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# Small is beautiful

**Antwerp theatre collective De Roovers leave their trademark sensitivity on Ostend's TAZ**

Tom Peeters

Over the years, Theater Aan Zee (Theatre by the Sea, or TAZ), Ostend's 10-day summer theatre-and-more festival, has earned a reputation for inviting curators with a strong social commitment. After Mechelen-based artistic jack-of-all-trades Michael De Cock, Brussels director and actor Josse De Pauw and Leuven music theatre group Braakland/Zhebelding, it's the turn of De Roovers. The collective, created in 1994 by four graduates of the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp, has no director and is renowned for questioning its place in the theatrical landscape and the wider world.

It's not a big surprise that TAZ is teaming up with De Roovers; in fact they are somehow contemporaries. The theatre festival arose 17 years ago, De Roovers 19 years ago. And De Roovers' Robby Cleiren, the actor/theatre-maker I meet in the company's Berchem office, has a long bond with Luc Muylaert, now the festival's artistic director, dating back to the time they both worked for Flemish public television. "Between 1998 and 2002 I was playing in the TV series *Recht op Recht* (Canvas is rebroadcasting it right now) and Luc was working there as a light and sound technician," Cleiren recalls. "Back then TAZ was still a small festival: During the holidays it selected plays out of the regular season as well as

new work from upcoming talent. For four years Luc invited me to sit on the jury for young theatre work. It allowed me to follow new players and theatre-makers, and to see some performances I'd missed during the year." This basic objective hasn't really changed, though the festival has kept on growing, expanding its scope to music, literature and films. This year TAZ invites 20 young theatre-makers, eight young filmmakers and their short movies, eight promising authors and six unknown bands. The exact formula has been adjusted over the years, by appointing music and theatre curators, which has kept the bill fresh, and by putting more emphasis on projects on location.

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## FACE OF FLANDERS

## Jan Becaus



At the end of this month of abdication, Belgium says farewell to another venerable figure; a man who has fulfilled his role with grace and intelligence, wit and integrity. An institution, in other words. He will be sadly missed by a grateful public. On Wednesday 31, at 19.00, Jan Becaus will present the evening news on the main VRT channel for the last time before entering a well-deserved retirement at the age of 65 – the only anchor ever to have seen it through to the bitter end. Before that, however, as a sort of lap of honour, viewers saw him last weekend anchor the state broadcaster's marathon coverage of the 21 July celebrations, which this year also included the abdication of Albert II and the oath-taking by his son Filip to become king.

"I had thought I would get a chance to take it easy in July," Becaus said. However, King Albert's surprise announcement at the beginning of the month changed all that. "The boss and the board all insisted I be there." Becaus, a newsreader of the old school, always said that he tried to make the job as "colourless, odourless and tasteless" as possible, like a potato. "The news

anchor is not the news," he said.

Becaus was born in Ghent in July 1948 and qualified as a teacher before gaining a degree in English, Dutch and German. He taught from 1972 to 1984, with the exception of his military service, and later became a journalist with the BRT, as it then was. He's therefore been in service half as long again as the king.

But it was his English which endeared him most to his faithful fans. As impeccably correct as any dinner-suited BBC announcer from the 1930s, his pronunciation of English names and words – even those considered to have been assimilated into Dutch – were a highlight for audience and colleagues, who it is rumoured tried their best to sneak as many odd English words into reports as possible, in a vain attempt to catch him napping. "I think it's a basic form of politeness to speak a language properly," he said. He now plans to spend his retirement travelling, but not ignoring the news. "I'm a newsfreak," he told *De Morgen*, doubtless pronouncing the word exactly as it ought to be pronounced. "I need to have news or I get anxious."

## News in brief

A DNA database for missing persons investigations could help **identify some of the 81 unidentified bodies** currently being investigated by the federal police's Missing Persons Unit, according to the unit's boss, commissioner Alain Remue. Last week the Senate gave its approval to the plan to set up the database, which would gather samples from volunteers in cases of missing persons, to add to the samples gathered since the unit was set up in 1995.

Almost half of Belgium's festivals are still largely ignoring the law on **serving alcohol to minors**, according to health ministry inspectors. In five of the 10 festivals inspected, inspectors found infractions, including serving beer to people under 16 and serving stronger alcoholic drinks to those under 18. Earlier this month the Belgian brewers federation launched a campaign to remind festival organisers to respect the age limits.

Police issued 36 tickets this month to restaurants in Beenhouwersstraat in central Brussels for breaches of the **ban on toutting for customers**. The street is famous for its tourist restaurants, and a ban on toutting – where waiters cajole passers-by to attract their custom – was introduced in 2005. "We have to avoid this sort of nuisance behaviour if we want to maintain the agreeable atmosphere in an area visited by many tourists," Brussels-City mayor Freddy Thielemans said.

Verbal and physical aggression against staff of the Brussels public transport authority MIVB fell dramatically in the first half of this year. Compared to the same period last year, cases of **verbal aggression were down 33%** and physical assault down 26%. Aggression against other passengers

also fell, albeit by less. MIVB said the figures could be attributed to an increased presence of police and security personnel, as well as metro turnstiles and information campaigns.

A 62-year-old mother from Bornem, Antwerp province, is in custody after **admitting she killed her 28-year-old daughter**, who had Down's syndrome. According to the prosecutor's office, the woman said she could no longer take responsibility for the care of her daughter. The woman's husband was held for questioning but later released.

Ghent University has appealed to the makers of a Facebook page extolling the virtues of the "beautiful, mysterious places" in the Plateau building on campus, after 23-year-old student Andreas Deruijter from Lier in Antwerp province **fell through a glass roof and died** last week while exploring the building, which is closed to all access.

The Vanderborght building in Schildknaapstraat in central Brussels – opposite the Royal Galleries – is not a suitable home for the **planned museum of modern and contemporary art**, according to Flemish master architect Peter Swinnen. Writing in *De Standaard*, Swinnen pointed out that exhibition space in the building was extremely limited in comparison to other major museums. He also argued for the museum to be given a place in another part of the city in need of tourist traffic and a cultural landmark, such as the canal zone in Molenbeek, currently undergoing gentrification.

The city of Brussels last week triggered its **heatwave plan for 500 people**, most of them elderly

and living alone, to ensure they are able to withstand the heat and get enough water. Unlike other parts of the country, where a heatwave only exists officially when the temperature stays about 28 degrees for three days, Brussels triggers its own plan the minute the mercury tops 28 degrees.

Swimmers at the Flemish coast do not pay sufficient attention to the instructions of lifeguards and **frequently swim too far out to sea**, or in areas not marked off for swimming, the profession's association has complained. The lifeguards must then intervene, putting their own safety at risk. "The sea can be very unpredictable, and if something should happen, those bathers are much too far out, and that makes it more difficult for us to help," one lifeguard told VTM news.

The theory that autism is caused by a fault in communication between different areas of the brain has been confirmed by a study of an **international database of brain scans**, researchers at the University of Leuven said. The team under head researcher Kaat Allaerts were taking part in a study led by New York University whose results have been published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry*.

The new city stadium of AA Gent **opened** last week for 19,000 fans of the football team and two special guests – the outgoing King Albert II and Queen Paola, who were on a farewell tour of the three communities in Belgium and were in Ghent on Wednesday for their last official visit to Flanders. The stadium, known as the Ghelamco Arena after the company of owner Paul Gheysens, almost didn't make it, with the turf for the pitch being laid at the very last minute. The home team won a friendly game against VfB Stuttgart 2-0.

## FLANDERS TODAY

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## OFFSIDE

## Parks and potholes

Earth has no sorrow, it sometimes seems, that can't be healed with a smartphone app, and two recent new apps offer residents of and visitors to Brussels with solutions to very different problems.

If you're looking for a place to chill with a book or just dabble with your toes in the grass, you'll find the green space to suit you with the Brussels Gardens app. The app, in English, allows you to search about 70 of the capital's 800 parks according to various criteria: facilities such as fishing, sandpits or disabled access; flora from hawthorn to hogweed; fauna from bee to barbastelle (a type of bat, in case you were wondering); and type of site, for instance of heritage or archaeological interest.

It's a great idea. The only problem is, it doesn't work too well. When



Another donkey, also not listed, in the Maximilienpark in Brussels

I searched for "maple" under flora and "donkey" under fauna, it offered me only the Park Fond'Roy in Ukkel, when I know from long experience there's a maple tree and

a very fine donkey in the Josaphat Park just down the road from me. Fix My Street, on the other hand, is for things you probably don't want to find: potholes, subsidence in the road, obliterated road-markings and so on. The app, in French and Dutch, does little more than let you report the problem by taking a photo, adding a description and sending the report off. The question then is whether anything will be done.

According to public works minister Brigitte Grouwels, the app has seen 2,800 reports made since it was launched in February: about 30 a day. Most were about the state of the road or pavement surface. According to Grouwels' office, 40% of complaints have been taken care of, and 54% are being dealt with – the other 6% fall outside her remit.

# Small is beautiful

## Coastal festival presents an intriguing mix of established names and new faces

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With the opening of the new cultural centre De Grote Post last December, Ostend has a big covered theatre hall for indoor performances. TAZ welcomes the new infrastructure, a nicely renovated old post office building, but that doesn't mean the organisers have scaled down the projects at other sites in the city. For Cleiren, pictured on the cover, second left, with De Roovers' fixed core of actors and theatre-makers Sara De Bosschere, Luc Nuyens and Sofie Sente, and for scenographer Stef Stessel, it's an opportunity to blow off the dust from three past location projects.

For TAZ, they are repeating a big co-production with eight actors, 10 musicians, 16 singers and a head chef that they did for the Zomer Van Antwerpen. *De Noces/Svadebka/De Bruiloft* (pictured) was played in a railway hangar next to the Antwerp-Dam station during the whole of July 2005. This festive and very speedy play set around a giant wedding party table is based on the works of Chekhov and Stravinsky and in Ostend again occupies a big railway warehouse.

### Old friends

"Projects on location do give another dynamic," says Cleiren. "For us it's a bit like a boy scouts camp. We're reaching another audience, it's energising and inspiring. We're always looking for ways to refresh plays. Like old friends, we want to keep on visiting them."

