

Ford Genk to close

Despite promises to the contrary only one month ago, Ford is shutting down the plant in Genk



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Green dreams

Researchers in Limburg are growing algae, which could lead to a valuable new crop in Flanders



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Sound all around

An ingenious new festival in Bruges based on music from the 16th century surrounds you in a circle of sound

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Prison education

Students set free in a former jail that has become the new campus for law studies at the University of Hasselt

Andy Furniere

What better environment to prepare law students for their future careers as lawyers and magistrates than in a former prison? It's no joke: To establish the first "city campus" of the University of Hasselt (UHasselt), barbed wire was cut from the tops of walls, and cells were redecorated as intimate study rooms.

The grim, secured building of the old Hasselt prison, dating from 1860, has transformed into an open space with colourful corridors, where students hang out before and after class. Although the front of the former jail, which housed prisoners until 2005, still bears a weathered engraving saying *gevangenis* (prison), its doors are now wide open and a large UHasselt sign welcomes students and visitors.

Next to it, the modern administration building provides an extreme contrast, with its large windows and green glass panes creating an impression of overall transparency. The same applies to the bright yellow building behind the former prison, where groups of about 20 students are taught in brand new classrooms.

These three academic edifices form the new law faculty of UHasselt, its first campus actually located in the city. Until now, the university only had a campus at Diepenbeek, about four kilometres east of Hasselt.

Wandering around "the city"

The yellow building with classrooms is linked to the former prison through an underground tunnel. The entire city campus building project, with a surface area of 10,000 square metres for up to 1,000 students, was finished in four years. A few spots still need some attention, and a touch of green space is still being incorporated into the site. There are already a few gardens on the roofs, where students could be found enjoying this month's autumn sun.

"The main challenge was transforming the inhospitable prison to an open space for students without losing its historical character," says Philippe Viérin

of the Brussels-based noArchitecten. He compares the new concept of the building to that of a city environment with broader streets and large meeting points but also narrow alleys and hidden corners. "Every time you wander around, you discover new crannies," he says.

The heart of this city is the entrance hall with a dome where a priest used to preach to the prisoners, who watched and listened from stands on the first floor. From here, four main hallways spread out to all corners of the star-shaped structure (pictured). Because the original hallways were claustrophobically low and narrow, they were completely altered. Fresh colours brighten up the atmosphere and also help students to find their way, as they can meet up in the blue, green, yellow or salmon-coloured corridors.

There are two auditoria, with 400 and 200 seats, each with large windows (to make sure the students don't feel penned in). Large gathering places to hang out before or after classes are provided by the cafeteria and the agora, the outside courtyard where prisoners once got their exercise. Student associations are planning to use a space outside with a large stairway to organise open-air movie nights and other outdoor events.

There's no entrance, however, to the so-called "lion's cage", an enclosed outdoor space where the most aggressive criminals spent their breaks in isolation. The most hidden spot in the city, meanwhile, is in the former apartment of the prison manager, where the administration team now has its offices. Somewhere here lies a passage, through which the police could enter the prison if a riot broke out.

Retreating to the (study) cells

There are several intimate spaces spread around the city campus where students can relax or talk in private, on bean bag chairs or benches. The most popular spots are, ironically, the former cells, now decorated as cosy study rooms for a maximum of three students. On the glass doors, the architects have put a series of stripes, as a cheeky allusion to prisoners



FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

Bas Birker

© basbirker.nl



It may not seem like a good time for comedy, what with the weather and the crisis and the state of the planet and all, but the business of making people laugh tends to thrive in hard times. That the ambient depression will bode well for comedy is something for which Bas Birker will be hoping. Birker is a Dutch stand-up comedian living in Antwerp and the founder of a new Comedy Academy, which aims to take aspiring new comedians in hand and teach them some of the tricks of the trade. "We throw the learning material up in the air, and the workshopers pick up what they want," he told Stamp Media. "There's not a single comedian who got where he is today without the help of other comics." Birker's own style is firmly in the tradition of stand-up from Britain and the US, and increasingly in Flanders. That's somewhat different from the Dutch tradition of cabaret, which includes stories, songs and sketches and isn't always so driven in pursuit of laughs. The business in Flanders is in transition from one to the other, and it's not only fertile

ground for home-grown stars like Philippe Geubels and Alex Agnew (who's half-British), but also for imports like Nigel Williams, the Brit-turned-Antwerpenaar. Williams did an English comedy show recently with comedians from England, New Zealand and Canada, as well as Jeroen Pater and Soula Notos from the Netherlands. The Comedy Academy is also going on tour, taking its workshops out to the people, with four dates across Flanders in the coming months. Along the way are open mike nights for anyone who fancies him or herself the next Bert Gabriëls. The only way to do it, any comedian will tell you, is to do it. "There's always talent out there, but someone who's funny in the pub isn't necessarily funny on stage – and vice versa," Birker said. "You can see pretty quickly whether someone has it in them. And every once in a while there's someone who comes bursting out of nowhere when you least expect it."

► www.comedyacademy.be

News in brief

Rail authority NMBS has announced plans to **cancel 170 trains** starting on 9 December. The trains concerned are being cut because they serve fewer than 40 passenger and are no longer cost effective. Seventy-six of the routes are in Flanders, and the full list can be consulted online.

► www.tinyurl.com/NMBScuts

Police in Brussels have arrested a man suspected of being the **jewel thief who terrorised the citizens of Knokke** in recent months in a spate of robberies in which women were forced to hand over rings, watches and necklaces. At one point the prosecutor of Bruges advised members of the public not to go out wearing anything expensive. The man was previously convicted of similar crimes there in France.

The owner of the famous **Flemish bar Monk** near Sint-Katelijne, Horeca Logistic Services, is looking for a new licensee willing to maintain the café's original concept. The previous owners failed to file annual accounts since 2006, and the café has been closed since last June. Two other Flemish cafés in the area – Kafka and Archipel – recently underwent similar closures and changes of management and are now open and operating.

Police in Hamont-Achel in Limburg used a remote-controlled helicopter equipped with a camera to find a **cannabis plantation** in the middle of a cornfield. The drone's camera shoots high-quality images as it flies over terrain and sends them to police computers on the ground. It can also hover over a particular spot to indicate where police need to investigate more closely.

One in three rest homes in Flanders **fails to live up to safety requirements**. Government inspectors visited all 717 residential

care facilities in Flanders over a period of three years and discovered faults such as drugs left within reach of patients with dementia, doors without locks where patients could wander outside and a lack of adequate hygiene products like latex gloves.

Tests for the **presence of tuberculosis** among employees of the Brussels public transport authority MIVB are "encouraging," according to Fares, the foundation for respiratory illnesses. At the end of September one metro driver was found to be infected, and 137 colleagues who had come in contact with the man were tested for TB antibodies. Three were found to be infected.

Last week saw the inauguration of the **fourth European School in Brussels**. The school is located in the former military cadet college in Laken and was officially opened in the presence of close neighbours King Albert and Queen Paola, as well as EU Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso and Flemish education minister Pascal Smet. The new school will host 1,200 pupils from pre-school to secondary levels.

Unions representing civil servants who work for the Flemish government have been asked to come up with a plan to tackle the planned **reduction of €100 million in spending on staff salaries**. The plan was one of the main ingredients of the budget announced in September by minister-president Kris Peeters. According to one union representative, the instruction will allow unions "some margin to come up with creative proposals and approach the problem in an intelligent manner."

Ghent University last week started working with the first **Tier 1 supercomputer** of the

Flemish Supercomputer Centre (VSC), a complex intended to allow researchers from academic institutions and companies access to the most high-performing computers available. The centre also oversees the Tier 2 computers installed locally at all Flemish universities.

ING Bank has warned customers to beware of **fake emails** asking for account information in connection with a supposed new security system. The emails appear to come from an ING address but contain a link that diverts to a website where account details can be harvested by fraudsters. The bank stressed that they never ask for personal information by email or phone and advised anyone who receives such an email to forward it to be-irm-phishing@ing.be.

The federal police in Ghent last week made international headlines when it was discovered that a **brand new police station in the city** had been completed without a single telephone line or computer connection. "We've got light and water, and that's as far as it goes," one police officer said. The building is intended to house 40 officers, a laboratory and the medical service. The planned residency of early next year will be postponed while lines are installed.

Flemish heritage minister Geert Bourgeois is preparing a plan that would legally **protect advertisements painted on side-gables of buildings**. Sites will be studied for "historical context and potential heritage value", and a selection criteria will be established, Bourgeois said. Also last week, the minister announced a subsidy of €2.6 million for the restoration of two Bruges landmarks: the Sint-Salvator Cathedral and the Church of Our Lady, which houses a sculpture of the Madonna and Child by Michelangelo.

FLANDERS TODAY

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VERANTWOORDELIJKE UITGEVER

Hans De Loore

OFFSIDE

Gnome not included

It's the archetypal red-and-white mushroom, looks as if it had been designed by a five-year-old and is the largest one in Flanders. Flemish nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt last week announced the results of a competition to find the largest mushroom specimen in the region, and the winner is 26.5 centimetres in height. The red toadstool with the white dots, *Amanita muscaria*, is called fly agaric in English and goes by the marvellous name of *vliegenschwam* in Dutch. It's native to these parts, and indeed all of the Northern Hemisphere.

