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The waiting game

Flanders has waited long enough: The American remake of blockbuster *Loft* opens this month



Lisa Bradshaw

More articles by Lisa \ flanderstoday.eu

No one is more relieved that the English-language remake of the blockbuster Flemish film *Loft* is finally opening in cinemas than Erik Van Looy. The three-year wait, the director assures us, is about studio politics, not about the quality of the film

“It’s got nothing to do with the movie.” These are the first words out of the mouth of Erik Van Looy to every journalist’s question regarding his movie *The Loft*.

Van Looy made the film three years ago, the English-language remake of his 2008 thriller *Loft*, which broke Belgian box office records. The American version, filmed partly in New Orleans and partly in a Flemish studio, has never been released in cinemas.

Until now. The movie is opening the Ghent Film Festival on 14 October and opens across Belgium the following day. The long (long, long)-awaited US opening date is 15 January. So what took so long?

“All I can say is what the American producer kept telling

me,” answers Van Looy (pictured). “He said, ‘Remember Erik, it’s not about the movie, it’s about politics.’”

The American studio system can be “almost enough to make you lose hope,” the Flemish director admits. “But then you see the results of the test screenings, and you know it was never about the movie. One day I might write a book about all the things that happened behind the scenes, but I’m so happy it’s opening the Ghent Film Festival and that it’s being released that I’m not interested anymore in talking about what went wrong.”

Van Looy, 52, is a celebrity Flemings love to love. Aside from writing or directing solid, crowd pleasing thrillers (*De zaak Alzheimer*, *Dossier K*), he is the host of one of the region’s most popular TV shows, *De slimste mens ter wereld* (The Smartest Person in the World). He is pleasant and affable, both on screen and off.

In keeping with his character, he applies that famous American optimism to the *Loft* situation, noting that the film got a great opening month (January) stateside and that’s it’s opening nationwide, rather than a limited release.

“Unless you’re *Spiderman*, you have to fight for wide release,” he says. “And that’s what we did. It took us longer than expected, but ... we have a better date. And in the meantime, Matthias is an international star.”

He’s talking, of course, about Matthias Schoenaerts, who reprises his role of bad boy Philip in the movie about five friends who acquire a secret loft apartment to give them a private place to cheat on their wives. James Marsden of *X-Men* fame (he was Cyclops) plays Philip’s brother Chris, the moral compass of the group, and Karl Urban (“Bones” McCoy in the latest *Star Trek* films) portrays the group’s slick ringleader, Vincent.

Rounding out the cast are Wentworth Miller (*Prison Break*) as the nervous Luke and Eric Stonestreet (*Modern Family*) as the clownish Marty.

“It was really good to have a Belgian ensemble,” continues Van Looy, referring to the presence of Schoenaerts in the American production, as well as director of photography Nicolas Karakatsanis and script supervisor Ann Van Aken. “Those actors didn’t know me, which can always be a prob-

Sharia4Belgium trial starts

More than 45 on trial in Antwerp accused of being members of a terrorist group



Alan Hope
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Belgium's largest terrorism trial ever started last week in Antwerp amid heightened security. The 46 defendants are charged with membership of a terrorist group, Sharia4Belgium, which recruited volunteers to fight in Syria with anti-government Islamist rebels. Among the accused is the group's leader, Fouad Belkacem, who was transported from prison to the court in a bulletproof vehicle. Police arrived in four armoured vans. Members of the public passed through metal detectors to claim a place in the crowded courtroom, which was filled with police, both in and out of uniform. Explosive-detecting dogs patrolled inside and out. The prosecution's star witness is Jejoen Bontinck, whose father Dimitri travelled to Syria in April 2013 to retrieve him amid much media attention. Bontinck has now

turned state's evidence against Sharia4Belgium. Belkacem is accused of being one of five leaders of the movement and is the only one not to have travelled to Syria himself. He has been in prison since April last year, when he was arrested for hate speech. If Sharia4Belgium is found to be a terrorist organisation, the leaders risk a sentence of 15 years; other members could be sentenced to up to five years. In related news, one of the men on trial in Antwerp had access to technical areas of the nuclear power plant at Doel in East Flanders, according to an investigation by VTM News. Ilyass Boughalab, 26, is currently fighting in Syria. He worked as a technician with the subcontractor Vinçotte, which carries out inspections of repairs at the plant. Boughalab's task, until he left the company in Novem-



© Yves Herman/REUTERS
Key witness Jejoen Bontinck arrives at the Antwerp court

ber 2012, was to inspect the safety of welding work, which gave him access to the most secure part of the installation. That is where an incident took place last August that forced the closure of the plant until the end of the year. The incident is being investigated as possible sabotage.

Electrabel, which owns the plant, carries out security screenings of personnel allowed access to sensitive areas of nuclear plants, VTM reported. Boughalab was screened once during the three years he worked at Doel. "If we had known the man had become radicalised, we would have reacted immediately," said an Electrabel spokesperson. According to nuclear inspection agency Fanc, Boughalab would have been subject to checks each time he entered and left the technical zone, regardless of his clearance. There is at present no evidence to link Boughalab to the incident in August, when he was not even in the country. However, the security services will now be looking more closely at possible connections he had during his time at Doel.