Like *Blue Remembered Hills* (pictured), originally a TV movie by English writer Dennis Potter. It's about seven children in the English countryside in 1943 "playing war" and examining the thin line between playfulness and cruelty. For TAZ, De Roovers will take the audience to the nearby dunes, making the metaphor with the real war even more striking.

The last location project is *Van De Brug Af Gezien* (*A View From The Bridge*) by the New York playwright Arthur Miller, a drama about an Italian dockworker and his illegal compatriots in the New York of the 1950s. De Roovers played it in 2002 and Cleiren can only note that in the year 2013 the immigration theme is still as relevant as ever.

"Especially in Ostend, where illegal immigrants hide and try to make the passage to England," he explains. "It's a tragic love story, and a Greek drama. But the Greeks could blame the gods, and here it's only people who are to blame. To leave everything behind, searching for a piece of paradise, can be utterly frustrating."

De Roovers have always mixed old theatre texts with new insights about themselves and the outside world. But what was the *leitmotiv* for selecting other artists? "We deliberately picked artists carrying the responsibility for their plays themselves," says Cleiren. As a small collective, De Roovers are not used to working with tight stage management. "We are



Tribute band We Are Not Talking Heads re-enact the concert film *Stop Making Sense*



*De Noces/Svadebka/De Bruiloft* depicts a chaotic wedding party



Children act out war games in *Blue Remembered Hills*

equally, as actors and as theatre-makers, responsible... We work as accomplices. Like TAZ we have a small structure and little hierarchy." The actor credits their theatre education at the Antwerp conservatory for that. "In the early

1990s the school was still headed by Dora van der Groen and we had teachers like Sam Bogaerts, Ivo Van Hove and Jan-Joris Lamers. We were encouraged to make our own plays and our teachers forced us to think about what we really wanted

pick up his theatre career again." A lot of the invited musicians have made music for De Roovers in the past: Peter Vermeersch, David Bovée, Bjorn Eriksson, Frank Vander Linden. Now they have been invited to show their latest projects in Ostend. Vermeersch and Bovée, praised by The Roovers for their out-of-the-box thinking, even flew to Banjul in Gambia to improvise with local musicians and drummers. The result is premiered at TAZ.

Eriksson presents The Broken Circle Bluegrass Band and will invite Cleiren on stage. The actor will play the mandolin, just like he did in the successful Flemish movie *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, though he has second thoughts about the invitation. "Sometimes I meet the band's real mandolin player, in front of the school my daughter goes to. He's also a father and the most virtuoso mandolin player around."

Cleiren is less uncertain about the *Burnning Down the House* gig he will do (on guitar and synth) with the tribute band We Are Not Talking Heads (pictured). With Erik Engels, De Roovers' sound designer, and eight other actors and musicians they will stage a "re-enactment" of the Talking Heads concert movie *Stop Making Sense*.

### Tight schedule

That concert will be the climax of a festival that, for Cleiren, will be the opposite of what he has been used to. "Can you imagine that after dropping by in Ostend summer after summer I've never performed on a TAZ stage? Once I made a play with conservatory students, updating a piece by curator Michael De Cock, but that's it. And now I will be on stage for 10 days in a row. The schedule is so tight there will be no time to see our guests, apart from after the show. Staying disciplined and going to bed not too late will be our biggest challenge. Otherwise we won't survive."

After almost 20 years working in what he calls "an old and slow medium", this won't be a problem for Cleiren. The main challenges are at another level. "At the drama academy," he says, "I'm confronted with a generation of students having difficulties reading a play for two hours, but they do know how they will market their career that still has to start. They're fast, and they're used to being entertained all the time. How can theatre react to this? How can we be part of this fast-changing world, and stay true to our principles?" Those questions will keep De Roovers alive.

1-10 AUGUST

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Ostend

► [www.theateraanze.be](http://www.theateraanze.be)

# King will meet region's leaders

## Crown changes hands without incident under blazing summer sun

Alan Hope

King Filip took the throne at the weekend with a promise to establish and maintain contacts with the leaders of the regions, which he said was one of the country's strengths. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, who earlier said he expected regular consultations with the new king, said "the king's emphasis on the regions was correct", but pledged to "wait to see how it works out in practice".

Speaking to the joint houses of parliament following the swearing of the Constitutional oath, King Filip said, "I am convinced that co-operation between the federal state, the communities and the regions is the best thing for our citizens and our businesses. The most recent state reforms hand important responsibilities to the regions, which brings the power of decision-making closer to the people, and which will help us to take on the challenges of the future.



"The strength of Belgium lies in its regions. I will be maintaining constructive contacts with their representatives."

- In his last address to the nation on the eve of his abdication, King Albert II called on the people to

"surround the future King Filip and future Queen Mathilde with your active co-operation and support. They make an outstanding couple in the service of the country, and enjoy my fullest confidence."

- The new king received good wishes

from US president Barack Obama, Russian president Vladimir Putin, European Commission president José Manuel Barroso and Vincent Kompany, captain of the national football team, among many others.

- One of his first acts on the day after ascending the throne was to accept the resignation of the government of prime minister Elio Di Rupo. However, the resignation is no more than a courtesy gesture and the king declined to accept it.
- Seven people were taken to hospital during the day, most of them suffering the effects of prolonged exposure to the heat. Red Cross volunteers treated another 180 minor incidents, while the civil protection forces handed out 40% more bottles of water to the waiting crowds than during last year's 21 July celebrations.
- By 18.00 on Sunday, the rail authority NMBS had transported 16,000 people to Brussels to take part in the festivities.

## Brussels parking plan approved

The streets of Brussels are henceforth divided into six parking zones, according to the final version of the region's parking plan, approved last week. The regional zone scheme replaces the current system, where each municipality devises its own plan – however, the plan will be enforced by the municipalities. The zones are as follows:

Red: maximum two hours; cost €2  
Orange: maximum two hours; cost €1  
Grey: maximum 4.5 hours; cost €1  
Green: no maximum time; cost €1  
Blue: maximum two hours; free during permitted time

A special zone for events also comes into force on an ad hoc basis whenever necessary. There is no maximum duration, but parking costs €5 an hour, with exceptions for those holding

permits issued to doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and home-helps, as well as local residents. Cards are allowed in all zones except red and orange.

Municipalities will have a year from 1 January 2014 to draw up their local plans based on the regional model, including the time needed for public consultations.

• The Brussels region also last week approved a decision to transform the 71 bus route into a tramline. The 71 bus currently travels from Delta metro station in the south-east of the region to De Brouckère in the centre; however, road congestion causes frequent delays, particularly on the busy Elsensesteenweg. The new tramline will run between Delta and Naamsepoort. Work starts in 2015 and will last two years, at a cost of €54 million.



## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

**50%**

of babies born in Belgium in 2011 had parents who were not married to each other, far above the EU average of 39.5%, according to Eurostat

**€652,133**

paid to drivers by the Flemish government in compensation for damage caused by the poor state of road surfaces in the region in 2012

**100km**

altitude to be reached by Julien Rateau from Brussels in 2014, making him officially the third Belgian in space. Rateau's friend won the flight in a competition and gave him the ticket

**€923,000**

a year from the Civil List agreed for the former King Albert II and Queen Paola, the same sum paid to King Filip when he was crown prince. The former king will have to pay tax on a tranche of €180,000

**€4.4 million**

agreed by the Brussels Region for events to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War in 2014, including a multimedia spectacle, new websites and a book

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### Vive la république?

As politicians and other dignitaries crowded in the relatively small Chamber of Representatives to witness the new king's oath, many expected a repeat of earlier incidents. In 1950, when King Boudewijn took the oath, someone in the room called out "Vive la république!" Julien Lahaut, a communist senator believed to be the culprit, was killed later that year. In 1993, Jean-Pierre Van Rossem repeated the act before King Albert. This time, no republican yells were heard.

Smartphones may be the reason, as most of those present seemed to be occupied with capturing the historic moment on camera. Or maybe no one could be bothered to disturb the ceremony this time. Vlaams Belang, notorious for its anti-Belgian feelings and republicanism, decided to stay away. N-VA, similar in its adversity to anything Belgian, sent only a few representatives, who refrained from clapping and cheering the king.

This lack of protest comes as no surprise, even though a majority of Flemish politicians are what is called private republicans. Many of them echo the same words: "In any other country, I would be a republican, but Belgium cannot do without monarchy." Hereditary heads of state are a thing of the past, they believe, but Belgium holds so many political and language differences that a neutral figure can be useful whenever tensions run high. Moreover, what vice prime-minister Johan Vande Lanotte (SP.A) says – "I have more important things to do than to abolish the monarchy" – is true for many of his colleagues. So the monarchy will be with us for quite some time. Over the years, however, its wings have been clipped, with lower financial provisions for the royal family. And while the king will still play a role in the formation of government, no one wants a king who actively intervenes, as many of King Filip's ancestors did.

Politicians of all parties shudder at the thought of another incident such as King Boudewijn's refusal to sign the abortion legislation for religious reasons. Some people fear that Filip may have inherited some streaks from his uncle Boudewijn, who was largely responsible for his upbringing. As crown prince, he has spoken out against Flemish radicalism and criticised journalists. He seems to lack the light-heartedness his father was known for and sees himself "on a mission". His first day on the throne passed flawlessly, though. The only criticism was of his typical awkwardness – hardly a reason to abolish the monarchy.

# Life after trauma

## Flemish network supports research into trauma therapy and peace-building efforts

Linda A Thompson

A couple of years ago, Tomas Baum received a slideshow from an NGO raising awareness for victims of sexual violence in Kivu in eastern Congo. After the first couple of slides with numbers and statistics on the where, what and how of the advocacy group came raw and graphic photographs of disfigured women and children – horrible images that sent shivers up his spine.

Even in his capacity as director of the Flemish Peace Institute, Baum's first instinct was to look away. "The direct confrontation with trauma is shocking, and we feel very ill at ease," he told a crowd of academics, public officials and NGO workers during a recent congress at the Flemish Parliament. "We need to look trauma in the eye. We have a responsibility to ask ourselves what we can do as the involved third party."

