk Castle, Ooidonkdreef 9
www.outsideview.be

Groot-Bijgaarden

Floralies: Seventh annual floral exhibition in the castle's 14 hectare-park, featuring more than 500 types of flowers and a flower labyrinth
APR 3-MAY 6 at the Castle of Groot-Bijgaarden, Is Van Beverenstraat 5
0494.47.72.56,
www.kasteelgrootbijgaarden.be

Knokke-Heist

International Photography Festival: Photography and audio-visual arts festival with the theme "Stars & Models"
Until JUNE 13 across the cities
www.knokke-heist.info

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

CAFE SPOTLIGHT



Arthur's

Trierstraat 26, Brussels

Situated as it is amid the Eurocrats, Brussels' Place Luxembourg is awash in trendy but monotonous pubs. But there's one old-fashioned little joint encapsulating everything that's good about café culture: great food, friendly service and a laid-back, artsy feel that will take you away from the district's increasingly stark modernity.

Just off the square on Trierstraat opposite the railway station and the megalithic European Parliament, you'll find the entrance to this Bohemian bolthole called Arthur's, where you'll be welcomed into a cosy shop of yesteryear selling coffee, tea, chocolates and a range of arts and crafts curios.

You may choose to spend your time browsing in the shop, but don't miss the rest because Arthur's has a serious split personality.

Beyond the brown café, it opens up into a beautiful art deco conservatory culminating in a fountain with a magnificent jade façade. With its verdigris tables and chairs, running water and mosaic floor, it's like a little corner of paradise.

In keeping with its schizophrenic appearance, Arthur's attracts an eclectic clientele. Friday evenings see the arrival of the knitting club, but any other night the bar is happy to play host to private parties where, for a fee, they clear away the tables so you can dance your socks off until the wee hours.

Arthur's once had branches in Elsene, Sint-Gillis and Ukkel, but the owner, a former Coca Cola marketing guru, decided to deliver outside of Place Luxembourg by bicycle. The fact that the remaining café is unique only adds to its desirability over the café chains that pervade the high street.

Arthur's is also a catering business and is only open on weekdays. But for private functions, it opens its doors in the evenings, including Saturday nights, until as long as you can keep partying.

➡ www.arthurs.be

SHARON LIGHT

bite



Wagamama

Wagamama has been on my list of favourite restaurants for a decade. I discovered it as a student in London, and I ate there countless times in that all-too-short six-month period.

Back in the US, I would occasionally think back to those Japanese meals while waiting patiently for Wagamama's brand to expand across the ocean – naturally, now that I live in Brussels, it can indeed be found in Boston, my former home.

But fortunately, among their 37 international locations, one can be found Antwerp.

According to the website, "Wagamama" means a "wilful, naughty child" – although others contend that "selfish" may be a more accurate translation. Whatever the meaning, the chain subscribes to a simple philosophy: "to combine fresh and nutritious food in an elegant yet simple setting with helpful, friendly service and value for money." Let's break that down.

The food: Wagamama is based on the Japanese ramen bar. Noodle soups abound, with varying combinations of pork, chicken, tofu, fish and fresh vegetables. You'll also find noodle dishes sans soup, as well as some rice-based options.

The dishes are prepared to order in the open kitchen.

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

Although many include fried ingredients, the combination with raw or lightly cooked vegetables provides a balance towards healthiness. There are also a healthy number of sweet and spicy Asian flavours abound; you can hardly go wrong here.

The setting: I wouldn't quite describe it as "elegant". Wagamama has a sleek, modern, almost industrial look to it. Everyone sits at long tables on benches, so you know instantly that this is not a location for a leisurely meal.

The service: Wagamama is indeed just a few steps removed from fast food. Waiters will take your order on a PDA, scribble some numbers on the paper placemat in front of you, and dishes will come out as soon as they are ready – which is why you will only see "side dishes" and not "starters" on the menu.

I did find, shall we say, "Belgian influences" in the quality of service in Antwerp, but all in all, no serious complaints. A friend with small children also assures me that the staff was very helpful, providing booster seats and being attentive to their needs – so much so that it's a favourite spot for family outings.

A value? I've always felt Wagamama's prices were well in line with their quality. But then again, I'm a little biased.

→ www.wagamama.be

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



straat →

Some street names are a dead give-away: Wetstraat – Law Street – is synonymous with government in Belgium, being the address of the federal parliament. Others tell something about the country: Leopold III laan refers to the king who abdicated in 1951, who in this case has an avenue, rather than a lane, named after him.

Likewise, you shouldn't be surprised to read the headline *Opnieuw vliegtuigbom gevonden in Bombardementstraat* – Another aircraft bomb found in Bombardement Street, which was the case in Evergem not so long ago.

Of course, you will find an abundance of flowers and animals: Boterbloemstraat – Buttercup Street, Schapenweg – Sheep Way. Some odd names soon reveal themselves: a street called Tramlaan – Tram Avenue – out in the country tells you that along the side of this strangely wide road there once rolled a rural tram.

Others say very little: de Grote Baan – Great Road, unless it's a shadow of itself and now a narrow lane. Villages often honour their own by naming streets after them. Professors and priests abound: Professor Scharpelaan and Pastoor Pitetlaan, and of course Pater Damiaanstraat.

With so many villages in Flanders joined by a *steenweg* – road lined with houses, confusion can arise. One place that has decided to put its streets in order is Kasterlee in Antwerp province. With its *straatnamenproject* – street name project, Kasterlee has renamed

meerdere straten met dezelfde naam – several streets that had the same name. Also the many anonymous *fietswegen en wandelpaden* – cycle tracks and footpaths now have a name.

A committee drew up a list of suggestions, which was sent to those affected and invited to make their own suggestions. Now we see local politics at work: *Het gemeentebestuur heeft de voorstellen van de inwoners zo veel mogelijk gevolgd* – The local council followed the suggestions of the residents as much as possible.

Kasterlee's new street signs are being installed, but that's not the end of the matter. Residents now have to have their electronic ID cards updated. This is done at the town hall, where they will also receive *een nieuw huisnummerplaatje* – a new house number plate. Apparently, this has to be placed *op een in het oog springende plaats* – in a conspicuous place ("in the eye springing") *bij voorkeur rechts langs de toegangsdeur op een hoogte van minimum één meter en maximum twee meter* – preferably right of the entrance door at a height of minimum one metre and maximum two metres.

Some streets seem to have been named to provoke: take Heuvelstraat – Hill Street in Duffel which is as flat as a billiard table. It is not far from Venushoek – Venus Corner. And just along the road, you might wonder who lives in Niemandshoek – Nobody's Corner.

THE LAST WORD...

Pas de deux

"Flanders is well-known for its tough, masculine ballet dancers."

Seventeen-year-old ballet student Edo Wijnen from Deurne, who last week won gold at the prestigious Youth America Grand Prix in New York City

The folks next door

"I took an old Walloon couple to let them see the North Sea for the first time. They were perfectly happy without it."

Flemish TV host Julien Vrebos started a new series on Wallonia on the VRT this week

Lead us not into temptation

"I myself am a victim."

Pastor Antoon Vandenhende was revealed to have stolen from parishioners to pay off blackmailers who threatened to reveal details of his sex life

A regular guy

"I hate absolute judgement like 'the legendary Declair' or 'the greatest living Flemish actor'. Call me one of the better ones; I'm happy with that. And when I'm dead I don't want any statues or streets named after me."

Greatest living Flemish actor Jan Declair has no plans at 64 to retire



FLANDERS TODAY

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