Chaotic pontoon celebration in Antwerp

Last weekend's public opening of a reconstructed pontoon bridge over the river Scheldt in central Antwerp was a major event in the city's commemorations of the First World War, but it became chaotic, as tens of thousands of visitors who had bought tickets were turned away, including the city's own mayor, Bart De Wever. The problem arose, organisers said, because people were taking longer to cross the bridge than expected. In their planning, they had estimated an average of five minutes for a crossing, but crowds moved much more slowly, as people took time to take in the view from the middle of the river only centimetres above the water, and to take photos. Tickets were €5 per person. "It was apparently calculated that more people would cross the bridge at a particular speed," De Wever said. "However, people walk more slowly because of course they want to take photos. I can perfectly well understand that everyone is angry." The pontoon commemorates bridges of a similar style – individual floating sections manoeuvred into place by boats – built over the Scheldt from October 1914. The bridges were eventually used to evacuate citizens from the city. The pontoon had a festival opening on Friday, with the king and queen the first to



© Courtesy Antwerpen 14-18

cross, accompanied by ministers, ambassadors and centenarian Josée Heyrman, who was five years old when the original pontoon bridge was constructed. The congestion led to serious delays – each ticket was booked for a half-hour time-slot, but visitors were having to wait for hours. On Saturday, the bridge opened an hour late, and later had to be closed again to make way for shipping. An estimated 12,000 people paid for a crossing they were unable to make. On Sunday, more time slots were cancelled, but on the whole the day went ahead without problems, organisers said. People were advised to keep moving. Those who couldn't cross will be reimbursed for the cost of their ticket. Meanwhile, the *schelfie* – a combination of "selfie" and "Schelde" – made its first appearance on Twitter on Friday. \ AH

Health survey shows increase in psychological problems

The number of people with mental and emotional problems in Flanders has sharply increased in recent years, and young people in particular report emotional problems in much greater numbers, according to the Health Survey, a large-scale report commissioned by Belgium's three ministers of public health to alert policymakers to any need for adjustments in mental health policy. The Scientific Institute of Public Health (WIV) last year interviewed more than 10,800 Belgians for the survey, among them 3,512 in the Flemish region and 3,103 in the Brussels region. About one in three Belgians (32%) reports some kind of mental problem, whether they are chronically stressed, sad, depressed or can't sleep because of worries. In 2008, that number stood at 26%. More people in urban areas reported mental problems than in rural or semi-urbanised municipalities. In Brussels, researchers found a larger concentration (40%) than in Flanders (29%). The population of Flanders had fewer mental and emotional issues overall than the other two regions. The number of girls and women in Flanders between the ages of 15 and 24 with

emotional problems is higher than in the other regions. Eating disorders (18%), anxiety (16%) and depression (25%) are all high for this group. In total, 10% of the Belgian population older than 15 has anxiety, 15% shows signs of depression and 30% mention problems sleeping. All these issues have increased since 2008, according to the report. The report "demonstrates trends in the well-being of the population," said Health Survey project leader Stefaan Demarest. "The results among the youth population are a particular cause for concern." \ Andy Furniere



© ingimage

55th



place for the University of Leuven in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. Ghent University came in at 90 and Antwerp University at 170

€800,000,000



to be invested by petroleum giant Exxon in the construction of a new refinery in the Port of Antwerp. Minister-president Geert Bourgeois took part in a ground-breaking ceremony last week

1842



year the bottles of Belgian beer salvaged from a shipwreck off the coast of Finland were brewed. Researchers from Ghent University recreated the recipe, which is selling for €113 a bottle

7,500



marched in Brussels last week in protest at the slaughter of animals without anaesthetic. Led by animal rights organisation Gaia, it was held in the run-up to the Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice on 4 October

€37,000



spent by a 15-year-old Antwerp boy on the online game *Game of War: Fire Age* without the knowledge of his mother, who is now being asked to foot the bill

WEEK IN BRIEF

The people of Mechelen have voted **not to place a clock on the Sint-Rombouts** tower in a referendum that took place yesterday. Fifty-four percent voted against the measure, which would have cost about €600,000. The measure was intended to replace the clock that once stood on the tower and was damaged in the First World War.

The month of August saw **93% of trains arriving on time**, the ninth month in a row when figures for punctuality have improved, according to rail infrastructure company Infrabel. In August 2013, the figure was 90.2%. Infrabel said the improvement is a result of better co-operation with the NMBS. A reduction in the number of cable thefts also had an influence, a spokesperson said. In Infrabel figures, a train is considered to be on time if it is less than six minutes late.

QinetiQ Space of Kruibeke, East Flanders, has won a €2.3 million contract to provide an important **component for the new Euclid space telescope** of the European Space Agency. The telescope will be sent into space to search for the source of “dark matter”, which accounts for one-quarter of all of the energy in the universe. QinetiQ will construct a cylindrical panel called a baffle, designed to prevent solar rays from disrupting the telescope’s lens.

Estimates of the **cost of building a new national football stadium** are “over optimistic,” according to sports economist Trudo Dejonghe of the University of Leuven. According to Brussels-City, which is in charge of the plans, public spending will not be necessary, as the stadium’s cost of €314 million will be financed entirely by the private sector. Dejonghe argues that the costs are almost certain to be higher, while income from events is likely to be lower than the

football union estimates. “I hope the interested parties carry out their own study,” Dejonghe told *Het Nieuwsblad*.

Consumer organisation Test-Aankoop has called for the compulsory labelling of products with their **minimum life expectancy**, to protect consumers against “planned obsolescence” – the notion that manufacturers deliberately make products that will break down within a certain period of time to oblige consumers to buy new models. The organisation cited hand mixers, headphones and washing machines as examples. Test-Aankoop also wants to extend the legal guarantee period from two to five years.

The Brussels **Royal Conservatory was evacuated** temporarily last week for safety reasons, according to the association formed to press for urgent renovations to the buildings. The evacuation affected percussion, flute and composition classes as well as the print shop and workshops. The governments concerned, federal and regional, agreed almost a year ago to set aside the funding needed for renovation work, but so far no action has been taken.