A handful of lawmakers and academics have decided that even if Flanders has not known any armed conflicts in decades, it cannot look away from what is happening elsewhere in the world. The conference Between Trauma and Transformation was organised by the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs as part of a series of commemorative activities on the occasion of the centenary of the First World War. Over the course of one morning, speakers explored how research insights and scientific advances can improve trauma therapy and peace-building in conflict areas.

"It's very important for Flemings to know that we were one of the major battlefields in Europe for hundreds of years because we were a buffer zone between the most important powers of the past," says Axel Buyse, representative of the Flemish government to the EU. "I think, if you have any sense of history, you should know this." Buyse says the upcoming centennial of the Great War that



Kris Peeters at Yad Vashem, Israel's official monument to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, during his visit to Israel and Palestine last summer

ravaged much of Flanders is a good opportunity to stress the importance of remembrance. "We are using this to do some educational work."

At first glance, it may seem like there are few reasons for Flemings to care about trauma. Flanders has not been a conflict zone in more than 60 years. "But trauma is everywhere," says Patrick Luyten, an assistant professor in psychology at the University of Leuven.

There are the collective traumas that rocked the country in recent years, he says – the bus accident in Sierre that killed 22 children from two Flemish schools last year, and the wide-scale sexual abuses by the Catholic Church. Then, there are also the deeply personal traumas that produce lifelong scars – the ones that result from bullying, the loss of loved ones, violence at the hands of a partner, or from growing up in social

deprivation.

"Trauma influences us all in very negative ways," Luyten said, "and it will continue to do so, if we do not intervene."

As secretary-general of the Flemish Interuniversity Council, Rosette S'Jegers has accompanied Flemish university deans to conflict areas a number of times in recent years. Time and again, S'Jegers was struck by the local scientific community's interest in, and respect for, what Flemish universities and researchers were doing. "We may not be a world power with decision-making clout in international councils, or a discussion partner with billions to invest in some project," S'Jegers said, "but our institutions have a reputation for excellence in education and research. Plus, Flanders as a region and Belgium as a

country have a reputation for acting as a mediator in conflict areas."

When they visited Israel and the Palestine territories, S'Jegers and the university deans scratched their heads at the paradox before them – how seemingly inevitable it was for researchers' know-how and scientific synergies to become completely isolated in escalating conflict areas because of the political situation. "Palestinian universities, for example, tend to be cut off from all the world-renowned research taking place just around the corner in Israel," explained S'Jegers. This would become the impetus for the Flemish Interuniversity Council to create a platform to help facilitate indirect exchanges between Palestinian and Israeli research institutions.

When Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters subsequently visited the Palestine territories last year

on a routine mission, he asked the handful of university administrators who had accompanied him: "Why not expand their initiative?" He envisioned a network that would give academic support to not just research institutions in the Middle East, but also to other long-time conflict regions with which Flanders could potentially have partnerships. "It was Peeters who imagined this as something larger," says S'Jegers.

Peeters then asked the Flemish Interuniversity Council to map the scientific potential of the existing Flemish research and know-how on trauma. "Governments are often interested in scientific insights," explained Baum, "especially when they are useful in policy-making." The main purpose for this network is to serve as a tool that can be used in the Flemish government's diplomatic missions abroad, for instance when intervening in conflict areas or sending out emergency-response teams.

The Flemish government's move comes amid a broader context in which governments around the world have begun to shift their approach in conflict areas from diplomacy to trauma counselling. "But both are important," said Buyse. "We should still pay great attention to diplomacy because diplomacy is important in quite a few situations where there is a need to control and end conflict. But it is a good evolution, if you ask me, that we also pay attention to this counselling component."

For now, the overriding aim is to continue to map the existing Flemish research on trauma. Of course, this inventory cannot be the end goal in and of itself, said Koen Verlaeck, secretary-general of the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs. "In further expanding this trauma and transformation network it is critical that we continue to focus on researchers, but also on the people in the field and on policymakers."

# Distributors to invest in Flemish TV

The main TV distributors in Flanders, led by Telenet and Belgacom, are to be obliged to invest in Flemish audio-visual productions, media minister Ingrid Lieten has announced. The companies will be asked to pay €3 million a year between them, either by a contribution to the government's Media Fund or by direct investment in an independent production.

"It is very important for the distributors to make a contribution to the creation of home-grown TV productions," Lieten said. She said the proposal, which requires an amendment to the government's media decree, would help ease the problem producers have in Flanders of finding financial backing for productions. The plan was drawn up in discussions with the distributors, so no opposition is expected. According to Telenet's new CEO, John Porter, the company is "happy to be able to contribute to the support for the Flemish media world by investing with the Flemish government in the

audio-visual sector". The new rules come into force in 2014.

Elsewhere, Lieten announced a plan under which distributors like Telenet and Belgacom will pay a premium to the 10 regional TV broadcasters in Flanders, depending on their audience figures. The total budget for the package in 2014 is set at €4.5 million, rising to €6 million from 2015. Telenet CEO Porter said the agreement was in line with the company's "social responsibility".

The regional broadcasters, whose mission is defined by a government decree, receive a subsidy of €250,000 a year, but nevertheless have to find most of their income from advertising, and that market is shrinking. In addition, distributors are willing to pay less and less in intellectual property rights. Telenet's decision in 2011 to scrap a long-standing premium of €1.50 per subscriber cost the regionals up to €500,000 each. Alan Hope



Publicity still from *Tot Altijd*, an Eyeworks production directed by Nic Balthazar

THE WEEK  
IN BUSINESS

## Airlines

► **Ethiopian Airlines**

Ethiopian Airlines is to stop passenger flights between Brussels and Addis Ababa from December, according to the financial daily *De Tijd*. Brussels Airport stressed that talks are still taking place to bring about a change of mind. Twice-weekly freight flights will continue.

Banking ► **Dexia**

The problems of the collapsed Franco-Belgian bank Dexia cost the Belgian taxpayer "at least €6.6 billion", according to the French government's court of auditors in a report on the case published last week. However, according to the court's president, Didier Migaud, the chance exists that the remains of the bank may need further capital injections by the French and Belgian governments, which would increase the eventual cost to the taxpayer.

Dredging ► **DEME**

Zwijndrecht-based dredging group DEME has announced five major international contracts won by subsidiaries, worth a total of €250 million. Dredging International will work on construction of a new coal-loading facility in Colombia. Tideway will develop a natural gas field and drilling platform in Venezuela, with the state oil company PDVSA; it will also carry out works in Australia to level the sea floor and install erosion protection for a liquid natural gas project for Chevron. GeoSea will install a weather mast in the Irish Sea, and Seaport Dredging will carry out dredging work for the Indian port of Gopalpur.

Research ► **ILVO**

The Flemish Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO) is looking for 25 doctoral researchers from the fields of bio-engineering, biotechnology, veterinary medicine and chemistry for the same number of research projects, with topics ranging from the ovarian cycle of the chicken to the behaviour of pathogens on vegetables to genetic sequencing.

► [www.ilvo.vlaanderen.be](http://www.ilvo.vlaanderen.be)

## Retail

► **Free Record Shop**

The bankrupt Netherlands-based entertainment retail chain Free Record Shop has been taken over by investment company ProCures, which said the 70 Belgian branches would remain open, as well as 30 to 50 Dutch branches. The games chain Game Mania, meanwhile, has been taken over by the original three founders, and will now continue as an independent company. Game Mania, previously owned by Free Record Shop, has 39 outlets in Flanders.

# Government earmarks another €81 million for Limburg

## Investment to create 10,000 jobs in long term

Alan Hope

The Flemish government's strategic action plan for Limburg should produce 4,000 new jobs in the short term and 10,000 in the longer term, according to minister-president Kris Peeters, speaking last week after the government approved a package of €81 million for investment in the province.

The money from the Flemish government comes on top of grants of €17.5 million from the European Social Fund and €49 million from the European Regional Development Fund, as well as pledges of €20 million and €50 million from the city of Genk and the province respectively. At the same time, the Limburg investment agency LRM has received capital of €100 million from the Flemish government for investments in growth sectors like logistics, and to finance credit for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The €81 million is in addition to €58 million already earmarked for Limburg and the €43 million in aid the government intends to reclaim – through the courts if need be – from car manufacturer Ford, which would also go to the recovery fund.



jobs," Peeters said. "But that will cost blood, sweat and tears." Deputy minister-president Ingrid Lieten, a Limburger, said: "This plan offers hope, because jobs will be created immediately, but it also offers the building blocks for a durable economic policy in the long term."

- Environment minister Joke Schauvliege announced the go-ahead for a new biomass centre in Genk, in the old coal mine in Langerlo. It will be run by energy producer E.ON, which plans to begin the transformation in 2014. The centre will produce energy from wood pellets, delivering enough electricity at full production for 850,000 families, for a total investment of €125 million.

An original positive advice from the province of Limburg was challenged by environmentalists, who argue that the use of wood pellets as biomass is not sustainable. They appealed the decision to the minister, who has now upheld the original decision, under strict conditions including a limit to noise nuisance and reduced levels of the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide and fine particles.

"Our ambition is to create 10,000

### Regions agree road toll for lorries

Representatives of the three regions last week agreed the terms of a government tender to be launched this year for the introduction of a road toll for freight traffic. The regions reached a political agreement in 2011 to bring in a toll for lorries, based on the distance travelled. Belgium is an important transit country for freight traffic, but while many trucks use the country's roads, relatively few pay road tax here. The latest advance, according to Brussels minister Guy Vanhengel, is the first step in the implementation phase of that agreement. The regions

have to agree the terms of the tender, whose conditions are contained in a statement of work. A call for bids can then be published and companies will have the rest of the year to apply. The successful candidate could expect to be named in 2014 and the system to become operational in 2016.

At the same time, the three regions have shelved a plan to introduce a road-tax disc or vignette for private cars and will instead consider an adapted system of kilometre tolls. A pilot project is due to start within the Brussels region soon.

### Belgian builders cheaper than in neighbouring countries

Belgian construction workers are up to 15% better value than their counterparts in neighbouring countries when measured by productivity and wage costs, according to the federal government's expert group on competitive potential and employment.