The fly agaric gets its name (supposedly) from the practice of crumbling it up and sprinkling it into milk to kill insects – something you might think foolhardy, given that it contains a psychoactive ingredient that can be, well, intoxicating – or make you sick. At other times, it was considered a good luck charm,

and in some places, such as Siberia, where it may have originated, it was invested with religious properties. The mushroom is naturally red, and the white spots are the remains of the covering the young fungus wears while it is ripening, perhaps to keep it from being eaten. The largest specimen in Flanders was discovered by Ward Bogaerts in De Pinte, East Flanders, with honourable mention going to

Jenny Torfs for her 23-centimetre specimen found in Wortel, Antwerp province. Photos of the winners, as well as a number of other entries, some of them highly comical, can be seen on the Natuurpunt website. Pictured below is our favourite, from Olivia De Mey, who found her 'shroom on the nature reserve in Kalmthout, Antwerp province.

► www.degrootstevliegenschwam.be



Prison education

Law student numbers in Hasselt have multiplied five times in four years

► continued from page 1

counting down the days until they got out.

"We often talk about it when we study here," says Alper Darici, 23, who is in his first year of law studies. "Now it's a perfect place to concentrate on your books for a few hours, but it's unbelievable to think that two people had to spend whole days in such a confined room, with only a small window high up in the wall."

Like Darici, Dethé Gijbels – also a first-year student – retreats to the study rooms almost every day for a few hours. "You always have to hurry," the 18-year-old says, "because they fill up quickly."

Although both students feel comfortable in the former jail and are glad to study close to Hasselt's centre, they share two points of criticism: the difficulty of finding the right classroom and the use of naked concrete, which sometimes feels cold. And what do the professors think? Bernard Vanheusden, specialist in environmental law, is satisfied with the update of the electronic equipment, such as touch screens, in an atmosphere that has retained historical elements as well. "There are sometimes technical teething problems, for example, with the water supply, but that's normal in a new building of this scale," he says.



"It's a perfect place to concentrate on your books for a few hours, but it's unbelievable to think that two people had to spend whole days here"

"I'm especially looking forward to the summer, when we can sit outside on the terraces of the campus and stroll to the city centre at lunch."

Koen Santermans is the director of communications at UHasselt. "You have to remember, we are still in a start-up phase, and a few details need to be finished off," he says. "I admit that it is difficult to find your way;

we are planning to install a network of signs soon. The naked concrete will not be covered, but the hallways will be further brightened up with all sorts of decoration, to provide more of a cosy atmosphere." In the near future, a bookshop will also open on the campus.



► www.uhasselt.be

The new law campus of the University of Hasselt, incorporated into the city's 19th-century prison, is a mix of small former cells, narrow hallways and wide, open spaces

THE VIEW OF THE RECTOR

Rector Luc De Schepper on this milestone in the history of the University of Hasselt

Why was it necessary to found a new campus?

Because the University of Hasselt is growing exponentially. We started our law programme in 2008 with around 270 students, now there are about five times that here. Ten years ago, the whole university housed about 2,000 students. Next year, we will integrate certain studies from university colleges, which will raise our total number of students to nearly 5,000.

Why was this location chosen?

Ever since we changed our name from Limburgs Universitair Centrum to the University of Hasselt in 2005, we have been looking to open a campus in Hasselt itself. It was a long search, which ended in 2008, when the Flemish government approved our proposal to establish a campus in the former prison. It was deteriorating after the last prisoners were transferred to a new

complex, also in 2005. It was not an obvious choice, but now it's really fulfilling its potential.

What were the principal requests given to the architects?

The University of Hasselt has fewer students who come to live near the university all week; they mostly commute. That means that they stay longer before, between and after classes, to study or hang out with classmates. It was essential to create a warm, green space with a community feeling, with many places where they can gather in both small and larger groups. We also wanted the architects to take into account that we have a unique small-scale education system; the students mostly follow lessons in groups of about 20.

How much did the project cost?

It was an investment of around €30 million, with

the transformation of the former jail costing €8 million. Most of the funding was provided by Limburg Sterk Merk, a foundation that supports economic development projects in the province of Limburg. The university also contributed a modest part.

What are the advantages for the whole region of Limburg?

It helps stop the brain drain of young talent to other provinces. The university wants to be a motor for the knowledge economy of Limburg, stimulating innovation through interaction with companies. The region can benefit from our international network, our research results and our education of professionals. The building itself is ideal for the organisation of a broad scale of activities such as symposia, conferences and book presentations.



Four local victims in Jordan bus accident

The weekend's crash claims four lives from Brussels and Flanders, while four more are seriously injured

Alan Hope

A holiday coach carrying 16 Belgians and two Luxembourgers on a tour of Jordan organised by Thomas Cook crashed at the weekend, killing four people from Brussels and Flanders. Four more from the regions were seriously injured. The coach crashed following a visit to the city of Petra on the return road to the capital Amman. Other passengers sustained slight injuries and were suffering from shock. The four seriously injured were taken to the King Hussein Medical Centre in Amman. Some of the injured in hospital in Karak were visited by the Belgian ambassador to Jordan and Jordan's prime minister Abdullah Ensour. Seven Belgians have since been flown home.

The four dead have been named as married couple Alex Rodts, 51, and Katrien Ryckaert, 56, from Ghent; Alicia Bas, 21, from Brussels, who had been given the trip as a gift from her father and brother; and Inge Bens, 43, a teacher and alderwoman in Wommelgem, Antwerp province. Relatives of the dead and injured were flown to Jordan on Sunday. The crash is thought to have been caused when the bus was hit by a trailer attached to a truck coming from the opposite direction. The bus then left the road and rolled over several times before landing upright. "The exact circumstances of the accident are being investigated by the Jordanian police," a spokesman for Thomas Cook said. The driver of the truck has been detained.



From left: Jordan's minister of tourism Nayef al Fayez, Belgian Ambassador to Jordan Johan Indekeu and Jordan's new prime minister Abdullah Ensour visit one of the Belgian tourists injured in the bus crash

Colruyt defends its low-cost title

Flemish supermarket chain Colruyt has held on to its place as the cheapest supermarket in the country, according to the annual survey carried out by the consumer organisation Test-Aankoop. Test-Aankoop tested the price of a standard basket of products, food and non-food, including bio products. Compared to Colruyt, shoppers in Delhaize pay 9% more for the same products, and in Carrefour 10% more. Interestingly, the low-budget chains Match and Smatch came out worst: 26% and 28% more than Colruyt. One chain, the Delhaize-owned discount store Red Market, was



scrapped from the survey after it became clear that their prices had been deliberately manipulated to coincide with Test-Aankoop's visit. Test-Aankoop later found prices up to 20% higher for the same products. Red Market denies the allegation.

Local fines could be illegal, judge warns

The system of municipal administrative fines issued by local councils for cases of public nuisance may have to be reformed, after a judge in Turnhout ruled that the fines must be imposed by an employee of the municipality itself. At present, one official is often designated to deal with the so-called GAS fines for a group of municipalities – for example, within a police zone. GAS fines are fixed-penalty sanctions used to combat public nuisances, like noise, litter and vandalism. The police zone of Turnhout has one official for eight municipalities, while Mechelen has

one for 13 municipalities. According to the judge, fines handed out in areas other than the municipality that employs the official have no legal basis. The fines have recently come under scrutiny after complaints that they were being used for purposes other than public nuisance. In Mechelen last week, for example, a secondary school student was picked up by police for eating a sandwich while sitting on the steps of a church. The Flemish union of cities and municipalities has called for the federal government to clarify the law on GAS fines.

Charter for gender-friendly schools

Flemish education minister Pascal Smet has agreed to a charter with the region's various education networks to fight discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in schools. Smet (pictured), whose portfolio also includes youth and equal opportunities, said that the charter was "a strong commitment to make schools more acceptable of LGBT young people and more gender friendly. Young people who have feelings they can't place will be able to learn to understand them and to

grow in a supportive environment." According to the Flemish group for school students, the problem is not a minor one. "Bullying, depression and suicidal feelings are a reality among young people," explained chairperson Elio De Bolle. "Education and the right information can sweep away anxiety and prejudice." The charter allows the questions of orientation and gender to be brought up in any of a school's lessons where it is relevant, and teachers will be

trained to deal with the issues in the presence of students "from cultures that have a different view of the matter," said Smet. "That's the very time it's important to bring the subject up because schools are one of the means whereby the values and standards of a society are passed on." Smet's department will send a teacher to schools in Flanders to gather examples of good practice and class materials, which will be presented to the profession at a study day in May.



THE WEEK IN FIGURES

139,000

visitors to this year's International Film Festival of Flanders in Ghent, a record number

55,000

office parking spaces to be scrapped by the Brussels-Capital Region, from a total number of 225,000, in an effort to encourage greater use of public transport

€588,000

in subsidies made available by Flemish tourism minister Geert Bourgeois for holiday homes and recreational areas, such as Molenheide bungalow park in Hectel-Eksel, Limburg province

21

the age of the youngest alderperson in Flanders following the municipal elections: Silke Lathouwers, a law student now responsible for youth, events, e-government and equal opportunities in Kalmthout, Antwerp province

42,000

tonnes of road salt in stock at the Flemish roads and traffic agency in preparation for winter

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Stand and deliver

Drawing up a budget is never an easy task, but the federal government has an exceptionally difficult job on its hands this time. The economy has come to a standstill. Every day there are new announcements of jobs lost, not just at Ford Genk, but also in many smaller companies. Prime minister Elio Di Rupo postponed budget talks until after the local elections to avoid electioneering, but now everyone agrees that he has to deliver.

The opposition in Flanders has never been this powerful. On the Flemish side, the Di Rupo government has no majority in parliament. The three traditional parties, Christian-democrats, liberals and socialists, which do take part in the federal government, are feeling the heat from N-VA, the nationalist party that on 14 October once again showed its strength. They all have something to prove, if only that this federal government is able to act without N-VA.

All three parties have reasons to feel uncomfortable. N-VA leaders constantly call this administration a "taxation government". This is particularly unpleasant for Open VLD, as (low) taxes are the party's core business. But SPA and CD&V, too, find it nearly impossible to differentiate themselves from the French-speaking socialists, whom many people blame for everything that goes wrong in Belgium.