The state coffers have taken in between €4 and €5 million in the six months since it became possible to buy a **personalised car licence plate**, according to figures from the department of vehicle registration. More than 4,500 people have ordered a personalised plate.

The month of **September was exceptionally dry**, with only 15.1mm of rain compared to an average of 689mm. There were seven “precipitation days”, compared to 15 on average for the month. The average temperature was 16.5 degrees, with 157 hours of sunshine.

Police in Brussels have been advised by the interior ministry to wear **bulletproof vests at all times**, following arson attempts at two police stations. The incidents are not known to be connected to terrorist action threatened because of Belgium’s participation in attacks against IS, but the office in charge of analysing terrorist risk is considering whether the alert level should be raised from two to four.

Flanders’ children’s rights commissioner Bruno Vanobbergen has spoken out against a school in Meise, Flemish Brabant where children were **refused lunch because they were in arrears** with school fees. The school sent a letter to dozens of parents, withdrawing the right to school lunches for the entire year 2014-2015. If payments were made, the letter said, parents could sign their children up for next school year, beginning in 2015. “Children must not be allowed to become the victims of schools’ financial problems,” Vanobbergen said.

Belgium’s hospital capacity is in dire need of being re-organised, with between 10,000 and 15,000 **acute care beds described as “superfluous”** by Jean Hermesse, secretary-general of the CM mutuality. Changes in medical techniques, he said, mean hospital stays are shorter now and an increase in out-patient cases. That leads to fewer beds being required, Hermesse argued. Many could be used, he said, as longer-term accommodation for seniors.

Rubbish collection in Brussels will be reduced to once a week from 2016. The aim is to simplify collections by picking up all sorted rubbish at the same time. Collections are currently twice-weekly for household waste, and alternating fortnightly for paper and PMD.

FACE OF FLANDERS



© Courtesy BIVV

Laura

She’s 10 years old, with long blond hair, and, as the camera zooms out, we see she’s in a wheelchair. Her name is Laura, and she has one question: Why were you driving so fast? She isn’t really called Laura, and she isn’t really in a wheelchair, as we see when she stands up and walks towards the camera. She’s a young actress telling the story of Laura in the new campaign clip produced by the Belgian Institute for Road Safety (BIVV). There really is a Laura, however, and she was involved in a serious accident 11 months ago that put her in a wheelchair. Laura was one of the 148 people injured in road accidents every day in Belgium, 13 of them seriously wounded. In the first half of this year, there were 27,180 people injured on Belgian roads, 8% more than the same period last year. Excessive speed is the direct cause of one in three accidents, but it is also an aggravating factor in others: If someone is hurt in the accident, the injuries will be

worse when higher speeds are involved. “We deliberately opted for a more confrontational campaign” explains BIVV director of communications Kris Verbeeck. “Tests following our previous campaign showed that when it’s about speed, tougher campaigns work better.” The BIVV’s last campaign in the early part of this year had drivers who had gone over the speed limit as witnesses at their own funeral. Now, instead of contemplating their own mortality, drivers are being asked to consider innocent victims of their behaviour. People have a too positive view of speeding, the BIVV finds, whereas if the average speed on the roads were to come down by just one kilometre per hour, the number of fatalities would fall by 3.5% to 6%. The video can be seen on YouTube and at the BIVV site www.waaromreedjezosnel.be. Laura’s image will be seen on 650 billboards along major routes.

Alan Hope

OFFSIDE Virtual money

There comes a time in everyone’s life when it seems that the world is moving too fast to keep up anymore. For Offside, it was the discovery that there’s such a thing as a Bitcoin ATM machine, and that there’s one in Ghent. Like most people, we’re not terribly sure what a Bitcoin is, so we looked it up. It’s a digital currency that can be traded online in exchange for goods and services, or exchanged for physical currencies, like dollars or euros. Supporters like it because it cannot be counterfeited and exists independently of any government authority or bank. The Ghent Bitcoin ATM is in Gameswap on Schouwburgstraat. You need to have an account where you have Bitcoins stashed; you provide the ATM with the address of your account, which is expressed as a QR code. The machine scans the code, then transfers Bitcoins from your account to your mobile phone, and you can then spend them. You can also buy Bitcoins for cash.



The ATM was installed by Brussels IT consultancy Orillia, which says that the ATM gives the public a more tangible idea of what Bitcoin is. At the moment, the number of retailers that accept the currency in the real world, as opposed to the online world, is minimal. That could change, however, with news from the finance ministry that domestic digital currency transactions are not subject to VAT. According to a spokesperson for the ministry, the government’s position is likely to change as the European Commission harmonises rules at European level. For the moment, you can spend your Bitcoins at Gameswap, Mobile Vikings, Pizza.be, Babygoodies in Mechelen, and a handful of other businesses. More are sure to follow. Alan Hope

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FLANDERTODAY



Flanders
State of the Art

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Hans De Loore

5TH COLUMN

Hurry up and wait

This week, at last, an announcement is expected on the new federal coalition government. But why, in the absence of institutional and language issues, was the so-called Swedish coalition so long in the making? Party politics is the answer.

Take Open VLD. The Flemish liberals have taken an assertive stance, leading to a clash between party president Gwendolyn Rutten and her CD&V counterpart, Wouter Beke. Open VLD's attitude, commentators believe, is to compensate for what happened at the Flemish level.

The liberals joined the government of Flanders with an agreement that does not bear their mark, as they hardly took part in the formation talks. Open VLD wants to avoid a repeat at the federal level.