Charged by the government with calculating the exact dimensions of the country's wage handicap compared to the Netherlands, Germany and France, the group found that on wage costs alone, Belgian builders are 4% more expensive.

However they are more productive, which more than makes up for the higher cost, so that in the end they cost 15% less. The Building Union and the Construction Confederation last week pointed out that neighbouring countries were not so much of a problem when it came to competition. "Our businesses have to contend with the killer competition from mainly eastern and southern European building firms, which have lower wage costs and productivity just as high," the Confederation said.



### Astrid takes over economic missions

With the enthronement of King Filip (see News, page 4), his place at the head of Belgium's international trade missions is to be taken over by his sister, Princess Astrid, who has experience of international contacts through her work as a representative of the Belgian Red Cross. She will lead the next two missions, to Angola and South Africa and to Russia, but her appointment is a temporary measure, the federal government said. The choice of a permanent replacement is unlikely to be made by foreign minister Didier Reynders alone, given Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters' recent views on his installation of economic advisers among diplomatic staff, a clear breach, in Peeters' view, of the responsibility of the regional governments for overseas trade relations.

# Tomorrow, the world

## On the eve of Tomorrowland, the hit Flemish festival prepares to work its magic in the US

Sarah Crew

Electronic dance music fans from all corners of the globe descend on rural fields in Boom, near Antwerp, this weekend, for the ninth edition of the Tomorrowland extravaganza. It's Europe's most successful festival, due to the unique experience and some innovative branding. As the lakeside spot is transformed into a fantasy amusement park, an all-star DJ line-up entertains 180,000 dance fans from 214 countries.

Behind the escapist fairytale setting lies a Flemish success story that is about to go global. Festival founders Manu and Michiel Beers are brothers and music fans from Antwerp who staged the first loss-making one-day event in 2005, when it was attended by fewer than 10,000 people. Now they are launching the first global spin-off, TomorrowWorld, near Atlanta in the US from 27 to 29 September, with more festivals on other continents planned for next year. It is one of a series of entrepreneurial moves that has rocked the electronic dance music scene this year.

### Eye on expansion

The success of the Beers brothers and the pioneering Amsterdam-based electronic music experience company ID&T, in which they previously had a 50% share, had not gone unnoticed by music promoters around the world. After months of speculation, in March US company SFX Entertainment bought a 75% stake in the global business of ID&T for around \$97.5 million (€74.5 million).

Back in the late 1990s, SFX built up a portfolio of concert promoters, producers and venues. CEO Robert Sillerman subsequently sold the company in 2000 for \$4.4 billion to Clear Channel, the predecessor of concert promoter Live Nation.

With Tomorrowland selling out in seconds and capacity limited to 180,000, the Beers brothers' quest for expansion via foreign investment was understandable. But in mid-June the Flemish daily *De Standaard* broke the news that the pair had bought back the shares from SFX, making them Tomorrowland's majority shareholders. In return for the low share price, the brothers agreed to work with SFX in developing the brand globally, so strong is the belief in the future and profitability of the genre.

The success of TomorrowWorld in September is key to this global march. Its location at Chattahoochee Hills in Georgia features the same natural amphitheatre of the Boom site, plus natural lakes and rolling hills. A major selling point is the fact it is 20 minutes from the international airport in Atlanta. And the 8,000-acre farm belongs to a fellow Fleming, former Olympic three-day event horse rider Carl Bouckaert.

The first edition of TomorrowWorld is expected to attract 50,000 fans



Before and after: the festival site near Atlanta, and the original event in Boom

each day. All 75,000 US tickets sold out in two hours, while tickets remain for international fans. ID&T spokeswoman Debby Wilmsen admitted there was a risk element to the event: "People have high expectations; the pressure is on to do something that will surprise them. We always have to try and do something better."

Wilmsen is enthusiastic about the American version. "We will have the same atmosphere, same decor, Belgian elements but with a local flavour. Belgian beers will be available and we are now looking for local famous chefs." The choice of artists as well as the image remain

the responsibility of the Belgian team, explains Wilmsen. It will be the first festival in the States to have an age limit of 21, to maintain the

example in Africa." Tomorrowland stages local artists alongside European and world names, and the American version will be similar.

**"When they first designed the festival it was all about flowers, smiling, colour and no queues"**

adult atmosphere. Tomorrowland is off-limits to under-18s. The concept is deliberately one that can be moved around the world, adds Wilmsen. "We can work with other promoters, even smaller ones, for

"There is no other country with so many music festivals, and now we have this massive dance event," says Kevin McMullan, press officer of Brussels concert hall Ancienne Belgique.

The other important aspect, he says, is the creation of a unique fairytale world. "No other festival in the world does this. Festival-goers get into this whole trance state with the beat of this repetitive music and then all this crazy stuff happens such as aeroplanes flying over dropping thousands of rose petals," he explains. "They are going to have to do something crazy in the States as well." McMullan believes the growing appeal of electronic music within a festival context is probably a generation's need for shared escapism.

Wilmsen acknowledges that it is a "modern-day Woodstock". There is a holiday atmosphere, you hear so many languages and people fly their national flag." One reason for the popularity of Tomorrowland among fans and promoters is that the event team pays enormous attention to detail, quality and creativity. These were the initial priorities of the Beers brothers when they launched the festival as a welcoming daytime alternative to the then late-night scene that characterised electronic dance music.

### Creature comforts

"When they designed the festival it was all about flowers, smiling, colour and no queues," says Wilmsen. They were equally determined that the food and drinks would be of a high quality, and creature comforts were important from the start. "Wooden floors for wearing heels, tables and chairs for eating, and clean toilets. When people travel from as far as Australia they appreciate a certain level of comfort."

With many fans flying in early, festival organisers put together a Global Journey package that includes hotels and a tourist programme to Bruges, Brussels or Antwerp. The team are preparing an equivalent deal for TomorrowWorld visitors and are collaborating with Brussels Airlines' long-haul partners, hotels in Atlanta and activities such as visiting the city's Coca Cola Museum.

For Wilmsen, the passion of the young festival team outweighs the hard work. "There are no arguments, despite the stress. I don't sleep for a week before the start of the festival, worrying mainly about the weather," she says. She has also learnt to play coy when asked what she does for a living. "Everyone wants to come to the festival and I get about 1,000 calls. So now I just say I'm a press agent." With the Tomorrowland brand on the brink of going global, Wilmsen had better remain evasive about what her day job is.

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# Hermes the healer

## Guardian of the mentally ill lives on in Flanders

Text and photos: Toon Lambrechts

The Saint Hermes Church in Ronse is a beauty in its own right, but the crypt underneath it is really worth a visit. Yet the church has a very dark side to it. It's the latest stop in our tour of Mysterious Flanders.

Like many other churches, the Church of Saint Hermes is designed to impress the faithful. The thick walls, the light playing through the windows, the lavish decoration... Everything invites silence and contemplation. The church is a destination of pilgrimage where a host of saints are invoked for a variety of ailments. That means that the church, more than other places of worship, is filled with religious art, often donations from people whose prayers were answered. The niches are filled with stone plates acknowledging the various saints. Furthermore, there's a collection of ex-votos, little statues in silver, representing the sick body part.

The saint who gave the church its name is Hermes, called on to heal the mentally ill. In the side chapel dedicated to him are signs on the wall showing gratefulness for the healing of the soul. A large statue depicts Hermes on horseback in full armour, with a chained devil



behind him. In the past, psychiatric disorders were seen as the work of Satan.

Hermes lived in the early days of Christianity. He was a wealthy Roman patrician and a confidant of the emperor. Hermes had one son, who was terminally ill, but whose

life was saved by Pope Alexander. Hermes converted to Christianity after this miracle, but that was not appreciated by everybody, to say the least. Together with Pope Alexander, he was beheaded. And for some reason, his remains ended up here in the church's side chapel. At the back is an inconspicuous wooden bench containing solid iron hooks,

where those with the severest mental illness were chained until they were healed. With a little imagination you can hear their cries mingling with the murmuring of the pastor. During the middle ages, those considered to be possessed by the devil were not exactly handled with kindness.

Under the church building, accessible from the side, lies a well-conserved crypt. Today the Romanesque colonnade gives off a mystical air, but it must have been a sinister place in earlier days. Here, those suffering from neuroses were treated to eradicate the devils from their body and soul; that happened through ritual baths and immersion in the ice-cold water of the well in the middle of the crypt.

Once a year, on the first Sunday after Pentecost, the bones of Saint Hermes leave the church. Then the relic is carried around the edge of Ronse in a procession called the Fiertel. The origin of this religious procession and its name remains unknown, but the intention is clear: Keep evil outside Ronse.

*The church and the crypt are in Sint-Hermesstraat in Ronse. The church is open to visitors every day and the crypt's opening hour can be found online.*

► [www.ontdekronse.be](http://www.ontdekronse.be)

## OUTDOOR JUSTICE

Along the busy road between Oudenaarde and Wortegem lies an unsightly structure, flanked by two old lime trees. There are two low pillars with bearded heads carved on them and a wall that fences off a paved square. The purpose of this edifice is not immediately clear, but its old age certainly is. The inscription calling it the Bevere Vierschaar doesn't provide much more clarity. The Vierschaar is a relic of medieval law. The name refers to the four ropes that were stretched (*geschoren*) to mark out the open-air courthouse and refers to the proceedings as well to the place where the court took place. On such a spot, lawmen would once have meted out justice in the name of the ruling nobility. Separation of powers had yet to be introduced, so the town's law and police chief acted as chairman and prosecutor, the alderman as jury and judge.



Originally cases were tried out in the open, often under a lime tree like here in Bevere. This species was traditionally known as the tree of justice. Later the Vierschaar met in public buildings such as the Wachtebeke Vierschaar. The construction here in Bevere is the only remaining outdoor court and therefore unique in Flanders.

The Bevere Vierschaar was once part of a long alley that led to the castle of Volkaertsbeke, which is now long gone, just like the avenue. It was probably also the Lord of Volkaertsbeke who established the Vierschaar. Under its paved floor lies a basement. When it was opened for archaeological research in 1933 they found human bones, the remains of those sentenced to death here.