Higher taxes is just one of the taboos with which the Di Rupo government has to contend. Some creativity may be necessary here, as taxes on labour are already one of the highest in the world. Taxes on capital gains or on the generation of pollution may be an outcome – but will never be popular.

Another taboo is the country's index mechanism, which links wages to the cost of living. Employer organisations complain about this, as it makes labour even more expensive. However, the index mechanism is also credited with keeping Belgium safe from the worst of the economic crisis. Parties on the left, invariably great supporters of the index, may now have to give in on this. This will directly hit the purchasing power of millions of workers, so it will hardly be popular, either, and could lead to industrial action.

Now is the time for the Flemish parties in the federal government to demonstrate that they can do what N-VA does not at this moment on the federal level: govern.

Tougher energy standards for new homes

Owners can save 50% on property taxes if they surpass energy norms

Alan Hope

Owners of new homes built in Flanders will benefit from a 50% discount on annual property taxes if the house is more energy-saving than the norms in place. Those who go further still in building passive houses could qualify for a full discount. In both cases, the rebate lasts for five years. At present, houses that do better than the existing norms can get rebates of 20% or 40% over 10 years. Since that measure was introduced in 2009, the limits have been made stricter, and now the government of Flanders has approved more extensive rebates, on a proposal from energy minister Freya Van den Bossche and budget minister Philippe Muyters. When the measure was introduced, the energy performance level of all new homes was set at a maximum of E90, and that has gone steadily down, to E80 in 2010, E70 in 2011 and,

from 2014, to E70. The E-number – the lower the better – is calculated according to an internationally recognised index and takes into account heating efficiency, insulation and ventilation, among other factors.

From 2014, all new constructions will be required not only to consume less energy but to produce energy as well, by, for example, installing solar panels, solar boilers or heat pumps. According to the Flemish construction confederation, the industry is ready to meet the new requirements. "The builder has to take into account extra spending of a few thousand euros, but they are also able to make money back," said Marc Dillen of the confederation.

The effect of the measure, according to Van den Bossche, will be to make almost all new homes energy neutral by 2021.



Some cities better than others for businesses

An urban environment is good for companies in the creative, advertising and ICT sectors, but not for other industries usually associated with cities, like retail, food service and construction.

A study carried out by Brussels University college, Unizo and consultancy Graydon looked at the sectoral economy in five cities in Belgium, including Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent (including surrounding municipalities). It found that wholesale, retail and food service in the three cities barely rose above the average, and sometimes fell below.

When it came to the creative

industries, however, the picture was quite different. Against a national index of 1, Brussels scored 2.75 on film, video and music, and close to 2 for other creative and performing arts; Ghent scored 2.75 on the arts, and Antwerp, perhaps surprisingly, reached only 1.4 on the arts, and failed to reach the index for the other sectors.

Brussels and Ghent also score highly in ICT, advertising and the administrative services industry (information, computers and consultancy): more than 2 for advertising and market research in Brussels and for services in Ghent, and above 1.5 in Ghent for ICT and



Brussels is good for ICT, advertising and information services

in Brussels for ICT and services.

The conclusion of the study is that economic policy for cities needs to be approached more broadly, by, for instance, applying measures aimed at "greening" across the board rather than in specific sectors. And if the various levels of government are applying sector-specific policies in innovation, for example, they need to take account of the "innovation DNA" of the city in question and concentrate on the sector that offers the most overflow possibilities into other sectors.

► www.tinyurl.com/graydonstudy

Horeca expects reprieve on smart tills

The federal government is likely to postpone the introduction of "smart" cash registers for the food service industry, according to finance minister Steven Vanackere, speaking last week in the Senate.

Smart cash registers are essentially computers that register every transaction in a way that cannot be manipulated. In a restaurant, for example, all servers have their own key-code, and every action is recorded by the machine. The industry is being forced to introduce the smart registers as a tool in the fight against the

widespread use of workers who are not registered for tax and social security.

The registers had been planned for 1 July 2013, but the industry, which includes bars, cafés and restaurants, claims that meeting that deadline could mean the loss of 25,000 jobs in Flanders alone. According to a survey carried out by the sector federation Horeca Vlaanderen, 52% of businesses questioned forecast problems as a result of the registers, and 9% feared they would go out of business. According to the federal agency for social security, one in three inspections of food service businesses reveal the use of undocumented labour, involving 4,800 employees across the country. The restaurant sector scored higher than three other problem sectors combined.

In 2010, the government lowered VAT from 21% to 12% as a response to industry complaints that employing people legally involved too many taxes. The industry – most businesses declined to pass the savings on to the customer – promised in turn to do all it could to stop undocumented labour. The effects of the VAT cut, the sector now says, have been wiped out by the economic crisis.



Lutosa potatoes goes to Canadians

McCain from Canada is the new owner of Lutosa, the manufacturer of processed potato products based in Westrozebeke, West Flanders – contrary to reports in the press in September that Lamb Weston of the US was the new owner.

Parent company Penguin Lutosa, which makes frozen potato products such as fries and mashed potatoes as well as potato flakes and starch for other processed food producers, had received three bids for the Lutosa division, purchased in 2007 for €130 million from the Van Den Broeke family. They were McCain, Lamb Weston (a subsidiary of ConaGra Foods) and the Dutch Aviko.

In September, it was reported that the race had gone to Lamb Weston, for a price of €225 million. According to a company announcement last week, the price was

right, but the purchaser was McCain, a privately owned company based in New Brunswick. McCain is active in 12 countries, including Belgium, which produces one-third of all the fries in the world.

Apparently Lamb Weston was given the chance in September to negotiate exclusively with Penguin Lutosa about its bid, and Penguin issued a press release stating it was in talks with one party. According to reports, Lamb Weston could not, or would not, offer guarantees on future investment and lost its advantage. The deal then fell into the hands of McCain, which was ready to offer guarantees. The agreement now has to await the green light from EU competition authorities.

► www.lutosa.com

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Bakery ► La Lorraine

La Lorraine Bakery Group, based in Ninove, East Flanders, has been named Belgian Enterprise of the Year by Ernst & Young, which has handed out the award since 1995. La Lorraine, best known for its Panos chain, employs 2,500 people and has grown by an average of 14% a year over the last 15 years, to achieve sales in 2011 of €480 million.

Chemicals ► Innovation Award

Emulsons supplier Emulco and chemical company BASF won the first Innovation Award, handed out last week by Essencia, Belgium's chemical industry federation. The companies won for their advances in producing polyisobutylene in emulsion form, making the product easier to use. The process will create new jobs in Emulco's facility in the port of Ghent.

Chemicals ► Solvay

The Brussels-based plastics and chemicals group is investing €26 million in its French Tavaux plant to increase capacity of special PVDF polymers.

Entertainment

► Tomorrowland

The Dutch company ID&T, partial owners of the Tomorrowland dance festival in Boom, Antwerp province, have turned down a takeover bid worth €77 million. The company declined to say who lodged the bid, but American media entrepreneur Robert Sillerman is known to have expressed an interest. "Our concept is not for sale," commented founder Manu Beers.

Holdings ► Verlinvest

The Verlinvest holding company, controlled by the shareholding families of AB Inbev, is bidding to acquire the salty snacks and chips division of UK-based United Biscuits.

Hotels ► Pullman

The up-market chain of hotels, part of the Accor group will open a hotel near Brussels' South Station next summer. The new four-star property will have 237 rooms and up to 10 meeting rooms. Meanwhile, the landmark White hotel, on Brussels' Louizalaan has been taken over by the Cointet family and will shortly operate under the Ibis Styles brand.

Surfaces ► Desso

Flooring and turf manufacturer Desso, based in Dendermonde, East Flanders, will continue with a slimmed-down tufting and coating division of its own, after a planned takeover by carpets group Domo in Sint-Niklaas, fell through. Desso workers were originally offered a premium of up to €12,000 to move over to Domo but voted against.

"This is so unjust"

Ford Genk to close by 2014, with the loss of up to 10,000 jobs

Alan Hope

The Flemish government will set up a task force for Limburg, following the announcement that sent shock waves throughout Flanders last week: The Ford motor factory in Genk, which was thought to have been saved from the axe only a month ago, will close in 2014.

The news came after a rapidly arranged board meeting, announced on Monday, 22 October, which led to speculation that there was bad news on the way – particularly as Ford asked for an appointment with Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters. Suspicions were confirmed at the end of the meeting on Wednesday. The closure will directly affect the 4,300 people employed at Ford Genk and affect at least as many employed by Ford suppliers in the Genk area. That includes Kautex Textron in Tessenderlo, which employs 220 people making fuel tanks, and Zender Industrie in Genk, with 98 employees making spoilers and bumpers.

Workers at the Ford test track in Lommel, also in Limburg, laid down their tools on Thursday for 24 hours, in solidarity with their colleagues in Genk. The 380 employees at the test track are for the time being not affected by the Genk closure.

A legal procedure for the closure of a manufacturing plant of this size, the so-called Renault law, was introduced when the French car company closed its Vilvoorde plant in 1997. However, early indications are that Ford is likely to offer a redundancy payment of \$100,000 (about €77,000) to each departing worker, while about 1,800 over the age of 50 could be allowed a bridging pension to cover them to the legal retirement age.