This ambition is both helped and hindered by the presence of N-VA. Over the years, N-VA has heartily supported Open VLD's anti-taxation and pro-entrepreneurship programme. This means they can join forces, but it makes it even harder for Open VLD to stand out.

Christian-democrats CD&V, too, are in an uncomfortable position, now that they have given up the post of prime minister. This has freed the party from the need to compromise. However, it is isolated when it comes to social issues. Being centrists, taking the "left wing stance" does not come naturally to CD&V. Also, every proposal to make the new federal government "more social" makes them vulnerable to attacks depicting them as a "taxation party".

As if all that wasn't troublesome enough, CD&V also has to deal with Arco. Christian-democrat Koen Geens, finance minister in the outgoing federal government, has promised a solution for the 800,000 savers/stockholders who lost their money when the Dexia banking group, in which the Arco co-operative had invested, went bust.

CD&V sticks by this promise and may pay a heavy price, as the other coalition partners do not believe state funds should be used for this compensation. Either way, Arco will never be much of a trophy. If the 800,000 families do not receive their money back, then beweging.net (previously ACW), and by extension CD&V, will be blamed. If they are reimbursed, it will be hard to explain why taxpayers' money went to this. A decision on Arco is expected in the days to come; a breakthrough in the federal formation should follow soon after.

\ Anja Otte

Federal coalition government talks enter home stretch

Formateurs close to agreement on new coalition government



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

Talks on forming a federal coalition government, led by *formateurs* Kris Peeters of Flemish party CD&V and Charles Michel of the French-speaking party MR, are nearly done. In an interview with VRT news, Michel said that the negotiators had entered the "home stretch". Meetings were held on Sunday between the four parties involved in the coalition government – the Flemish nationalists N-VA, Flemish Christian democrats CD&V, Flemish liberals Open VLD and the French-speaking MR – to discuss the final details of agreements that have been forming since the 25 May elections.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, political

commentators were expecting an announcement very soon.

One of the main policy issues on which the four parties are already agreed is an increase in the retirement age. "We are going to have to work longer if we are going to afford to pay pensions, but we aren't planning to reduce the pension," explained Wouter Beke, president of CD&V. Didier Reynders (MR) added that Belgians would in future have to work until at least age 65. Unions are already reacting negatively to the announcements.

In terms of who the next prime minister will be, media and analysts are betting on Michel.



© Corbis

Charles Michel (left) and Kris Peeters hoped to make an announcement by the end of the week

EU objects to state aid for Brussels Airlines

The European Commission has raised strong objections to the €15 million subsidy approved by the outgoing Di Rupo government for Brussels Airlines. A thorough investigation has been ordered.

According to the government, the aid is for Brussels Airport, part of a €19.4 million package to be shared between three airlines – Brussels Airlines, Thomas Cook and Jetairfly. The two smaller airlines receive €1.2 million and €3.2 million respectively.

The Commission criticised the subsidy on the grounds that it had not been informed in advance. EU rules are on the whole against the granting of state aid to companies because it is seen as protectionist and a distortion of fair trade.

The government could, according to analysts, have trouble convincing the Commission that the best way to support the airport is to subsidise the security costs of only three airlines. Those three airlines were selected because they are the only ones carrying more than 400,000 passengers annually out of Brussels Airport.

The main recipient, Brussels Airlines, recorded an operational loss last year of €28 million, which would have been almost half as large again without the government subsidy. The three airlines received their aid payments for 2014 only three weeks ago, after the mobility ministry delayed the payment for budget reasons.

\ Alan Hope

Marianne Thyssen grilled by European Parliament

Marianne Thyssen (CD&V) defended the EU's principle of free movement during a three-hour grilling by members of the European Parliament last week. Thyssen was one of four candidate EU commissioners summoned to appear before the parliament ahead of taking up posts in the Commission.

Thyssen has been given the post of EU commissioner for work, social affairs, skills and labour mobility. During the hearing, she faced members of the employment, culture, education and gender equality committees. At one point, she was asked by Paul Nuttall, deputy leader of the UK Independence Party, whether the UK would be allowed to close its borders to economic migrants.

Thyssen was applauded when she said the free movement of workers was an essential element of the internal market. "One is not possible without the other," she said.

She added that she supported current EU legislation that allows workers to be employed in one EU country under the same conditions as they enjoy in their country of origin. But she added that the EU should introduce legislation to prevent abuse by employers seeking to undercut local workers.

The European Parliament has to approve the entire team of commissioners put forward by Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker. If they find any candidate unsuitable, the president then has to either shuffle posts around or ask for a new candidate from the member state. \ DB



© Thierry Tronnel/CORBIS

Flanders and France commit to Seine-Scheldt project

Flanders' minister-president Geert Bourgeois and mobility minister Ben Weyts said they were pleased with the recent commitment by the French government to improve the Seine-Scheldt link by deepening the Seine-Nord canal.

A treaty signed last October paved the way for a new inland shipping corridor linking the Seine and Scheldt. France's prime minister, Manuel Valls, declared his country's commitment to the project during a visit to the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region.

The main work to be done in Flanders involves the Leie and the Ringvaart waterway around Ghent as well as the construction of a new lock at Terneuzen in Zeeland on the canal to the port of Ghent. Once the corridor has been built, Flemish harbours are expected to benefit from improved access to

large markets in Paris and northern France.

The project forms part of the EU's ambitious Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T), which aims to develop an efficient network of roads, railways, canals, rivers and airports across Europe. The Seine-Scheldt link, partly funded by the EU, will allow large inland barges to move goods more easily across Europe.