*The Vierschaar is on Oudenaardseweg, just outside Bevere.*

## VICTIM OF THE SKY

In the industrial zone just north of Ghent, a simple monument, almost unreadable, stands alone and forgotten. The memorial stone recalls Daniel Kinet, the first victim of aviation, and has fallen into total oblivion, just like the figure of *Brusselaar* Kinet. But he must have been a colourful character: racing car driver, balloonist and pilot. On July 10, 1910, on the occasion of the start of the Gentse Feesten, Kinet planned to fly from Ghent to Ostend. Aviation at that time was still in its infancy, so the plan was a risky one. It would end dramatically. After a few short test flights Kinet took off from Oostakker-Lourdes. Immediately after take-off, the numerous spectators saw the plane swing first to the right and then to the left before crashing down from a height of 50 metres. The plane hit a tree first before crashing into a potato field. Kinet was still alive but died five days later due to his injuries. The sky had claimed its first victim.

The cause of the accident was probably a broken cable that ended up in the propeller. However, Kinet was no novice in the air. He was the second Belgian to have a pilot's licence and was permitted to fly with a passenger. The device in which he flew was a Farman, a

primitive biplane. Today it is almost inconceivable that daredevils like Kinet took off into the sky in such aircraft.

*The monument to Kinet is on the Singel in the Ghent industrial zone. Nearby there is also a street named after him.*





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# The future of our past

## Kristl Strubbe talks about her new role at Herita and the organisation's new focus

Alan Hope

Just after the municipal elections last autumn, Kristl Strubbe took everyone by storm by quitting her job as alderwoman for finance and IT in the council in Mechelen, having just been re-elected, and leaving politics behind entirely. The former journalist and TV news anchor then re-emerged two months later as the new director of the Flemish heritage association Herita, and now, having found her feet and her bearings in the new job, she talked to *Flanders Today*.

**H**erita intends, according to heritage minister Geert Bourgeois, to become the Flemish version of the National Trust, the English role model. "It's a union of three separate organisations which each had their own history and their own approach to the heritage sector," Strubbe explains. "Erfgoed Vlaanderen worked with monuments, opening them up to the public principally; the Forum of Heritage Associations was the umbrella organisation for the sector, representing 300 or so associations, and providing expertise and workshops; and Open Monument Day was the major public open day, once a year. "We here at Herita gather expertise not only in the field of restoration but perhaps more than that – and this is something of a change in focus – in opening up heritage sites to the public. That's something slightly more than a museum with an audio guide: A lot more is possible, including events, going out towards broader target groups, which requires different tools than the ones we're used to working

with."

Open Monument Day is Flanders' heritage industry's big shopwindow event, when major and minor sites throw open their doors to the public, attracting tens of thousands of visitors – but only one day a year.

"It should be Open Monument Day every day, in fact," says Strubbe. "We want to attract more people than simply that 10% of heritage fanatics. That's a very small group of people who also go to the opera, to classical concerts, always the same people you come across in the cultural sector. It's important, I think, to go for a broader public: to families with children, to young people themselves, so that they feel that monuments are something for them, too."

The English National Trust has numerous sites, mainly stately homes, under its own management, and 3.7 million members of the public providing funding and, just as important, a public for heritage. "In Britain there's obviously a different public view of monuments; people are more open and involved," Strubbe says. "Herita is not looking to collect monuments for itself. Herita wants to help in opening sites up for other partners. We're there to help, and in the future to attract the public to sites under one label, and of course to make more sites open to the public."

Herita directly controls 13 sites (see box). Open Monument Day, meanwhile, involves opening up around 600 sites in 200 municipalities, under the ownership of municipal authorities, the provinces, private owners or the federal government through the Royal Endowment. The



Kristl Strubbe is relishing her new role at Herita: "It should be Open Monument Day every day"

whole heritage scene is, to put it mildly, fragmented.

Strubbe agrees: "Yes, it's terribly fragmented. Now that we've become the umbrella organisation in the place of the Forum, we have 300 heritage 'carers' – heritage associations like local authorities, church councils, local history associations, all kinds of groups who are our members. So we don't have far to travel to go to those associations to ask if they have a monument, which they don't all have, that we can work with.

"For example, the University of Antwerp is a member, and they have I think six monuments in

their portfolio, which they open up for Open Monument Day but for the rest of the year there's not much public work going on. We'd like to look and see if there's a way we can work together to open those sites up more often."

Strubbe was appointed at the end of last year, and started in January. It's a change of scenery for someone who was until now in the public eye, in the media and then in politics. Does it help in the new job, I ask, that she's a little bit BV – something of a *Bekende Vlaming* or celebrity?

"I'd put it another way. Before I was a politician people knew me because I had presented the VTM news, which is handy because it means that other politicians, officials and so on recognise you right away, which makes contact all the easier. And now that I have a wide network of people out of the world of politics and I come here, that's also handy to help do this job well."

"The fact that people know me, yes that's handy. It makes it easier for them to invite me to take part in a TV programme, for instance, because people know my face, and that makes it easier for me to get my message across. And obviously I make use of that to promote the organisation. I'm quite pragmatic about the fact."

The decision to quit politics came as a bolt from the blue, but she insists the resignation and the job at Herita were not connected.

"It was a couple of weeks after the elections, in November, when I made my decision and announced it, and I was being interviewed by Ruth Joos on VRT radio when I got a phone call to say they were looking for a director here, would I care to

apply? So I knew nothing about the job in advance, but for me the political side of the city council was a closed book.

"I'd been alderwoman for five or six years and that was enough. I wanted to stop and find something new in the cultural sector. But I think if you've been an alderwoman for six years then out of party loyalty you really need to take part in the elections to help gather votes for the party. But I never had any intention to go on any longer. That was it."

She was part of the administration of Mechelen mayor and party colleague Bart Somers, which, leaving all political considerations aside, enjoys a reputation as one of the most dynamic and innovative in Flanders. Wasn't it with heavy heart that she left a political career on a high?

"No. I haven't had even one second's regret so far. I'm pretty good – though I say so myself – in policy-making, in project management, and as alderwoman that's what you need to be able to do," she explains.

"But aside from that there's a whole side to politics where I'm not so talented: that pure party-political aspect of militants and activists and campaigning and canvassing and all that. I'm not so keen on that."

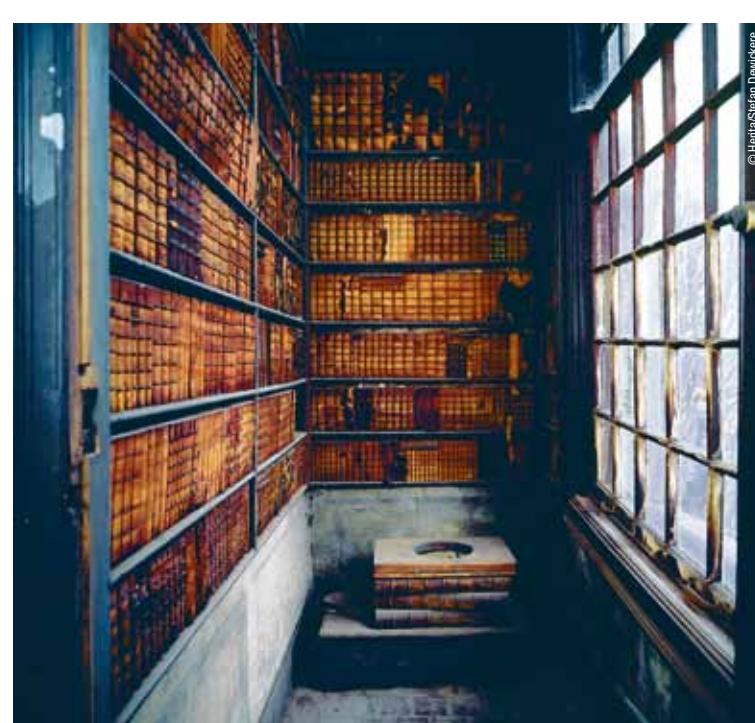
"What I'm doing now allows me to do nothing but work on my projects, 100%, and I'm delighted about that. I'm glad I no longer have to go flyering or trying to convince people to vote for me. I want my work to speak for itself, and I'm so happy to do it."

Still, you had a good time as an alderwoman? "Yes, and I think more people ought to do it."

## THE HERITA LIST

There are 13 sites run by Herita itself, many of which we've covered in the past:

Herkenrode Abbey, Hasselt  
Den Wolsack and De Hofkamer, Antwerp (pictured)  
Fort Napoleon, Ostend  
Beauvoorde castle, Veurne, West Flanders  
Horst Castle, Holsbeek, Flemish Brabant  
Hoeke windmill, Damme, West Flanders  
Paleis op de Meir, Antwerp  
Schepdaal-Dilbeek tram site, Flemish Brabant  
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Kinkenberg chapel, Voeren, Limburg  
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Van Steenberghe chapel, Oud-Heverlee, Flemish Brabant  
De Notelaer Pavilion, Bornem, Antwerp  
St Anna chapel, Voeren, Limburg  
Stadspark Tower, Leuven



Herita will start work in August on restoring the Hofkamer in Antwerp, with its unusual "book toilet"

► [www.herita.be](http://www.herita.be)