Jobs going to Spain

Fears for the closure of Ford Genk have hung in the air for a long time, based on the plummeting sales of cars in Europe and that the factory was operating at only 48% capacity, according to Ford's figures. But those fears were assuaged only a month ago, when the Ford parent company in the US announced that Ford Genk would stay open, producing the new Mondeo from October of 2013 and the new S-Max

© Belpa



Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters consoles Ford Genk workers at the factory last week

and Galaxy from the end of 2014. Now Ford has said it will close Genk and production will move instead to Valencia in Spain, where wages are lower than in Limburg. In a special session of the Flemish parliament on the day of the announcement, there was widespread and bitter criticism of Ford's decision, which many members referred to as "breach of contract" and "going back on a promise".

"This is a cold shower," said Peeters, who is also economy minister. "We have done everything to keep Ford Genk open. This is a nightmare for more than 4,300 workers and for those who work for suppliers, a total of 10,000 people. It came as a bolt from the blue."

Peeters also accused Ford of unilaterally breaking an agreement. "How in God's name is it possible

that things can have got so much worse in such a short period?" According to SP.A member of the Flemish parliament Mia De Vits: "This is a multinational that is cynically playing member states against one another. Europe must urgently learn a lesson from this."

Task force to discuss early pensions

The federal government, meanwhile, finds itself divided over the possibility of allowing Ford workers over the age of 50 to draw a bridging pension, effectively allowing them to retire 15 years earlier than the current pension age. "I first want to see what the social plan for Genk is, and then we will decide," said labour minister Monica De Coninck.

The new pensions minister,

Alexander De Croo, though, said that a 15-year bridge would be "irresponsible". The government should concentrate on the workers' future, he said. "It's unthinkable that such competent workers should have no future left."

The task force announced will involve the government as well as unions and employers, and one of its main jobs will be to attract new investors to Limburg in an effort to stimulate employment. "It will not be easy," Peeters said. "But we have to group our forces together, shoulder to shoulder."

Socialist MEP Katherine Van Brempt, a former Flemish minister for social economy, called for the European Commission to have the power to screen the restructuring plans of multinationals to ensure that member states compete fairly with each other.

REACTIONS

"I am furious. This is so unjust for the workers ... Ford has broken its agreement with society and with Limburg. Today is a day for pure emotion and compassion."

Flemish innovation minister and Limburger Ingrid Lieten



"The decision to close Ford Genk is not yet definitive. We have a moral duty to see if this wave of redundancies can still be avoided."

Federal finance minister Steven Vanackere

"Agreements are binding. They can't just be abandoned unilaterally. The management committed itself, and that is legally binding. This could cost them a lot of money."

Roger Blanpain, professor emeritus of labour law at the University of Leuven



"The vast majority of those who work here are semi-skilled. They're used to working with bolts and screws and know nothing but these factory walls. No-one seems to realise that this is a bloodbath for Limburg."

Union spokesperson Gaby Colenbunders

"This decision borders on the unethical."

Peter Leyman, former boss of Volvo Cars in Ghent



"Half of all Limburg companies with more than 20 employees can expect income or job losses ... 40%

of companies who have no links with Ford say the closure will have an impact on their business."

Gert Schreurs of the Limburg enterprise organisation VKW

"I've worked here for 35 years. How do you think I feel. Everyone is devastated. I'm 52 years old. What do I do now?"



Other car manufacturers may have jobs for Genk workers

Audi Brussels, one of only two major car manufacturers left in Flanders together with Volvo Ghent, said it was looking for 70 new technical workers for jobs that would perfectly fit the profile of some of the Ford Genk employees. Audi underwent its own severe job losses in 2006-2007, when some 2,500 workers were laid off. "Our members can imagine what the workers of Ford

Genk are now going through," said union representative Edwin De Clercq.

The technology federation Agoria will raise the question of Ford Genk on a pre-arranged visit to China this week. Agoria had already planned to discuss cooperation between automobile manufacturers and suppliers in Flanders and investors in China, who now own the Volvo Cars plant

in Ghent.

Toyota has announced it will take on 100 new staff at its research and development facility in Zaventem, which currently employs 850.

Meanwhile, the bankers' federation Febelfin has promised to look into special arrangements to handle the debt and mortgages of Ford Genk workers, according to Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, who held a weekend

meeting with the association. "They will examine the possibility of enacting a general ruling for the employees of Ford, its suppliers and other companies who may go out of business."

The government itself is making immediate plans to start using the €57 million it had set aside for efforts to keep Ford production in Genk, without waiting for the actual closure in 2014.

A place in the sun

Algae is the crop of the future, according to researchers in Geel

Senne Starckx

Algae occupy the lowest and most fundamental level in the ecosystems of oceans, rivers and lakes. Now, though, these simple organisms are making their way onto dry land. With the attempt to move towards a more sustainable and bio-based economy in mind, researchers and industry are more and more considering algae a high-value "crop".

Fish farms, for example, use a huge amount of fishmeal and fish oil to feed all their fish. It takes on average two kilos of food, which is largely made up of fish and sea animals caught in the ocean, to produce one kilo of edible farmed fish. That's not sustainable. But there's an alternative.

Instead of serving ground fish from the open sea, we can also feed farmed fish with algae-based fish food, which is the basic food in most aquatic ecosystems. Algae – a group name for thousands of uni- and multi-cellular organisms that perform photosynthesis – contain many unsaturated fatty acids (like omega-3 and omega-6), antioxidants, some essential amino acids and other substances that we humans associate with a healthy diet.

What's more, algae, as a whole or after processing, can be used in food products for humans, in cosmetics, in health additives, in animal feed and in industrial chemistry.

To show to industry that cultivating algae – called algaculture – is a promising and economically viable method of moving towards a bio-based and sustainable economy, the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (Vito) and the University College Thomas More Kempen are building a large pilot installation, known as Sunbuilt, at the Thomas More campus in Geel. The photobioreactor (PBR), a



Sunbuilt project manager Bert Lemmens is working to cultivate high-quality algae in large glass tubes under meticulously controlled conditions

machine in which algae can grow thanks to sunlight and water while producing oxygen and biomass, is due to start working in the autumn of next year.

Growing algae how-to

So how are algae cultivated? "You have several options," explains Bert Lemmens of Vito. "You can cultivate them in large open ponds of shallow water, with a paddle wheel that moves the water around. Those ponds are placed inside greenhouses, which opens up new opportunities for Flemish horticulture."

Other options, he says, are cultivating them inside PBRs,

consisting of tubes, flat panels or plastic bags. "The appropriate method depends on the type of algae and the desired end product."

Only a limited number of algae can be produced in open ponds. That's why a photobioreactor was chosen for this project. In the PBR, the quality of the algae can be regulated more effectively. Algae are very sensitive to changes in temperature or light, leading to a different quality of algae. So for this pilot installation, a PBR was a logical choice.

The production scale of the Sunbuilt algae plant lies between the laboratory and industrial level. "Sunbuilt will yield up to 500 kilos

of algae, in dry powder, per year," says Lemmens. "That's enough to perform daily tests concerning the quality and the applicability of the algae powder." Vito's role in the project is in the harvesting and processing technology.

"Sunbuilt is a good example of a symbiotic relationship," says Lemmens. "Our strength is our experience in separation and bio-refinery techniques. Our partner, Thomas More Kempen, has expertise in greenhouse cultivation, which has many similarities with algae production."

Boost across industry

Algaculture is also an opportunity to reinforce Flemish industry in many different fields. Horticulture, a sector that has been suffering for some time from competition from producers in other countries, will have a new crop with high added value. The food industry will have new ingredients. The chemical industry will have sustainable resources.

"Also, we could replace part of the soy that is used in animal feed and comes from countries like Brazil with algae," says Lemmens. "This would contribute to a more sustainable agriculture in Flanders and reduce the excess production of manure. The applications range, then, from extremely high to low added-value products."

The world of algae yields a huge richness of diversity, with an estimated 200,000 to 800,000 sorts. Of these species, only 50,000 have been described by science and less than 100 have been produced at laboratory scale. There is, therefore, still an enormous potential for new crops and products that is still undeveloped.

► www.sunbuilt.be

Q&A

Professor Herman Terryn is a specialist in "self-healing materials" at the Free University of Brussels (VUB)

Materials that repair themselves? It sounds like science fiction.

In fact we often make the comparison with RoboCop's indestructible suit. But certain cars already have a coating that erases scratches and nicks when the sun shines on it. To protect its space technology, NASA develops self-healing materials. Estimates show that in five years' time, self-healing materials will be developed for aircraft, nuclear reactors and oil pipelines because tiny cracks in any of them have a huge impact on people and the environment. It will also be far cheaper in the long term to build roads, tunnels and wind turbines with self-healing materials than to have to continuously maintain and repair them.

Do all materials "heal" in the same way?

Think of yourself when you are sick

or injured: Often your body heals itself, but sometimes you need medicines or bandages. With, say, concrete, scientists can incorporate bacteria that automatically repairs small cracks. Certain polymers need heat or light to trigger a chemical process and be "cured". Polymers, like rubber, are easiest to make self-healing, while the most difficult material is glass. There is a lot of chemical "life" or activity inside polymers, while glass is as good as dead chemically.

What are the challenges in introducing self-healing materials?

While it's fairly easy to develop materials that repair themselves once, it's a lot harder to make sure they can repeat this feat. We also have to be completely sure that new products don't cause health problems; in the

past, carcinogenic substances were used. Furthermore, positive characteristics of the material are often affected after the material is adapted – the hardness, for example.

What is Flanders' role in this research area?

Since 2009, Flemish universities have been cooperating with material-producing companies in the Strategic Initiative Materials platform, funded by the government of Flanders. Researchers at Ghent University and VUB are collaborating in specialised networks, focusing on self-healing polymers, concrete and coatings. Recticel, a manufacturer of polyurethane foam products such as mattresses, supports our work. Flanders has a pioneering role worldwide, which is why the international conference



on self-healing materials takes place in Ghent next year. Interview by Andy Furniere

► www.icshsm2013.be

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Professor Thierry Vanden-Driessche, director of the gene therapy and regenerative medicine department at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), has been given the **Outstanding Achievement Award** by the European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy. It's the first time this international prize has been won by a Flemish scientist. VandenDriessche and colleague Marinee Chuah were the first to cure the hereditary genetic disorder haemophilia in test animals. Haemophilia reduces the blood's ability to clot, causing spontaneous or longer bleedings than normal.