The new government of Flanders is determined to tackle chronic road congestion in the region by improving water-based transport. Now that the French government has given the green light, Flanders can begin work in 2017 with an expected completion date of 2023. "Our roads are saturated, which means we have to make the maximum use of waterways to carry freight," said Weyts. \ DB

Belgium's carbon footprint fifth biggest in world

Belgium has the fifth largest carbon footprint in the world, according to the latest biennial Living Planet Report published by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Belgium climbed one place, from sixth in the 2012 report. The survey, which calculates the natural resources required to sustain the population of a particular country, found that each Belgian is using 7.45 global hectares to support themselves. If every living person produced the same footprint, the human species would need to inhabit 4.3 times the earth's surface.

Belgium's main failings are the amount of energy used for heating and the amount of traffic, the report revealed. "Belgium has a large amount of relatively old, badly insulated buildings that are very energy-deficient," explained Damien Vincent, CEO of WWF Belgium.

In its recommendations, WWF referred to Ghent's Veggie Thursday initiative, which encourages locals to shift from eating meat to vegetarian food for one day a week. Wouter van Besien of the Groen party said that Belgium's carbon footprint would only get worse unless there was a change in policy. "If there's one competition we don't want to win, it's this one," he said.

He advocated a subsidy to encourage people to insulate older houses. He also argued that the government should stop supporting company cars through tax breaks and introduce a mobility subsidy instead.

The worst carbon footprint came from Kuwait, followed by Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Denmark. \ DB

The waiting game

The Loft opens Ghent Film Festival, which features 10 Flemish film premieres

continued from page 1

lem, especially on an American movie set where the actors tend to want to be the boss. You hear these stories, like the one on the set of *Robin Hood* where Russell Crowe kept 75-year-old Ridley Scott, one of the world's biggest directors, waiting for an hour so that he could see the end of a hockey match on TV. So if you're Ridley Scott, and you have to deal with that kind of thing, what are they going to do to Erik Van Looy from Borgerhout?"

Long story short, they went easy on him, with Schoenaerts helping pave the way. "He had played the role before, so he just started acting; he was into the character immediately. And they said, this guy is brilliant. They saw immediately that he had a head start. They really had to focus to be on the same level. So Matthias was not only a friend on the set, he not only spoke my language, but creatively, he was an ally."

And although the American actors didn't know him, says Van Looy, they did know his movie. "They saw it, and they liked it. And they saw the performances, and they knew these characters could lead to good performances. So there was a confidence there."

Making the same movie makes the transition to shooting in another country smoother, but there are still cultural differences, both expected and less so. "American actors ask a lot of questions," Van Looy says. "They ask more ques-

“If Ridley Scott has to deal with that kind of thing, what are they going to do to Erik Van Looy?”

tions than Belgian actors. They are very analytical, and they want to analyse their character – why does he do this, where does he come from, where is he going to?" Van Looy smiles. "Sometimes they overanalyse."

Though Van Looy enjoyed overanalysing the characters with them, "I don't love doing that on set because there are like 150 people standing around waiting for you." What are all those people doing? "Every assistant has an assistant has an assistant," he says. "But basically, you're directing the same scene, so I felt like I was making the same movie. There are more trucks, more people, but the work gets done the same way."

And half of the film, in any case, was shot on home turf, in a studio in Vilvoorde. All the scenes outside the loft apartment were shot in the US, but the loft set was built here.



The men of *The Loft* react to the long-awaited arrival of Philip (Matthias Schoenaerts)

"Sometimes when they're in the loft, they walk out on the terrace," relates Van Looy. "On the terrace, it's New Orleans, back inside, it's Vilvoorde. It's movie magic!"

The four American actors, he said, were surprisingly content with their crew of 35 in Flanders. "I think they were a bit scared in the beginning, where they were ending up," Van Looy says with a grin. "Is there internet in Brussels?" they asked. Like it was going to be the jungle. But after a few days, they were like, man, this is really efficient."

Van Looy takes his time between films; taking both *Loft* films into account, this is his fifth feature ("but only my third good one"). His next shoots in early 2016. Called *The Prime Minister*, it's about a Belgian prime minister, played by go-to leading man Koen De Bouw, who gets kidnapped by terrorists "and begins to fight back," says Van Looy. "I waited and waited, and now Koen De Bouw is old enough to make a convincing prime minister. He's still a bit too handsome, but we can mess him up a little."

At the start of the interview, I didn't

know what to expect from Van Looy. Is he the loveable host from *De slimste mens*? Or the brooding sort you expect to make somewhat gruesome thrillers? "I can laugh my head off and be melancholy an hour later," he admits. "That's life. It's a balancing act. I guess I'm just your very average schizophrenic Belgian."

The Loft opens the Ghent Film Festival on 14 October (sold out) and appears in cinemas across Belgium on 15 October

Ghent's film fest: focus on France

WWW.FILMFESTIVAL.BE

France might seem like a too-easy choice for the country focus at this year's Ghent Film Festival – an historical world leader in cinema, and right next door. But it's just that "historical" part that appealed to programmers.

French cinema has lost its lustre over the last couple of decades, overtaken by more exotic options from the burgeoning Eastern European and Asian industries. So the festival would like to bring us back around by showing us many of France's recent gems, without ignoring its glorious past.

You'll find options aplenty to brush up on your *français*, from the Luis Buñel classic *Belle de jour* to the latest from François Ozon. Most of the selection, though, is new work: recommended are the Cannes jury award-winner *Adieu au langage* (*Goodbye to Language*) by the 83-year-old Jean-Luc Godard, which wraps up past and present all in one package (in 3D!), and the terribly cool *Eden* by Mia Hansen-Love (*Father of My Children*), which follows 18 years in the life of a 1990s Parisian DJ, whose only true love is a house beat.