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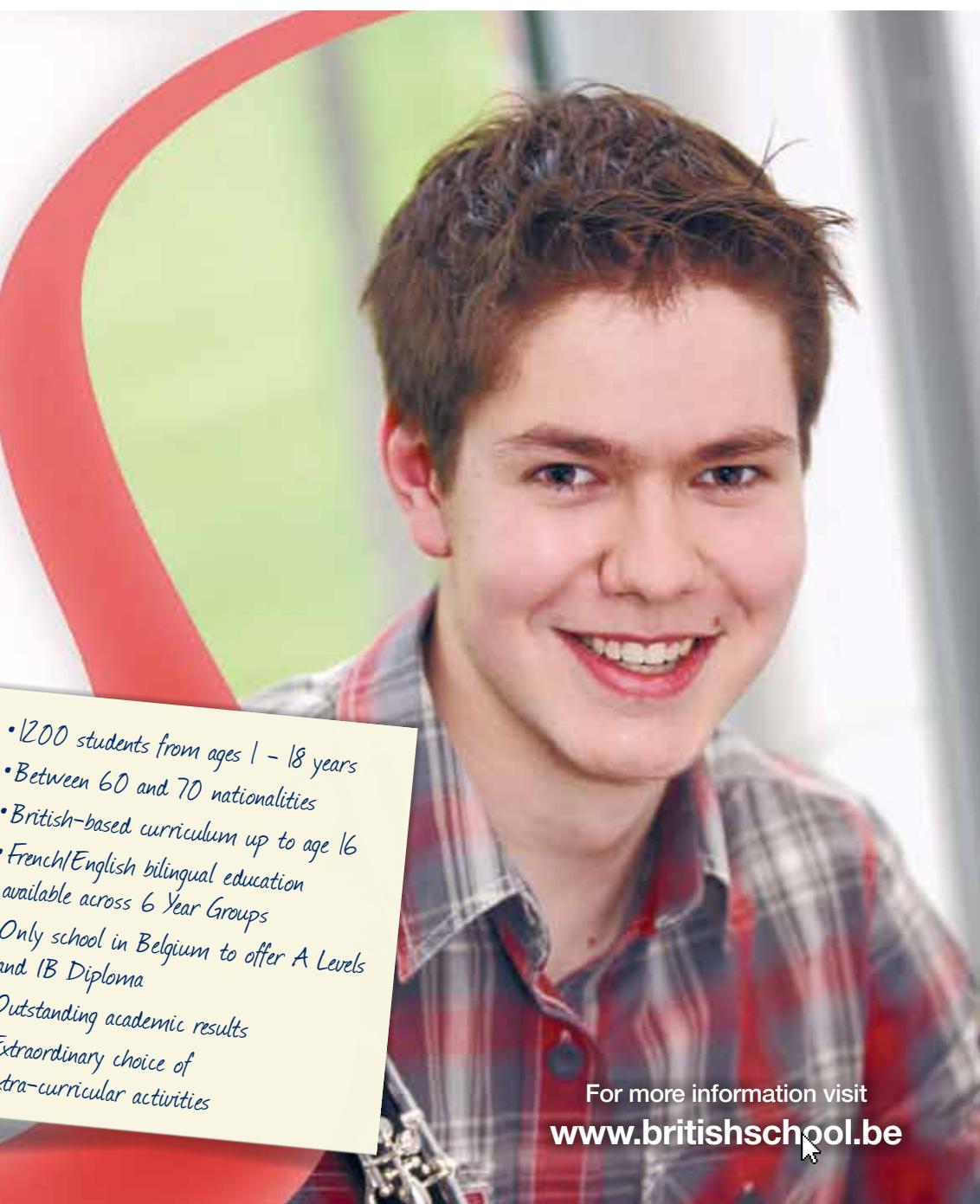
I love the fact that BSB has given me the opportunity to take part in a range of activities outside the academic programme, such as debating at the Model United Nations, speaking in the national finals of the Telenet BBC Public Speaking Awards and playing in the school orchestra.”

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# Night of the song hunter

## Flemish band Oscar and The Wolf close a chapter with an EP compilation

Christophe Verbiest

Does Lou Reed remember Flemish band Oscar and The Wolf? If he's been to see them, he certainly will do, since they're captivating live. But why on earth would Lou Reed go and watch them in the first place, you might wonder. Because they opened for him in June last year, in Luxembourg's Rockhal. "I would be surprised if Lou Reed chooses his own opening act," says Max Colombie, the singer and mainstay of the fivesome Oscar and The Wolf. "I think it was the organiser's choice." And no, he didn't speak with the New York musician. "I could have if I had wanted to, since I saw him backstage and in the canteen. But he looked tired, as if he didn't want any contact. I didn't feel like it, anyway: I'm shy when it comes to talking to famous people."

### New direction

While still working on an official full-length debut album, due some time next year, Oscar and The Wolf have released *EP Collection*, a combination of their two previous EPs, *Imagine Mountains* and *Summer Skin*, plus two previously unreleased tracks. The band play contemplative folk rock with lovely harmonies. At least, that's what you'll find on *EP Collection*, because the next release will show a different face of the group. The present release closes a chapter in the band's history.

Until now, the music had not been dissimilar to that of Bon Iver or Isbells. But change has come. "It's important not to keep repeating yourself," Colombie says. "I'd like to describe the new songs we're recording as we speak as both sexy and dark: You can dance to them, but they can also make you think. They're more electronic, I'd like to create a party, albeit a dark one. I hope the music sounds futuristic. It's the influence of bands like Flying Lotus, Darkstar or Kuedo."

Whatever music Colombie plays nowadays, he's come a long way since 2005 when he came second in Eurokids, the Flemish selection event for the Junior Eurovision Song Contest. "I was 13 going on 14. I wanted to be on a stage, I signed up



Max Colombie (second left) with his Oscar and The Wolf bandmates

and was selected. I wouldn't advise it for children younger than 12, because it's very weird to suddenly have 100 friends instead of four. I also discovered that children can be very cruel. But I was 14 and could already put things in perspective." Laughing, he adds: "It left me unharmed."

Colombie started Oscar and The Wolf four years ago, with guitarist Filip Brans and bass player Roland Spooren. He's from Dilbeek, the two others are from Lommel, in the northeast of Limburg province. "But we met when we were studying in Ghent. I was enrolled at Sint Lucas, where I studied painting. I quit because in class I was playing music more than painting. My teachers understood very well that music was a higher calling. But I still like to paint. I often associate images with my music, and vice versa. It's impossible to separate them."

Spooren recently had to leave the band for medical reasons. He's been replaced and the band also has a drummer and keyboard and guitar player, but Colombie, who writes the songs, is undoubtedly the man behind Oscar and The Wolf.

Of course, melomaniacs will associate the band name with

"Peter and the Wolf", the musical fairytale by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev. Colombie says: "I've been told this several times already, but honestly: I had never heard of it when I chose the name." So, what is the story behind the name? Colombie: "I opted for an alter ego because when writing songs, I feel like someone else: I go into a trance and can't be disturbed. I like to work at night, too, and I'm very intrigued by the moon. I think it was Nietzsche who once said that the moon is a medium that makes us humans feel lonely. It became my motto when writing songs. From the moon to a wolf is a small step. And Oscar sounds better than Max. Oscar is the boy who sucks

up life during the day and uses this inspiration at night."

A smile appears on his face. "People sometimes ask me if I'm unhappy." And? His answer is emphatic: "No! I make dark music because the intensity of the deepest pain is, certainly at my age, much stronger than that of happiness or ecstasy. I love art that is cheerful at first glance, but is full of irony: the music of The Smiths. Or the paintings of (the Flemish luminist) Emile Claus: His works, with colours as eye-candy, appear to be celebrating life's beauty, but underneath lies a strong melancholia." Let that be precisely what you find on *EP Collection*. And what the future will hold, only the future can tell.

27 JULY

Bruksellive

Groentheater, Brussels

Boomtown

Kouter, Brussels

► [www.oscarandthewolf.com](http://www.oscarandthewolf.com)

## NEW MUSIC

### Monk

#### All about Elliott • Monk

With a name like Monk, you might expect a jazz ensemble, but wouldn't it just be asking for problems if jazz cats went under that name. So, indeed, this Monk isn't toying with jazz. On their debut *All About Elliott* the fivesome, centred on David Vandenplas, a musician from Leuven, mainly produce subdued pop songs with a folky edge. Sometimes they try to rock, but they also opt for more intimate tunes. Not a flawless debut –

some tracks lack originality – though the band might blossom on their next albums. Working with an outside producer might be a wise thing to do.

► [monkmusic.be](http://monkmusic.be)

### Knelpunt

#### Antropocean • self-released

### Rivercrest

#### Rivercrest • self-released

Two releases by instrumental bands featuring pianist and composer Tom Bessemans. Knelpunt (sometimes written as

knel, since *punt* is Dutch for dot) have been going for over a decade, but haven't managed to become a household name in Flanders, yet. That's a pity as *Antropocean* proves: The quintet from Flemish Brabant create jazzy tunes, veering towards rock and world music. They themselves call it world fusion. The music is instigated by Bessemans' soulful Fender Rhodes piano, with beautiful sax solos by Gilbert Lens. Though it's not fair to single out two players, since Knelpunt are a tightly knotted

band. I throw in the not-so-new – dating from December – eponymously titled first album by Rivercrest, since it certainly deserves attention. The three tracks, good for 72(!) minutes of music, were recorded in one day. It's a hazardous trip in a musical no man's land where free jazz is combined with spaced-out rock, groovy jams and even some afrobeat. Hallucinatory and highly contagious. Two bands that deserve to be discovered!

► [www.facebook.com/knelpunt](http://www.facebook.com/knelpunt)  
► [rivercrest.bandcamp.com](http://rivercrest.bandcamp.com)

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Fons Sijmons, bass player with Flemish band The Scabs in the 1980s and 1990s, has died in the Jan Palfijn hospital in Ghent after suffering from lung cancer. He was 58. Sijmons was described by colleagues as "a natural talent" on the instrument, but his career was also marked by a descent into alcohol and drugs. He will be cremated in Lochristi on 24 July; in the meantime a condolence book has been opened on the Scabs' website.

► [www.thescabs.be](http://www.thescabs.be)

The 27th Stripfestival opened in Middelkerke on the coast last week with the **unveiling of a statue of Jerom**, one of the heroes of the Suske & Wiske strips of Willy Vandersteen, whose centenary this year is being marked by the festival. The event, described by Middelkerke mayor Janna Rommel-Opstaele as "unique in Belgium and perhaps even in Europe", runs until 4 August.

► [www.stripbdmiddelkerke.be](http://www.stripbdmiddelkerke.be)

The TV comedy series *De Kotmadam* has been **renewed for another season**, its 22nd, broadcaster VTM announced. The series thus becomes the longest-running TV comedy in Flanders, pulling ahead of the VRT series *F.C. De Kampioenen*, which ran for 21 seasons but only broadcast 273 episodes against *De Kotmadam*'s 307.