Inverto, a technology spin-off of Ghent University, has created the **first magnet-free engine** for the electric car industry. The engine is made of brass and tin, while current electric engines need magnets made of neodymium, which is derived only from China and is becoming more expensive. The magnet-free engine will now be installed in a demonstration vehicle for the Electric Powertrain project. This project of Flanders Drive, the research centre for the vehicle industry, is developing a new powertrain for electric vehicles with 12 industrial partners.

Half of all Flemish women between the ages of 50 and 69 took part in a **free breast cancer screening** in 2010 and 2011. According to the Flemish Agency for Care and Health, more than 2,900 of these women had a tumour. Around half of the tumours were detected in the early stages where the chances of successful treatment are above 95%.

The University of Leuven has organised a "first stone ceremony" at the Heverlee campus, where the university is building **new research facilities** and high-tech infrastructure. The two buildings, with a surface area of 18,000 square metres, provide space for 500 researchers. The facilities will be dedicated to chemistry, nanofabrication and high-precision measurements. The cost of the facilities and high-tech infrastructure is €140 million. Construction should be finished by spring 2014.

The psychology department of the University of Leuven will next year carry out a major survey on happiness. The study divide about 1,000 subjects into three groups: one group will receive a daily tip provided by Leo Bormans, author of *The World Book of Happiness*, another will receive counselling, and the control group will be left alone. After six months the subjects will be tested to measure the effects, if any, of the interventions.

► www.tinyurl.com/kulgeluk



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Red river

Follow the Dijle to Sint-Agatha-Rode and immerse yourself in the beauty of nature

Denzil Walton

The 86-kilometre River Dijle rises near Nivelles in Wallonia but soon crosses the border a few kilometres south of Sint-Agatha-Rode. Here the river drunkenly zigzags through the fertile Flemish fields before sobering up and straightening out as if in reverence to its next ports of call: the cathedral towns of Leuven and Mechelen.

Around Sint-Agatha-Rode the Dijle's sharp bends have over the centuries become inaccessible to local farmers and are thus pockets of wildness: at this time of the year, a mass of Himalayan balsam. This relative of the garden Busy Lizzie is actually an unwanted introduction, but I can't help liking it. Its purple or pink helmet-shaped flowers are pretty, and its seed pods are such fun; when ripe, they burst explosively with a delicate squeeze.

The village is named after Saint Agatha, the Christian martyr who was born in Sicily and died there in 251 AD. Among the tortures she endured was the removal of her breasts. In paintings, she is often depicted carrying her breasts on a plate.

It's no surprise that Agatha is the patron saint for breast cancer. Less obvious is why she's also the patron saint of bakers. This job may have been added to her CV from the mistaken impression that the paintings showed her carrying bread rolls.

Liberty Tree

I assumed that the *rode* (red) in the village name was linked with Agatha's spilt blood, but I was way off. It's from the Dutch word *rooting*, which means to uproot. It simply refers to the digging up of trees in the 11th century to make way for the village.

The village church dates from the 13th century but has been restored multiple times. In 1578, iconoclasts set it on fire. During the Second World War, the nearby Dijle bridge was blown up, simultaneously blowing out many of the church's stained-glass windows.

More resistant to the blast was the magnificent *vrijheidsboom* (liberty tree) in front of the church, which was planted in 1830 to mark the independence of Belgium. Since then it's reached a height of over 30 metres and a girth of nearly five metres.

A pleasant 7.5-kilometre walk encircles Sint-Agatha-Rode and is excellently signposted. Along the way, you can stop off at the Grootbroek, a 30-hectare man-made lake and nature reserve. Despite its large expanse (hence its name), the Grootbroek is shallow, making it a favoured eatery for waders, herons and egrets – particularly in the spring and autumn migration periods. Overlooking the Grootbroek

is a very smart wooden bird observation hide. It even has posters and info materials available – and is, amazingly, graffiti-free.

Bats on the water

The walk continues through the Rodebos (Red Forest), where in 1907 the remnants of a Roman villa were discovered. On the return path, you get to walk alongside another river – the Lane – which flows into the Dijle just north of the village.

The Rodebos and the Lane Valley are renowned among local naturalists as favourite hunting grounds for many species of bat. One type regularly identified in the area is Daubenton's bat. Of medium size, it's sometimes known as the water bat as you'll often see it flying a few centimetres over the Lane's surface, feeding on small flies and midges.

Daubenton's bat also plucks insects directly from the water using its large feet, or sweeps up water bugs with its tail membrane. Being nocturnal, bats are not the easiest mammals to spot. You're more likely to see a roe deer browsing among the beech trees.

Staying over

There used to be 40 cafes in Sint-Agatha-Rode. One of them has been converted into a lovely B&B on Leuvensebaan: the Huis van Rooi. Established two years ago by local midwife Benedicte Vansina, it has already attracted guests from as far afield as Mexico, Japan and South Africa.

"Business people regularly stay here as their 'second home' because we are so much more cosy than a hotel," Vansina says. "Tourists are attracted by the peaceful countryside and the endless walking, cycling and mountain bike routes."

If you would rather be on two wheels than two feet, then you might be interested in paying a visit to Bike & Adventure on Oude Waversebaan. Here you can hire a mountain bike or a touring bike for adults and kids for €15 a day. They can also supply maps and recommendations for your excursion. If you want to take to the water, Bike & Adventure is also the place to go: They offer mini-rafts at €9 per person, which you can take for a paddle down the Dijle.

For a pleasant evening glass of something (or to quench your thirst after your walk, cycle or paddle), Vansina recommends the newly restored village cafe De Plataan, virtually next-door to The Huis van Rooi.

► www.tinyurl.com/sint-agatha-rode

► www.huisvanrooi.be



Sint-Agatha-Rode in Flemish Brabant is home to a wealth of wildlife; despite iconoclasm and World Wars, the 13th-century village church still stands; the cosiest breakfast nook in town can be found at Huis van Rooi

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Child's play

Actions speak louder than words at Bronks' multicultural theatre festival

Marie Dumont

"Don't pander to children. Be honest," urged the late American children's writer and illustrator Maurice Sendak. The quote would be a fit motto for Bronks, Brussels' flagship venue for Dutch-language children's theatre. Any resemblance to the name of a New York borough is purely coincidental: Bronks stands for BRussel ONderwijs KunSt (or Brussels Education Art) and was founded in 1991 in a bid to give children a chance to experience, and perhaps have their lives changed by, live theatre. Housed in a striking modern building in Brussels' Sint-Katelijne district since 2009, Bronks is no shrine to nostalgia or escapism: It has its mind to the future and its eyes to the world, as symbolised by the building's glass facade, which overlooks the busy Varkensmarkt and floods the place with natural daylight. It also stands out in its refusal to talk down to its young audiences – productions are profound and stimulating, socially relevant and frequently unsettling, even if they are told in a style and a language simple enough to be understood by all.

"Our shows are for everyone, not just children," insists Oda Van Neygen, who founded the venue and still runs it today. "There is only one criterion for making a production at Bronks: You must have something you need to say, a story you want to tell. Only once that is established do we start thinking about how that story can be told to children."

No words needed

Bronks is about to present the first edition of a new festival called Export/Import. Ten performances will be staged over three days, from traditional theatre to circus, dance and quirky interactive installations. Most will be staged at Bronks, but a handful will take place at sister francophone theatre La Montagne Magique.

As its name indicates, the festival serves a double purpose: to bring to Brussels the best of international children's theatre, while also showcasing a few hand-picked Flemish productions in the hope that they might catch the eyes of foreign festival organisers.

Flanders, Van Neygen says, is home to many talented youth theatre troupes that are seldom invited abroad because of the language barrier. Export/Import hopes to solve this problem: The selected productions tell stories of identity, loneliness and longing, using the languages of music and movement – or, when words are needed, spare dialogues in Dutch, English, French or Arabic, with surtitles in the other languages.

This is great news for foreign families living in Flanders, who can



Chicks for Money and Nothing for Free gently mocks the machismo of the male environment, while Bruno Pilz (below) nudges children into action

discover a whole new area of local culture even if their Dutch is less than fluent. And pretty much all the artists on the programme have managed to use the constraints of simplicity and language to their advantage.

Light and dark

Just about every production is a *tour de force* that deftly balances lightness and depth, offbeat humour and relevance, all with a disarming economy of means. Take the witty *Chicks for Money and Nothing for Free*, which gently mocks the virile rituals of male societies and changing rooms. The work of the Ghent-based Kopergieterij, it shows five young men stripped down to their waists, slapping their thighs, wallowing in shaving foam and laughing uproariously. Halfway between *Stomp* and *Fight Club* but positively weirder than both, this silly ode to beer and testosterone is a joy to watch.

Watch out also for Pascale Platel, a blond beauty with a magnetic stage presence. The sister of playwright and choreographer Alain Platel, she has danced in many of her brother's productions but is best known across Flanders for the madcap humour of her one-woman shows. At Export/Import, she will present *Bar Bobard*, a delirious fiction about a "world-famous salon" where hapless children are sent to have freedom and joy drilled into them.

Other highlights include *Sasja et Natasja*, about two severed Siamese sisters who go their own ways then meet again; *Capas*, a circus act from Barcelona featuring four acrobats, a drummer and a

massive wardrobe that serves both as a Pandora's box and a gateway to some elusive Narnia; and *Ich bin wie du*, a powerful reflection on national identity by Union Suspecte, a multicultural troupe from Ghent with a mission to "confront and disturb".