But there are about 25 countries represented, don't forget. *The Kindergarten Teacher* from Israel's Nadav Lapid (*Police-man*), for example, is a must-see, the story of a young teacher's obsession with a poetry-spouting prodigy. Also put the award-winning *Leviathan* by Russian director Andrezy Zvyagintsev (*Elena*) on your list: His transplanting of the *Book of Job* to a small Russian town is beautifully epic and achingly tragic.

Flemish cinema also abounds, with the premiere of Pier Van



Living legend Jean-Luc Godard's *Goodbye to Language*

Hees' *Waste Land*, starring Jérémie Renier as a volatile police officer caught up in a world of mysterious criminal masterminds, enchanting foreigners and the spirits of the Congo. Antwerp-based Teodora Ana Mihai, meanwhile, presents her award-winning documentary *Waiting For August*, a poignant look at the lives of a family of seven children on their own in Romania.

14-25 October

Ghent Film Festival

Kinepolis and other venues across Ghent



An evening with Bret Easton Ellis

It might seem odd to have a writer at the head of your jury, but the Ghent Film Festival chose American author Bret Easton Ellis because (aside from the obvious star quality) his work is inherently filmable (*Less Than Zero*, *The Rules of Attraction*, *American Psycho*) and because the dude is a major cinephile.

So while he's in Ghent, Ellis (*pictured*) will also make a public appearance at Vooruit, where he will be interviewed by author and *Knack* journalist Roderik Six (the only writer in Flanders with a name as cool as Bret Easton Ellis). His books will be on sale, and he'll even sign one for you.

15 October, 20.00

Vooruit

Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air freight \ Qatar Airways

The Gulf state airline has launched a four flights a week cargo service between Brussels Airport and Doha

Banking \ KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution has finalised the sale of its Bank Deutschland affiliate to US and British investors. The move, which frees €100 million of capital, closes the bank's divestment programme imposed by EU authorities to compensate for the €7 billion of public money received by the bank at the height of the financial crisis in 2009. In addition to reducing its balance sheet by 22%, the bank has also liquidated its last CDOs, which contributed to the crisis in the first place.

Brewing \ Tongerlo

The World Beer Awards, based in the UK, has named the Tongerlo Blonde, brewed in Haacht, Flemish Brabant, as the world's best beer for 2014.

Gas \ Fluxys

The Brussels-based gas transport and pipeline operator has increased its stake in the Trans Adriatic Pipeline project to 19%. The future connection will bring natural gas from the Azerbaijan Shah Deniz field to Europe.

Mail \ Bpost

Belgium's national post has made a non-binding offer for a 51% stake in Romania's post office, Posta Romana. First contacts took place in 2012.

Supermarkets \ Delhaize

The Brussels-based supermarket group is to join the Cooper-nic purchasing syndicate, headed by France's discount retailer Leclerc, in January. Delhaize was previously part of the AMS Sourcing group, led by the Netherlands' Ahold, which has become a local competitor through its Albert Heijn stores.

Telecoms \ Telenet

The Mechelen-based cable and telecommunications group is believed to be considering a bid on either Mobistar or Voo to strengthen its position on the local market. Telenet last week announced it would not pay a dividend this year, saving €500 million in cash, reportedly to finance a bid. In related news, Belgacom TV has signed an exclusive distribution partnership with Netflix.

Open Business Day a success

More than 650,000 peeked behind the scenes of companies across Flanders



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

More than 650,000 people took part in Sunday's Open Bedrijvendag, or Open Business Day, when 365 companies across Flanders and Brussels opened their doors to the public. Among them was rail infrastructure company Infrabel, which attracted 12,000 people to various installations.

The diversity of businesses taking part always attracts a broad audience to the popular event. This year some of the companies opening their doors were the Federal Food Safety Agency labs in Bruges and Ghent, the kitchens of Univeg Belgium in Sint-Katelijne-Waver,



© Courtesy OBD

landscapers Krinkels in Londerzeel, Flemish Brabant (pictured), Mobile Vikings mobile phone operator in Hasselt and a lock complex on the Albert Canal in Ham, Limburg.

Popular stops were De Varen funeral parlour in Oudenaarde, East Flanders, where visitors could take a selfie in one of the company's coffins, and club Versuz in Hasselt, where parents could get a taste of what their kids are up to at weekends.

The task of navigating through the many events on offer was made easier this year thanks to the Open Bedrijven app.

Colruyt launches new supermarket concept

Supermarket chain Colruyt will open its first Cru store in Overijse, Flemish Brabant, later this year. The new concept in shopping, said Colruyt, will offer "an idiosyncratic selection of fresh products in a market atmosphere," including freshly baked bread and roasted coffee.

The selection of products on sale will be limited, and Cru stores will not take part in price promotions. The company said it was aiming for "the highest artisanal quality".

The first Cru store will be established in a former farmhouse in Overijse, just outside of Brussels, and will open at the end of November. About 30 people will be employed, including a chef.

Vacancies are still being filled, and the company hinted that experience in food service is an advantage. Departments include a butcher, bakery and ready meals, produced in close co-operation with farmers and other suppliers, such as Antwerp-based cheese producer Van Tricht.

"Thanks to its particular character, Cru aims to meet the needs of customers in ways not currently available within the group," the company said in a statement. \ AH

Barco sells defence division to US group

The Kortrijk-based high tech imaging company Barco has sold its defence applications division to the American group Esterline Corporation. The sale is worth €150 million, a mixture of equity and cash.

"The transaction is part of Barco's long-term strategy to streamline its business portfolio and to strengthen its core activities," the company said in a statement. The transaction will be completed in the coming months.