The Loketenzaal of the Flemish parliament will **no longer be used to stage exhibitions**, after disappointing attendance figures, the parliament's speaker, Jan Peumans, announced. The last exhibition of original comic-strip art, which closed on 10 July, attracted only about 1,700 visitors but cost €90,000 to €100,000, Peumans said. "That's a lot of money. So we're stopping." The hall will be transformed into a permanent visitors' centre.

The city council of Aalst in East Flanders is considering **setting up a solidarity fund** to come to the aid of the members of a carnival association who were ordered by a court to pay damages of €1.5 million as a result of a fire on a float after their insurer, Ethias, refused to pay out. According to the court, the float, which caught fire because of an overheated engine, was only insured for accidents while on the street, not in the garage where it was kept. Each member of the association now faces a personal bill of €50,000.

# Love is... going together to the International Cartoon Festival

Tom Peeters

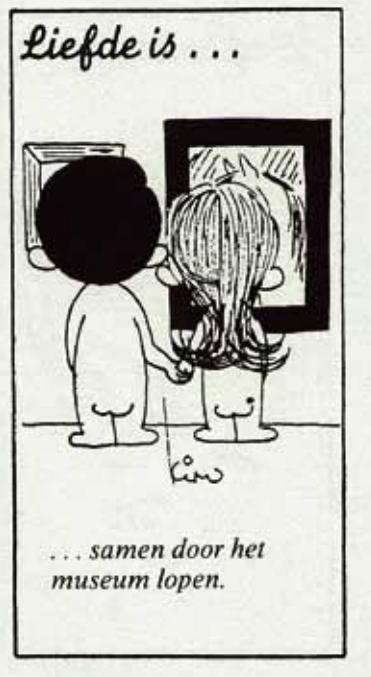
**L**ove is... trying to cook like his mother. Love is... not saying: I told you so. Love is... preferring to be miserable with him than without him.

Of course, those little cartoons with a naked but asexual boy and girl sharing their mutual love – actually, in most cases the girl is crying out her admiration, loyalty and affection for the boy – may seem hopelessly romantic and utterly naive. But they are spread across the pages of newspapers the world over, collecting a fan base that remains to this day. Even now, more than 15 years after the death of Kim Casali (1941-1997), the illustrator who invented the two characters, you can read her scribbles every morning in the largest newspapers. Her international career started on 5 January, 1970 when the comic strip *Love is...* was first published

in the *Los Angeles Times*. In Flanders, *Het Nieuwsblad* is still publishing her work. And now, for the first time, an exhibition tells the couple's story, as part of the International Cartoon Festival in Knokke.

New Zealand-born Casali (original name: Meredith Judith Grove) was writing these little love notes to her Italian boyfriend, Roberto Casali, whom she met at the end of the 1960s when she was living in Los Angeles; they later had three children together. "At first she just left small, loving messages for him, but encouraged by my father she started to make cartoon illustrations," says her son Stefano, who was at the opening of the festival. "It was her way to express herself, like a diary."

Stefano is aware of the fact there are a lot of women's rights organisations that don't approve of the naive way



in which his mother often depicted women. "But come on, get over it," he says. "It's simple, it's sweet, it's innocent, it's charming. That's why so many people can identify, and why it became a worldwide phenomenon."

Casali took advantage of her job as a receptionist for a printer company to make little booklets of her cartoons, selling them for a dollar each. The cartoons were soon syndicated and being published in newspapers in 50 countries and more than 25 languages. From 1972 you could see the couple on mugs, T-shirts and calendars, and later even in publicity campaigns, like the one asking for politeness in the London Underground.

"The characters weren't just created for material ends," explains Stefano. "At the exhibition you can see some of the original drawings my mother did for my father. For me it's especially nice to

see the cartoons from around the time I was born: Love is... being nice to the baby, or... not minding when the baby throws his food everywhere."

Roberto was diagnosed with cancer in 1975 and died in 1976. At that point, Kim commissioned British cartoonist Bill Asprey to take over the daily cartoons, under her signature.

Because Casali and Asprey's drawings are not political, it's like entering another world when you switch exhibition rooms and see the selection of cartoons from competitions such as the Gouden Hoed, European Press Cartoon and Belgium Press Cartoon. With more than 400 jokes about the euro crisis, political hypocrisy and human decay, and Michelle Martin bumping into former Fortis chairman Maurice Lippens in the streets of Knokke, you're in for an immediate reality check.

Until 15 September | Beach/Casino Knokke | ► [www.cartoonfestival.be](http://www.cartoonfestival.be)

## FESTIVAL

### Sfinks Mixed

Originally conceived in 1975 as a neighbourhood folk festival, Sfinks once hosted a mere handful of hippies in a Boechout schoolyard. A decade later it diversified in a big way, adopting a world-music focus and inviting the genre's top names. Youssou N'Dour, the Sun Ra Orkestra and Gilberto Gil have all graced the Sfinks stage. By the early 1990s, the old schoolyard could no longer accommodate the festival's growing audience and it moved to the wide-open space of the Molenveld. A third day of concerts was added to the programme, then a fourth. Now Sfinks features some 40 international acts on six stages (including one just for kids). There are live acts like Chilean singer-songwriter Nano Stern (*pictured*) and Brazilian pop diva Gaby Amarantos, and DJs like Buscemi and Daniel Haaksman. There's even an anti-world-music act in the form of the Clement Peerens Explosion, an over-the-top rock band whose members hail from Flanders and Africa. **Georgio Valentino**



25-28 July | Bessemstraat, Boechout (Antwerp) | ► [www.sfinks.be](http://www.sfinks.be)

## MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

### Brussels

**Bruksellive:** Free festival with four stages near the Atomium featuring Tommigun, Labyrinth Ear, Gullfisk, DJ Slow, Onda Sonora, Lefto, Dja-Vu, Elio Salamone and Bredren, among others

**JUL 27 15.00 at Groentheater, Ossegempark**

► [www.bruksellive.be](http://www.bruksellive.be)

### Kasterlee (Antwerp province)

**Wisselfeesten:** Free festival with original music from Belgium and abroad on the town square, also featuring entertainment for children and a talent show

**JUL 27 14.00-3.00 at De Wissel, Geelsebaan 34**

► [www.wisselfeesten.be](http://www.wisselfeesten.be)

### Oud-Heverlee (Flemish Brabant)

**RootsRock IV:** Free rock festival in a meadow with two stages featuring non-stop live music, plus beers, burgers and more

**JUL 27 12.00 at Ophemstraat 41**

► [www.rootsrock.be](http://www.rootsrock.be)

## FAMILY

### Meetjeslandse Balloonmeeting

Do you point to the sky every time you spot a hot-air balloon? You'd be forgiven for this almost instinctual reaction, since these giant floating balls of gas tend to inspire awe in most people since childhood. It's a demonstration of fundamental physics, but hot-air balloon flight has something magical about it. Come to Eeklo in East Flanders this weekend to watch as many as 100 balloons take to the sky in unison. You'll be surprised by the variety of shapes and sizes, including hearts, cartoon characters and colourful animals. For those keeping both feet on the ground, this 28th edition of the event features plenty of live music, food stands and activities for children.

**Robyn Boyle**



27 & 28 July | Sportcentrum Eeklo, Burgemeester L Pussemierstraat 157, Eeklo

► [www.meetjeslandseballoonmeeting.be](http://www.meetjeslandseballoonmeeting.be)

## MORE FAMILY ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

### Deurne (Antwerp province)

**Red:** Free afternoon concert by superhero Red for children aged four and up

**JUL 26 13.00-14.00 at Rivierenhof open-air theatre, Turnhoutsebaan 232**

► [www.openluchttheater.be](http://www.openluchttheater.be)

### Ghent

**Push:** Free powerful and athletic dance duet by Company Chameleon for all ages, including children aged nine and up

**JUL 27-28 at Spaanskasteelplein**

► [www.companychameleon.com](http://www.companychameleon.com)

### Peer (Limburg)

**Corn maze:** Two acres of corn fields have been transformed into a maze for young and old, with fun facts about farming along the way, and even several live animals

**Until SEP 1 at Lindebosstraat**

► [www.zomerinpeer.be](http://www.zomerinpeer.be)

## COMEDY

### All-English Comedy Night

For seven years, the Comedy Festival Ghent has lured many professional English-speaking comedians to the Gentse Feesten. This year is no different, with the award-winning deaf British comedian Steve Day set to make an appearance that will have you giggling like a little kid. Described by fans as "warm, funny, frank and thought-provoking", Day has a self-effacing kind of humour and slew of witty punchlines up his sleeve ("I'm Britain's only deaf comic... or if there are any others, I haven't heard"). The other act featured is the American comedy legend Lois Bromfield, one of the regular writers for popular sitcoms such as *Roseanne* and *Grace Under Fire*. When on stage, no topic is safe from Bromfield, from something as banal as shopping and dating to more serious – and seriously funny – societal critique. Grab your tickets while they last, as these shows tend to sell out fast. **RB**



26 July, 22.00 & 27 July, 20.00

Hof van Ryhove, Onderstraat 20, Ghent

► [www.comedyfestival.be](http://www.comedyfestival.be)

### MORE COMEDY THIS WEEK

#### Ghent

**Impro-Comedy:** A fixture in the improvisation world, The Lunatics are all about speed, surprise and plenty of silliness (in Dutch)

JUL 27-29 at Tinnenpot, Tinnenpotstraat 21

► [www.tinnenpot.be](http://www.tinnenpot.be)

**Hutsepot (Hodgepodge):** A variety show of skits filled with humour, accordion and singing in the Ghent dialect, French and English

Until JUL 28 at De Wingerd, Neermerskaai 1a

► [www.noelfack.be](http://www.noelfack.be)

**Leve papa (Caveman wordt papa) (Long live papa (Caveman becomes a father):** Following the huge international success of the relationship parody *Caveman*, Philippe de Maertelaere now plays a new father, with all the hilarious downfalls that go with it (in Dutch)

JUL 26-29 21.30-23.00 at Tinnenpot, Tinnenpotstraat 21

► [www.tinnenpot.be](http://www.tinnenpot.be)