Cautionary tale

Then there's *Lacrimosa*, an extraordinary puppet show by German artist Bruno Pilz, who started out as a juggler and street performer before training as a puppeteer at Berlin's Ernst Busch Academy. Presented to an audience of maximum two and lasting only four minutes, it centres on a single character: a man slouching on a sofa, staring at a television screen. Through the window, you see the seasons change as his life passes by, while the *Lacrimosa* from Mozart's *Requiem* plays in the background. *Lacrimosa*, which wasn't initially intended as a children's show, is a cautionary tale for those tempted to dream their lives away instead of actually living them. The culprit? Television, with its slick mirages that numb us into inaction, says Pilz, a soft-spoken giant with a mischievous smile.

"Many people see things on television and think, 'Wow, it's so beautiful, but I could never do that,'" he muses. "That kind



of prevents them from trying to make beautiful things themselves. Their fears pin them to their seats because the whole process behind that perfection, all the mistakes, are never shown on TV." Theatre, by contrast, is imperfect and intensely alive, Pilz's endearing miniature seems to tell us. It enchants and keeps us on our toes. Bronks, clearly, couldn't dream of a finer advocate.

Languages and appropriate age levels for productions vary, so be sure to check the programme

9-11 NOVEMBER

Export/Import

Bronks, Varkensmarkt 15-17, Brussels

► www.bronks.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Bruges' **Frietmuseum** has made the list of "Oddest Food Museums" in the *Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2013*, published last week. The museum chronicling the history of the french fry joins such establishments as the Pick Salami and Paprika Museum in Szeged, Hungary, and the Jell-O Gallery in LeRoy, USA.

► www.tinyurl.com/oddestfood

The Flemish film *Allez Eddy!*, about the economic woes of a small-town butcher and his sensitive 12-year-old son against the backdrop of the glory days of cyclist Eddy Merckx, won the prize for **Best Film at the Schlingel International Children's and Youth Film Festival** in Chemnitz, Germany. "The whole story is realistic, sensitive, not without conflict but still with much hope," said the jury. In addition, Jelte Blommaert won the festival's prize for Best Child Actor for his role in the film. In other film news, the Flanders International Film Festival's World Soundtrack Academy awarded the Film Composer of the Year to Spanish composer Alberto Iglesias in recognition of his soundtracks for *The Monk*, *The Skin I Live In* and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

► www.worldsoundtrackawards.be

Brussels-based choreographer Meg Stuart, founder of the troupe Damaged Goods, has **won the Konrad Wolf prize**, awarded annually by Berlin's Academy of the Arts to an artist who has made an outstanding contribution to film, media or performing arts. "Meg Stuart is an artist who unceasingly seeks the connections between longing and movement," said the jury. "She shows man drifting on the waves of his emotions, highly sensitive and vulnerable." The award ceremony takes place on 18 November. Earlier this month, meanwhile, Stuart's production *Blessed* won the award for Outstanding Visual Design at New York's prestigious Bessie Awards.

► www.damagedgoods.be

Flemish author, columnist and playwright **Tom Lanoye** has been invited to give **six guest lessons** at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Much of the author's work has been translated into French, and he will present some of it in his lectures but also talk about other Flemish writers, such as Paul van Ostaïen and Willem Elsschot, he said. "We are naturally delighted," said the university's professor of Dutch literature Kees Snoek. "Lanoye is one of the most important contemporary authors in Flanders." Lanoye is only the second Fleming to be invited to lecture by the literature department of the Sorbonne.

► www.lanoye.be

THE RACE IS ON!

Join us on **November 6** at the **Renaissance Brussels Hotel** and share the excitement of the US Election. Take part in a debate between Democrats and Republicans. Cast your vote in a straw ballot... and **enjoy the party!**



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Paper and aeroplanes

Browse antique books surrounded by ancient aircraft at Brussels' Army Museum

Alan Hope

The first Saturday of every month, sellers of antiquarian books gather in the Royal Army Museum in Brussels, against a background of aircraft both ancient and modern, to set out their wares. The event has been going for 25 years, after some dealers who had taken part in the annual Brussels Book Fair realised that the capital had little else in the way of regular, open sales of antique and collectable books.

"The aviation hall was chosen as a location quite simply because it's easy to reach, has plenty of space and the parking is free," explains Alex Winnepenninckx, who's been taking part for a decade and is now leading an effort to bring the fair to more people's attention. "We're aiming at expats because they're interested in culture, and they like to discover new things," he says.

The fair attracts sellers not only from across Belgium, but also from France, Germany and the Netherlands. The books and



assorted documents and papers on offer are in all languages, including English. "My speciality is beautiful things, especially Art Deco," says Winnepenninckx.

In fact, Winnepenninckx has written a book about the Mechelen architect Josef Chabot, whose uncle was Marcel Chabot, who designed the De Brouckère theatre in Brussels, "a

fine Art Deco building that's now the UGC cinema".

What's your pleasure?

Most of the sellers specialise in one particular field: books on furniture, cars, jewellery or for children. "One specialises specifically in catalogues of Wolfers, the jewellers," says Winnepenninckx. "I have a client

who is looking for everything about Japan, while others collect anything on the Congo or ocean liners or, of course, Brussels."

You might think, in this internet age, that people would be less interested in books, let alone in the style of books and bindings. But not at all, says Winnepenninckx. "Many people just love the book as an object – like books containing etchings and lithographs. Books make you dream, and the line between a mere book and a work of art is a very fine one." One of Winnepenninckx' biggest-ever sales was a catalogue from the Soviet Union of the Paris Exposition of 1925, with a cover by Russian graphic designer Alexander

Rodchenko. "It was very special, and it sold for €1,000."

Another dealer scored with a year's worth of issues of the journal *Ver Sacrum*, the official magazine of the Vienna Secession school of artists and writers that included Rainer Maria Rilke, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the Flemish dramatist Maurice Maeterlinck. "Even though it wasn't in a very good state, the collection went for €4,000," Winnepenninckx says.

Lower down the scale, there are books, documents, maps, postcards and comic books of all sorts on sale, while those who like to dream can enjoy some beautiful examples of publishing and typography.

3 NOVEMBER 9.00-14.00

Antique Book Fair

Royal Army Museum, Jubelpark, Brussels

► www.plaisirdulivre.be

Film four

Film festivals take over cinemas across Brussels and Flanders

Lisa Bradshaw

Once the Flanders International Film Festival shuts up shop for the year, the floodgates open. There are four film festivals going on simultaneously over the next couple of weeks. The very first edition of **Flemish Documentary Days** starts today (31 October) in Brussels and then moves around on the following days to Leuven, Antwerp, Hasselt and Ghent.

Flemish Documentary Days offers the chance to see five new films you won't otherwise find in the cinema. Sien Verstyhe's *Junior* follows the story of Jean-Pierre Bauwens Jr, a lightweight professional boxer, who comes from a poor family with seven children, four of whom are autistic. Lieven Corthouts' *Little Heaven*, meanwhile, finds the filmmaker at an orphanage of the same name in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. There he finds a remarkable 13-year-old girl who refuses to see her HIV diagnosis as a death sentence.



Don't miss Sien Verstyhe's *Junior*, a look into the troubling personal life of Flemish pro boxer Jean-Pierre Bauwens

Other documentaries in the event include *Cinema Inch-Allah*, Vincent Coen and Guillaume Vandenbergh's portrait of four Belgian-Moroccan filmmakers based in Brussels; *Empire of Dust*, Bram Van Paesschen's award-winning film about Chinese labourers trying to

build a road in Congo; and *Snake Dance*, Manu Riche and Patrick Marnham's fascinating look at the lives and theories of two very different men who happened to both visit New Mexico – German art historian Aby Warburg, who studied the Hopi Indians, and physicist Robert Oppenheimer, who developed the atomic bomb.

The **Mediterranean Film Festival** in Brussels, meanwhile, begins on 7 November. The Mediterranean covering a huge area, you'll find movies from Africa, Europe and the Middle East, and the festival also hosts live music and a market. Traditional foods from different parts of the region will be available throughout the festival.

In terms of film, try to catch French director/writer Elie Wajeman's debut feature *Alyah*, in which a young Jewish man tries to escape his dead-end life in Paris' 19th arrondissement by saving enough

money to move to Israel. Equally good is Nabil Ayouch's *Les Chevaux de Dieu* (*Horses of God*), a look at several years in the lives of boys living on the outskirts of Casablanca, leading up to a suicide bomb attack. On the lighter side – but only just – is *Italy: Love It or Leave It*, Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi's follow-up to their 2008 documentary *Suddenly, Last Winter*, a denouncement of Italy's oppressive social system. This time the gay couple are trying to decide if they should leave a country still under the thumb of organised crime, machismo and sexism, or stay to fight the good fight.

Which leads us to our next two festivals, the **Holebi Film Festival of Flemish Brabant** and **Pink Screens** in Brussels, both festivals of queer cinema. I suppose they have different audiences, but I can't help feeling that it's unfortunate that they happen at the same time. Still, you can go to both opening nights: On 7

November at Cinema Zed in Leuven is *Mary Lou*, Eytan Fox's musical in which the young Meir goes in search of his mother but inadvertently becomes a star drag queen in Tel Aviv, and on 8 November at Cinema Nova in Brussels is *Young and Wild*, Chilean director Marialy Rivas' look at an adolescent girl trying to survive her conservative, religious parents.

Bonus! Pink Screens has two opening films: the second is American director Ira Sachs' award-winning *Keep the Lights On*, in which a New York-based filmmaker struggles to maintain a long-term relationship with his drug-addicted partner.