Barco's defence and aerospace division employs 600 people in the US, Asia and Europe, and had sales of €150 million in 2013. The business includes imaging applications for defence, avionics, air traffic control, training and simulation.

"Reduced complexity and increased focus were key considerations behind our decision to streamline our portfolio and increase our market share in our commercial markets," said CEO Eric Van Zele. "Over the past few months, we have thoroughly investigated several options that would benefit both Barco and the defence



and aerospace division and have come to the conclusion that a more market-specific US owner will be better placed to unlock the full potential of the division's specific strengths. With Esterline, we have found such a new parent." Esterline is based in the Seattle-area of Washington state and makes equipment for the aerospace and defence industries in three areas: avionics and controls, sensors and systems and advanced materials.

"This transaction is a cost-effective opportunity to accelerate growth in our visual display product division, a core strategic capability that is important to our future," commented Esterline CEO Curtis Reusser. \ AH

China providing new market for food exports

Belgian food exports to China increased fourfold between 2003 and 2013, from €27 million to €98 million, and continue to grow this year, according to the food industry federation Fevia.

"If growth rates continue as they have been, the figures for 2014 point towards a minimum of €155 million in sales," Fevia chair Bernard Deryckere said. "China is on its way to becoming the third or even second most important export market outside of Europe after the US. That gives a boost to the sector, particularly after exports to Russia fell away following the import boycott." Chinese customers prefer traditional European products such as chocolate, beer and dairy, and particularly appreciate the quality, variety and innovative nature of Belgian products, Fevia said. Beer and chocolate make up one-third of all exports, while milk powder is much in demand following scandals involving Chinese dairy producers. Biscuits and potato products are also top sellers.

Meanwhile, Canadian food safety



© Courtesy Colruyt

inspectors have agreed to allow the import of pears from Belgium, the Federal Food Safety agency said. Deliveries can begin once administrative procedures have been completed, and all shipments will be inspected during a trial period.

In related news, sales of pears in Belgium rose by 30% this year following the Russian boycott, but the media attention surrounding the plight of growers has not helped apple sales, also hit by the embargo. "We really should just all eat more domestic fruit," advised Etienne Leclère of the Haspengouw fruit auction. "The hype around pears was felt in sales. Now we need a hype for apples because we're not getting them sold abroad." \ AH

DAF Trucks to invest €100 million in Westerlo plant

The Dutch heavy vehicle constructor DAF Trucks, based in Eindhoven, has announced plans to invest €100 million in its manufacturing plant in Westerlo, Antwerp province. The Westerlo plant makes cabins and axles for DAF's XF and CF trucks, and the plan includes the installation of a new painting line for coaches.

The investment is not yet decided definitively, said spokesperson Rob Appels, and requires the approval of US holding company Paccar. "That will happen within a few weeks," he said.

The parent company plans to increase production volume at Westerlo. "You don't make an investment like this for just a couple of years," Appels commented. The company has just signed a contract to supply 700 trucks to Russia's Monopoly, to be delivered this year and next. A week earlier, road haulier Waberer's International of Hungary ordered 1,000 new trucks to renew about one-third of its fleet.

Last July, the Westerlo plant saw its millionth vehicle roll off the assembly line. "The new orders are a great boost for the order book, although that doesn't mean new jobs suddenly being created here," union representative Mario Lenaerts told *De Standaard*. "But it does give extra work security for the 2,000 employees." \ AH

Freeing the water

Leuven researchers identify causes of sediment build-up in Africa reservoirs



Debra Percival

More articles by Debra \ flanderstoday.eu

Scientists at the earth and environmental sciences department at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) recently succeeded in determining which areas in Africa are the most affected by sediment build-up, which clogs the continent's reservoirs and, more importantly, why it happens.

Providing drinking water, irrigation, fish and hydro-electricity, water stored in reservoirs and dams is vital to both livestock and people. In the past two years, the Leuven team studied existing data in addition to conducting field research to map the spatial variability of sediment yield for the entire African continent. The scientists also probed the major factors controlling sediment yield, including seismic activity.

The findings are expected to bring about improvements in the continent's future water catchment strategies and to help policymakers and planners decide where to build dams and reservoirs. The research project was financed by the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research, the Flemish Interuniversity Council and KU Leuven.

"Several times over the last 15 years, I have been confronted by problems relating to the rapid silting of reservoirs in various parts of Africa," says KU Leuven professor Jean Poesen, a member of the research team. "On each occasion, it was clear that those who designed and built the dams did not have the right data or models to estimate how fast the reservoirs would be filled by sediments."

For their research, the scientists dug up existing statistics from the 1950s to 1970s, which had in most cases been collected by aid agencies. They analysed this data and



© Courtesy KU Leuven

The researchers pooled sediment yield data for more than 600 African rivers, such as for the Tekeze dam in north Ethiopia

were able to pool sediment yield measurements for 683 African rivers. Sediments initially build up in a river behind a dam or reservoir before being carried into the larger

“Dam designers didn't have the right data on how fast the reservoirs would be filled by sediments

body of water by the river's flow.

For Dr Matthias Vanmaercke, another member of the team, the discovery was a blessing, since a single reliable sediment yield observation for a river can easily

require 1,000 hours of fieldwork.

The conclusion of the KU Leuven study was that there is no single cause for sediment build-up. Instead, a number of both natural and human-caused factors contribute to increased sediment yields, such as steep terrains, rock and soil compositions very vulnerable to erosion by water, and landslides and seismic activity making the geological materials more susceptible to erosion. Other factors include low vegetation covers that reduce the protection of the soil surface, erosive rainfalls and land uses by humans that accelerate soil erosion rates.