## VISUAL ARTS

### Massimo Bartolini

Last year, Italian sculptor Massimo Bartolini wowed Ghent (and us, for that matter) with his contribution to the city-wide art binge, Track. *Bookyards* was a gargantuan open-air library installed on the grounds of St Peter's Abbey. It was an ambitious concept perfectly executed. Ghent's contemporary arts museum, in collaboration with Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery, now hosts a dedicated Bartolini exhibition featuring one supersized work and a cross-section of curios lifted from the artist's studio. Some of these are sketches, collages, prints and other warm-up exercises; others are fully realised (and often whimsical) sculptures. It's a glimpse into not just the imagination of the artist but his working practice as well. The show's centrepiece is "Otra Fiesta", a giant pipe organ made of metal scaffolding (*pictured*). The music it churns out was created by free jazz musician Edoardo Marraffa and singer Deirdre Dubois around a text by Argentine poet Roberto Juarroz. **GV**



Until 22 September

SMAK, Ghent

► [www.smak.be](http://www.smak.be)

### MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

#### Antwerp

**Mijn kleine paradijs (My Little Paradise):** Group show set up by Flemish artist Hans Op de Beeck and Middelheim Museum curator Sara Weyns, featuring seven local and international artists' reflections on the art historical significance of the Garden of Eden and the contemporary, social significance of paradise

Until SEP 15 at Middelheim Museum, Middelheimlaan 61

► [www.middelheimmuseum.be](http://www.middelheimmuseum.be)

**Ruud Van Empel:** Impressive collages made up of hundreds of fragments of photos by the Dutch artist that combine to make larger images of colourful, fictitious worlds

Until OCT 6 at FotoMuseum, Waalsekaai 47

► [www.fotomuseum.be](http://www.fotomuseum.be)

Katrien Lindemans

### DUSK TIL DAWN

#### Charlatan

Vlasmarkt 6, Ghent

For most people in and around Ghent, a visit to bar, music and party venue Charlatan never disappoints. Located on the bustling Vlasmarkt, there's always something going on. If you're after a good night out on the town, a trip to Charlatan might be exactly what you need.

The place is open from Tuesday until Sunday, from 19.00 until 6.00 in the morning. On Wednesday, 24 July, two parties will see you through the night. In the dance room, Alpha takes over the space with a house, UK funky, tribal and hip-hop party. Alpha is the brainchild of Ghent DJs Bafana & Bromin, who've invited a couple of great DJs to Ghent: Medlar from the UK, for instance, and the Dutch Jane Doe, among others.

The next evening starts with a gig by Maya's Moving Castle at the Charlatan cafe. The band made it to Humo's Rock Rally finale in 2010 and have now released a debut album. After their synth and new wave sounds, the party starts in the dance room with reggae and R'n'B mixed with sleazy electro by L-Dopa & Del Pierro. TLP closes the night, the party pope from Ghent who's a resident at such dance meccas as Decadence and Culture Club. Blues and folk lovers are welcome



the next day to watch King Dalton (*pictured*) perform songs from their debut album at the Charlatan cafe. On 26 July, it's all about rock and dance with Dearworld from the Netherlands, who combine electro house and rock. As it's a Friday, Charlatan's bigger dance venue Barabaar opens its doors as well. Behind the decks there you'll find We Are Prostitutes

and all-around DJ Love is Fighting. On Saturday, the cafe hosts a performance by Paulien, the singer who won *The Voice* (Flemish edition). On Sundays, recover from the weekend with the Love Boat Electric BBQ. And if you have some energy left, DJ Laplaz is on at midnight.

► [www.charlatan.be](http://www.charlatan.be)

## BITE

## Bombay Inn ★★★★☆

Flemish daily newspaper *Het Nieuwsblad* came out last week with a list of the top five places to eat Indian food in Flanders. The article set me off dreaming about curries, naan and aromatic rice. So I book a table for two at Bombay Inn, the Brussels restaurant acclaimed for its exceptionally good Indian cuisine and cosy atmosphere since 1978.

The owner is genuinely happy to see us come in, his first customers on this slow Wednesday evening, but the place fills up quickly in the two hours that we are there. First he brings a thirst-quenching Coke and pitcher of sparkling water, followed by the requisite poppadom and quartet of exotic dipping sauces.

The extensive menu is overwhelming at first, but does offer a helpful explanation of each dish in Dutch, French and English. This is useful for those of us needing to brush up on our knowledge of the difference between shahi korma, madras and rogan josh, to name a few. After long deliberation, we settle on lamb tikka masala and chicken dhansak.

We're amazed by how quickly the dishes appear on the hot plate before us, together with a side of naan, that irresistible flatbread straight out of the clay oven, and a bowl of heavenly scented rice.

The ultra-tender pieces of lamb have been marinated in yoghurt with ginger and spices and grilled in the tandoor before being added to a thick, creamy sauce. There is no lack of flavour here, with myriad spices mingling on your tongue



with the unmistakeably rich taste of ghee, or clarified butter. The dhansak makes for a nice complementary dish to the tikka masala, as the two are completely different. Chunks of white-breast chicken are found bobbing inside a thick and delicious sauce, a combination of onions, pink lentils and no small amount of spices, mainly cumin, coriander and

turmeric. We sop up every last bit of both sauces with torn-off pieces of the naan.

Rice, normally a modest and unassuming side dish, is in this restaurant one of the highlights of the meal. Thanks to a mixture of sweet, plump sultanas, earthy cashews and fragrant cloves and cardamom, the rice has a lot of character. My partner and I let it all digest over a couple of espressos which, it must be said, are not an Indian restaurant's forte. One of their speciality fruit teas or Indian chai teas with milk would have been more suitable. At any rate we're impressed by the whole experience, especially when it comes to just €44.

► [www.bombayinn.be](http://www.bombayinn.be)

Greepstraat 38, Brussels; 02.219.59.54

12.00-14.30 & 18.00-22.30, Mon-Sat

Mains: €12-20

Time-tested and truly enjoyable Indian restaurant in the heart of Brussels

## TALKING SPORTS

## A Tour to forget for Flanders

It's 37 years since Lucien van Impe, from Mere, East Flanders, won the Tour de France, the last time any Belgian claimed that crown. Sadly for Flemish fans, the 2013 edition did little to suggest that this long wait will come to an end soon: It was the worst performance for years.

Much of the disappointment concerns a Tour revelation of recent years, Jurgen Van den Broeck. The Herentals rider, who came fourth in 2010 and 2012, crashed out on the fifth stage. Not only was his Tour curtailed – as it was after a crash in 2011 – but he will be sidelined for at least two months after an MRI scan detected partial cracks in the posterior cruciate ligament and the medial ligament, as well as injuries to the cartilage, a bone bruise and a bruise of the patella tendon. Van den Broeck will now need an operation to mend the

damage to the cartilage.

But there was, at least, a surprise package in the unheralded Jan Bakelants, winner of the second stage and brief holder of the yellow jersey. Bakelants, 27, from Oudenaarde, finished the tour 18th overall, making him the top Flemish finisher. The rider with the Luxembourg-based RadioShack-Leopard team also finished 13th in the green jersey sprint rankings and 14th in the polka dot jersey climbing rankings.

After Bakelants, the next Flemish rider, in 38th position, was Zottegem-born 26-year-old Bart De Clercq, from Lotto Belisol, in his first Tour de France – he also came 14th in the green jersey rankings. Classics star Philippe Gilbert, riding with the BMC Racing Team, came in 62nd; Thomas De Gendt, with Vacansoleil-DCM, was in 96th place; Sep Vanmarcke and Maarten Wynants, from Belkin

Pro Cycling, were 131rd and 132nd respectively; Gert Steegmans, from Omega Pharma-Quick Step, was 153rd; and Jurgen Roelandts and Frederik Willems, of Lotto Belisol, were 160th and 163rd respectively.

Teamwise, it was not much better. Wevelgem-based Omega Pharma-Quick Step, which controversially dropped Tom Boonen from the Tour, trailed in eighth, despite being strengthened with Englishman Mark Cavendish, who came second in the sprinting ranking. And Lotto Belisol came 20th out of the 22 teams: Van Den Broeck's crash clearly hurt their overall performance.

So, not much to celebrate in Flanders this year. But, as ever, there is hope that the younger riders might use the experience as a springboard next year. And that Van den Broeck can recover once again.

Leo Cendrowicz

## The last word...

## Eye witness

## Child care

"This is a challenge. There won't be time all day for more than a quick sandwich, but as a news anchor you wouldn't want to miss it. Moments like these when history is being written, that's what you do it for."

Dany Verstraeten, news anchor for VTM, for whom the national day was a marathon of about 20 hours

"People with healthy children don't know what it's like to wake up in the morning, open your eyes and see a child that will never get better."

Nicole Terrie of Kruishoutem in East Flanders is 76, and has looked after her handicapped son for 53 years

## Tough at the top

"Times have changed. For Flemish politicians, minister-president of the Flemish government has become the pinnacle. Once it was the prime minister's job, but not any longer."

Federal finance minister Koen Geens rates his old boss Kris Peeters as a higher order than his current boss, Elio Di Rupo

NEXT WEEK  
IN FLANDERS TODAY

## Cover story

Making sport a world without discrimination is the aim of the worldOutgames, the third edition of which takes place in Antwerp from 31 July until 11 August. It's an international multi-disciplinary event organised by the LGBT community but open to everyone. More than 5,000 athletes from 100 countries are expected to take part in 32 disciplines; away from the sport there's a vibrant cultural agenda featuring theatres, parties and the Antwerp Pride. We tell you how it began and who you'll be cheering on.

## News

Preparations have been under way in Flanders for years for the First World War's centenary, including a rush to restore the headstones of those who fell here. *Flanders Today* meets the men responsible for engraving headstones and replacing them when they have reached the end of their useful life – at a current rate of about 15,000 a year.

## News

Over the years, the Flemish public broadcaster VRT has built an extensive audio-visual archive: hours of programme content stored in a variety of ways. Now, the broadcaster's archives and documentation department wants to safeguard the valuable material. We take a quick peek behind the scenes.