► www.docville.be/vdd

► www.cinemamed.be

► www.holebifilmfestival.be

► www.pinkscreens.org

Belfius Bank launches online music platform

An exclusive concert earlier this month by Scottish singer Amy Macdonald celebrated the launch of Belfius Music, a new online download platform. Macdonald sang numbers from her new album *Life in a Beautiful Light* at the Brussels Event Brewery before an audience of 1,100 Belfius Bank clients and guests.

In search of new opportunities to improve the sale of music, the music industry is continuously exploring new strategies. With an increase of 17% in legal music downloads in Belgium last year, platforms like iTunes and Spotify are becoming increasingly popular.

Belfius Bank and record label Universal Music Belgium have

teamed up for Belfius Music "to offer clients a unique music experience within the banking sector," explains Simon Price of Universal Music Belgium. "Although Belfius Music primarily targets younger customers, the appeal of music is very broad, and we are already seeing strong interest in the music platform across a wide age range."

Belfius Music, which is only open to the bank's customers, wants to be more than a digital music service; in addition to free and cheap downloads, the site also extends invitations to concerts and DJ nights, plus provides meet-and-greet opportunities with well-known artists.

"Through this initiative, Belfius

Bank wants to emphasise that we understand our clients' interests," says Marc Lauwers of Belfius. "Belfius Music will give all our clients – the young and the young-at-heart – the chance to enjoy unique experiences." **Marc Maes**

► www.belfiusmusic.be

Float on waves of sound

Surround! Festival

Marie Dumont

Sometime in the early 1570s, a memorable event took place at Arundel House in London: the first performances of *Spem in alium*, a short polyphonic piece by Thomas Tallis. The work was composed for 40 voices, which in itself was a rare technical feat and made for unusually dense and rich textures.

But what made the experience truly special was that singers were standing in a circle around the audience, each beginning to sing, then going silent, one by one. The practice, which was common in Italy at the time, had never been tried in England before. The handful of people present found themselves literally surrounded by this musical ebb and flow. They must have felt as if they were being swept away in a sea of sound.

Today, for all our ultra sophisticated hi-fi equipment and state-of-the-art concert halls, we seem to have forgotten the sheer wonder that comes when sound and space become one. That's because we've come to think of classical music as an essentially flat art form, to be enjoyed from a safe distance. Which may be fine for a Haydn

string quartet, but in Monteverdi's *Vespers*, Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion* or Satie's *Musique d'ameublement*, however, where physical distribution of sound is almost as important as the notes being played, this approach is about as frustrating as admiring Botticelli's "Primavera" in black and white or gazing at a Giacometti sculpture without being able to walk around it.

The Surround! Festival in Bruges attempts to restore that third dimension in music. Installations and concerts will demonstrate how sound can fill and mould space, and reconnect us with the intensely physical experience that comes with it.

Berlin's Kaleidoskop ensemble will present a mixed programme of Baroque and contemporary music in which musicians slowly move around the audience, silhouetted against a dark background. As for the performance of Antoine Brumel's so-called *Earthquake Mass* by the Ensemble Musica Universalis, it will send shivers down your spine and not just because of the accompanying footage of Chernobyl and other

recent disasters.

Spatial music gives more weight to the listener, who plays an active part in the creative process: Since each person hears something slightly different, there are as many works as there are pairs of ears. It's a very modern idea, so no wonder that it has caught the imagination of many 20th-century composers. One of them is the Greek-French Iannis Xenakis, who started out as an architect before devoting himself to music. Two of his pieces will be played by the Brussels Philharmonic under Michel Tabachnik.

As for Tallis' *Spem in alium*, it won't be performed live but heard as part of an installation by Canadian sound artist Janet Cardiff. Cardiff has recorded each voice individually and will play them through loudspeakers arranged in a circle, as singers would have been. Visitors can either stand in the middle and contemplate the shimmering tapestry of sound, or walk around to take in each voice individually. And since this is no live performance but an installation that will be played in a loop, you can repeat the experience as many times as you want.



7-11 NOVEMBER

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34, Bruges

► www.concertgebouw.be

SPECIAL EVENT

Japan Expo Belgium

Last year's first edition of Japan Expo in Brussels was an immediate success, with more than 23,000 visitors. This edition again promises to completely immerse visitors in Japanese culture. Anything and everything having to do with Japan will be on hand, including Manga, anime, martial arts, toys, games, music, fashion, film, traditions ... Aficionados of Japanese culture are invited to revel in three days of talks by special guests, exhibitions, fashion shows, conferences, karaoke, quizzes, workshops and more. And of course, there will be plenty of opportunities to shop, with stand after stand filled with all manner of products straight from Japan. Or maybe you, like me, are such a fan of Japanese cuisine that the numerous food stands are all the bait needed to get you through the door. *Robyn Boyle*



2-4 November | Tour & Taxis, Brussels

► www.japan-expo.be

MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

Brussels

The King of Style: Dressing Michael Jackson: Book signing tour featuring Michael Bush, long-time costume designer and personal friend of the King of Pop, giving fans the opportunity to meet Bush and purchase his highly anticipated book before it reaches European stores next year

NOV 9 14.00-17.00 at Hard Rock Café, Grote Markt 12a

► www.hardrock.com

US Election Night: Join the international community in Brussels for this traditional late-night party hosted by thebulletin.be and the American Club of Brussels. Features an opening speech by US Ambassador to Belgium Howard Gutman, followed by live music and American-themed food and drink while waiting for the results to pour in

NOV 6 from 20.00 at Renaissance Brussels Hotel, Parnassusstraat 19

► www.xpats.com/en/electionnight

DANCE

Béjart Festival

Maurice Béjart was one of the 20th century's most active and acclaimed ballet dancers and choreographers. After trotting the globe for decades, including founding the Ballet du XXe Siècle in Brussels, which existed for 27 years, the Frenchman settled in Switzerland. His Rudra-Béjart school in Lausanne remains an international reference, even after the maestro's passing in 2007. The Béjart Ballet company, meanwhile, is keeping the choreographer's work alive and alights over the next two weeks in Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels. The programme in Antwerp includes three Béjart classics: *Cantate 51*, *Syncopé* and *Le Sacre du printemps* (pictured). In Ghent, the company reprises *Cantate 51*, going on to perform *Là où sont les oiseaux* and *Brel et Barbara*. The capital, finally, will be treated to a performance of Béjart's *Light*, which debuted in Brussels in 1981 and juxtaposes the Baroque tones of Vivaldi with the experimental music of Tuxedomoon and the Residents. *Georgio Valentino*



2-4 November, 20.00 | Stadsschouwburg, Antwerp

► www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be

MORE DANCE THIS WEEK

Brussels

Monika Gintersdorfer and Knut Klassen: The German contemporary dance/theatre duo takes over Brussels' Kaaitheater for the entire weekend. Together with their collaborators (most from the Ivory Coast), they stage four performances and then throw a party to celebrate. (In French and English)

NOV 9-10, 19.00 at Kaaitheater, Sainctelettesquare 20

► www.kaaitheater.be

Ghent

Cédric Andrieux: The fifth in French choreographer Jérôme Bel's ode to dancers, this homage to Cédric Andrieux is danced by Andrieux himself. The opening night performance is followed by a talk with both artists

NOV 7-8, 20.00 at Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23

► www.vooruit.be

CONCERT

Isbells

After an overwhelmingly successful debut album in 2009, Isbells brought out *Stoalin'* earlier this year and have been busy promoting both albums all over the world. Now the band from Leuven are back home to please fans with a whirlwind tour of Flanders that starts now and continues through the beginning of 2013. Singer-songwriter Gaëtan Vandewoude relied heavily on the Bon Iver principle for the production of *Stoalin'*: make music in a secluded spot surrounded by nature. The result? Ten warm, gentle songs in recognisable folk Isbells style: subtle guitar strumming and velvety vocals. Support act is Mad About Mountains, the solo project of former Krakow frontman Piet De Pessemier, whose hushed and intimate Americana will put you in just the right mood for the main attraction. **RB**



3 November, 20.00

De Kreun, Kortrijk | www.dekreun.be

MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Herbie Hancock: Concert by the American funk-jazz legend with a 50-year career. Part of Skoda Jazz Festival

NOV 2 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinsstraat 23

www.skodajazz.be

Brussels & Ostend

Simone Felice: The singer-songwriter and drummer of The Felice Brothers and charismatic frontman of The Duke & The King kicks off his solo debut with sinister, obscure tracks as well as brighter, folk-inspired tunes, often featuring members of Mumford & Sons and a children's choir as guest musicians

NOV 1 21.00 at Manuscript, Langestraat 23, Ostend

NOV 2 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110, Brussels

www.simonefelice.com

Turnhout

Fatoumata Diawara: Warm, melodic music by the Malian-raised, Parisian guitarist and singer-songwriter

NOV 2 20.15 at De Warande, Warandestraat 42

www.warande.be

EXHIBITION

Exquisite Silver

The Sterckshof Silver Museum is dedicated to Belgium's rich history of metalwork. Located in Antwerp's scenic Rivierenhof park, the architectural beauty of the building resembles a fairy-tale castle. The second-most-famous precious metal has plenty of functional aspects: Consider those knives, forks and spoons on our dinner tables. Silver also has religious, symbolic and even medical applications. The exhibition *Exquisite Silver* presents all of these in both their historical and contemporary contexts. The folks at the museum have anticipated the feelings of covetousness that might be provoked by such a display of precious metals, so visitors also have the chance to win a silver ring made by Flemish jewellery designer Helena Schepens. Just fill out a form during your visit, and drop it off on the way out. **GV**



© Ace of Spades, Joris Kuyt, Kessel-Lo, 1998 / photo: Hugo Maertens

Until 3 March | Sterckshof Silver Museum, Antwerp | www.zilvermuseum.be

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Brussels

One Way Boogie 2012: American indie film pioneer James Benning's first solo exhibition in Belgium finds him updating his seminal 1977 film, *One Way Boogie*, to a soundtrack by Leonard Cohen

Until DEC 16 at Argos, Werfstraat 13

www.argosarts.org

Ghent

The Fun Part of Art: Ghent's Zuid shopping mall showcases Flemish sculptor Dirk Denoyelle's reliefs and busts, constructed in Lego. The exhibition's centrepiece is Denoyelle's massive facsimile of Rubens' "Adoration of the Magi".

Until NOV 17 at Gent Zuid, Woodrow Wilsonplein

www.gentzuid.be

Leuven

Roe Ethridge: Leuven's eclectic museum presents the recent work of the equally eclectic American photographer. Ethridge's oeuvre isn't given consistency by genre or theme but rather by his thoughtful approach to the camera

Until JAN 13 at Museum M, Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28

www.mleuven.be

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

I Love Techno

10 November, 19.00-6.30

Flanders Expo, Ghent

It's been 17 years since the first edition of I Love Techno, and no one is looking back. The party night entirely dedicated to techno music was first organised by Peter Decuypere, the man behind Brussels' famous club Fuse. About 700 people showed up in '95, and danced the night away to a line-up of five national and international techno DJs.

Now, the event is one of Europe's largest electronic music nights, attracting more than 30,000 clubbers from all over the world. As it got so big, I Love Techno moved from Ghent's Vooruit to Flanders Expo, where more than 30 artists will perform in six different rooms.

Go to the yellow room for action from Boys Noize (Germany) or Vitalic (France), or wait until the sessions of Erol Alkan (UK), Tiga (Canada) or our own Dr Lektroluv. Join the crowd in the orange room for dubstep by Netsky (Belgium), DJ Fresh (UK), Flux Pavilion (UK) and more, or dive into the red room with headliners Dave Clark (UK) and Joris Voorn (the Netherlands).

The blue room is the place to be for DJ sets by Nero (UK), Sub Focus (UK) and The Magician (Belgium), while the green room is where Modeselektor (Germany, pictured) and Flying Lotus (US) will perform live. Last but not least, visit the Red Bull Elekropedia Room for more music and video images of what's going on in the other five rooms.

To keep track of where and when your favourite DJ will perform, download the clever "I Love Techno 2012" application for your smartphone, and you won't miss a thing. Make sure you're more than on time, though, as the doors to the rooms close for security reasons when the maximum number of people is reached.

Tickets cost €56 in advance online, at FNAC or at Free Record Shop. If you want the very best spot, though, you'll



have to cough up €96 for a VIP ticket, which gives access to the VIP deck with a view of the stages, drinks, snacks and a parking spot.

www.ilovetechno.be

BITE

Robyn Boyle

Yuna ★★★☆

You know you're in a privileged situation when you can't decide whether to satisfy your craving for Asian cuisine with good sushi or sizzling stir-fry. At Yuna, smack dab in the centre of Antwerp, you don't have to make that decision because they specialise in Vietnamese *and* Japanese sushi.

A strange combination, you might think, but it makes sense when you look at the huge sushi trend happening across Flanders. It's enough to make even the best Vietnamese restaurant want to jump on board.

Still, my companion and I decide to buck the trend in favour of the Vietnamese menu. I am quickly won over by a starter of *goi vit*, essentially duck salad, while my friend goes for *goi chay*, or veggie salad. For our mains, we order *pho bo*, noodle soup with beef and *tom rim*, sautéed tiger prawns.

Over a pre-dinner bowl of edamame (young soy beans in the pod), we observe our surroundings: Warmly decorated with lots of dark wood and deep colours, the dining room is not short on cosiness. There are beautiful south-east Asian-inspired paintings on the walls

and a mesmerising fish tank next to the bar. It's just a shame about the muzak, which does its best to disturb an otherwise calm and classy atmosphere.

My duck salad so deserves a more enticing name. The salad is beautifully presented on a long dish, with the thinly sliced morsels of rosy duck breast, fat-on, laid out over a bed of crisp lettuce and cabbage. This is topped with a fantastic combination of rice wine vinegar, sugar mixed with finely chopped chillies, ginger, crushed peanuts and big leaves of coriander, mint and Thai basil. I pair the salad with an easy glass of house rosé. Across the table I see a similar salad but with lightly fried tofu instead of meat.

The steaming bowl of *pho* comes with a smidgen of potent red chilli pepper sauce next to some thick, pungent hoisin, a popular condiment for *pho*; the sauces can be directly added to the soup or used as a side dip for the meat. I tip both sauces right into my bowl, to give the soup even more pronounced sweet and spicy flavours. Then I add a squeeze of fresh lime and tuck in.



Floating on top of the light fish sauce broth are loads of crunchy white onion, spring onions, mushrooms, bean sprouts and my favourite fresh herb: coriander. Underneath I discover thin strips of beef, dropped raw into the boiling broth for ultimate tenderness. I'm getting a wonderful cinnamon

aroma from the dish, and a wealth of other contrasting tastes that cover the whole range, from sweet and spicy to salty and sour.

The prawns in my friend's main dish are deliciously sticky-sweet. Sautéed in a mixture that includes fish sauce and a generous amount of coarsely ground black pepper,

they are caramelised and juicy. The rest of the dish, however, leaves something to be desired: Steamed rice topped with soppy fried onion and some wok veggies make up the lifeless accompaniments, which is disappointing considering how ultra-fresh the rest of the ingredients have been so far.

A soothing cup of green tea is the perfect ending to an overall satisfying meal and great service, for which we pay a total of €66.

Yuna is hosting a sushi workshop on 3 November at 12.30. Reserve your spot via info.yuna@gmail.com

► www.restaurant-yuna.be

📍 Pelgrimsstraat 2, Antwerp;
03.234.98.62

🕒 Mon-Wed 17.00-23.00;
Thu-Sun 12.00-23.00

€ Mains: €12-€24

📌 Vietnamese specialities, sushi and cocktails in a romantic setting at the heart of Antwerp's historic district

TALKING SPORTS

Leo Cendrowicz

Are the Red Devils ready for the big time?

Belgium's national side has had a dreary decade, failing to qualify since 2002 for either of the two big football jamborees, the World Cup and the European Championships. There have been sporadic surges over the years – the occasional surprise result or standout performance from one player or another. But hopes of fans – including this column – never quite materialised into the sustained quality needed to reach the bigger stage.

Is it tempting fate to say that this time is different?

After four matches, Belgium is now sitting at the top of its World Cup qualifying group. The Red Devils have beaten Wales, Scotland and – most impressively – Serbia, where they won 3-0 in Belgrade. (It was Serbia's first competitive defeat on home soil since 2001.) The only slip-up was in the match against Croatia, the side most likely to vie for the top spot in the group: They drew 1-1 in Brussels.

Belgium is only ahead in the group on goal difference, +7 compared to Croatia's +4. But it still bodes well for a side that has underperformed



over as national coach this spring. Replacing the flaccid Georges Leekens, Wilmots' drive had a galvanising effect on his charges, and they finally began to convert their much-touted potential into results.

But the players themselves are

the players selected against Serbia are based in England, including Manchester City's Vincent Kompany, Arsenal's Thomas Vermaelen, Tottenham Hotspur's Jan Vertonghen and Moussa Dembele, Chelsea's Eden Hazard and Everton's Marouane Fellaini, as well as the likes of Axel Witsel from Zenit St Petersburg.

The next World Cup qualifiers are in March, when Belgium travels to Skopje to play Macedonia, before facing them again three days later in Brussels. The qualifying groups run until October next year, and there are play-offs after that for second-placed sides.

It may be too soon to assume Vermaelen and co will be in Brazil in 2014. But it's not a fantasy either.

This is the most exciting generation of players to emerge since the squad that reached the 1986 World Cup semi-final

in recent years.

Part of the change is down to Marc Wilmots, the former Sint-Truiden and Mechelen dynamo and ex-Belgium captain, who took

the key. This is the most exciting generation to emerge since the squad that reached the Euro 1980 final and the 1986 World Cup semi-final. No fewer than 10 of

The last word...

An unpleasant surprise

"It might just as easily have been my daughter who found the head because normally she leaves the house before I do. I think that's going too far."

Bart De Wever discovered the severed head of a pig in his driveway last weekend

Driven mad

"I don't think I'll ever buy a Ford again."

Minister Ingrid Lieten, interviewed in *Het Nieuwsblad* (see p6)

All together now

"We've found our second childhood since we moved back under one roof together."

Anna Boogers, 99, now lives in the same rest home in Turnhout as her daughters, aged 80 and 73

Jailhouse rock

"Our music is a positive signal, a way of showing we can do something good."

A member of the band One Oh Seven, whose (anonymous) members are currently serving a total of 107 years in Leuven prison

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

If you missed Flanders' celebration of all things food, the Week of Taste, we have yummy news for you. After a hiatus to redevelop the mission and strategy, the event is back, with speciality markets, neighbourhood feasts, food-themed theatre and a cookie route. Check back next week for everything you need to know

Science

Are you registered to be an organ donor? Flemish organisation Navado was founded by Lia van Kempen, who lost her daughter but donated her organs to save the lives of other children. We talk to Van Kempen and tell you about the work of the non-profit

Arts

Two big music announcements: Selah Sue will soon be back in Flanders after an extensive tour in the US, and Het Depot is reopening after extensive renovations. These two have much to do with each other: The 23-year-old singing sensation plays the beloved Leuven venue's very first show in its new digs