"Africa is facing important challenges in the field of erosion and land degradation due to the rapidly increasing population and climate change," says Vanmaercke. Some regions on the continent are particularly vulnerable. The researchers found that sediment yield was for instance notably high in dams and reservoirs in the

countries of the Maghreb region in North Africa and East Africa – especially in the northern Ethiopian highlands at the headwaters of the Nile.

"It has steep topography, quite some seismic activity, a poor vegetation cover due to the climatic conditions and the large pressure on the land – due to agriculture and livestock grazing – and heavy rainfalls which may cause flash floods," says Vanmaercke.

"A lot of dams are constructed in this region to meet rising water and energy demands, but it is likely that several of these dams face important capacity losses due to reservoir sedimentation."

Sediment build-up has for instance seriously affected hydro-electricity generation in the Koka dam near Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa.

It is hoped that the KU Leuven data will offer future planners more accurate information to decide where to build a dam or reservoir.

"If for a given planned dam site, sediment yield is very high, planners may either choose another location," says Poesen. "Or they may conclude that additional measures such as soil conservation will have to be taken within the catchments draining towards the reservoirs, so as to reduce sediment deposition and hence increase the life expectancy of the reservoir."

The discovery that seismic activity has significant impact on sediment build-up in Africa is also likely to help scientists develop models that forecast yields.

"We hope that the compiled data – now freely available to anyone – will be an important step forward in the development of models that can predict sediment yields more accurately," says Vanmaercke.

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Leuven scientists discover HIV's origin

The global spread of HIV, the virus that causes Aids, almost certainly originates from Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which was a Belgian colony from 1908 to 1960. The discovery was made by an international team of researchers, led by scientists from the University of Leuven and Oxford University. They concluded that the common ancestor of the disease group probably appeared for the first time in about 1920 in Kinshasa. This evolution caused the Aids pandemic, of which there have been about 75 million infections to date. The new research shows that between 1920 and 1950, a number of social factors led to the spread of the virus that originated in Kinshasa, including the massive network of railway lines and waterways that branched out from the capital.

Hospitals co-operate to combat complex tumours

AZ Groeninge Kortrijk, OLV Ziekenhuis Aalst-Asse-Ninove and Maria Middelaers Gent are working together on the diagnosis and treatment of complex cancerous tumours such as those found in the oesophagus and pancreas. "We will share our expertise to guarantee that we are applying the latest trends in science," said Eric Wyffels, medical director of OLV Ziekenhuis. The hospitals will strive towards a uniform medical approach, including through video conferences for doctors from the three hospitals to discuss treatment methods. They hope their approach will eventually be financially supported by the government of Flanders.

New cleanser to fight hospital bacteria

After years of research, cleaning products company Chrial, from Lommel, in Limburg, claims to have developed a product that battles hospital bacteria. Every year, about 2,500 people in Belgium die in hospital because of bacterial infections – one of the highest rates in Europe. A study published by the American science magazine *PLOS One* says the use of Chrial products reduces the number of hospital infections by 64%. The products contain bacteria that deconstruct microscopic particles, thus removing the food on which harmful bacteria feed. / Andy Furniere

Q&A

Pierre Van Damme is a vaccinology professor at Antwerp University, which is leading a research project to develop a vaccine against the human papillomavirus

What exactly is the human papillomavirus?

It's a sexually transmittable virus that causes several cancers, with cervical cancer the most prevalent. The virus causes chronic infections in some women that can later cause cancer.

Do all women with the virus develop cancer?

No, that would cause panic all over Europe! The virus is omnipresent. About 70 to 80% of all women become infected during their lives. In 1% of them, the virus develops into cervical cancer. Most women are capable of getting rid of the virus by means of their

own immune system. But we don't know why some women do and some don't.

What is the difference between the experimental vaccine and the vaccine that is administered to girls when they're 12?

The vaccine the girls get is administered before they become sexually active. It's preventive. The vaccine we're testing now is the first therapeutic vaccine against the virus. It's meant to cure women who already carry the virus.

At what stage is the vaccine now?

The first stage of the research



was carried out in Antwerp. We tested the vaccine on women who were infected but did not have any lesions on the cervix. The results were promising. Now, in the second stage, it is being tested

on larger groups of women in research centres around Europe. In the third phase of the research, we will test the effectiveness of the vaccine for women who already have lesions on the cervix, but in a very early stage. We don't know yet if the vaccine is strong enough to cure them as well.

So this is an international research project?

This institute is the lead research centre, the principal investigator. The vaccine is being developed by Genticel, a French biotech company. We are carrying out the research for them. The choice for Antwerp might have to do with Genticel's president; he's Belgian. In any case, we expect a vaccine to be on the market in two to three years. \ Interview by Daan Bauwens



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“School is more than numbers”

Professor Roger Standaert argues against standardised testing



Alan Hope
More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

A leading educator has issued a request to the government of Flanders to resist the temptation to follow a growing global trend towards quantification in education. He says it should put its trust in the experience of teachers rather than standardised tests to determine the best path for pupils.

Roger Standaert is professor emeritus of comparative education at Ghent University and a consultant and speaker in demand at home and abroad. He recently published the book *De becijferde school* (The School Quantified) in which he attacks what he calls “the cult of measurement” taking over education systems.

“There is a tendency, influenced by East Asia and the United States, to move towards a global education system based on technocracy,” he says. “I’m warning against this sort of technocratic thinking in human behaviour, and education in particular.”

The problem, as he sees it, is the increasing reliance on the results of standardised tests imposed on younger and younger children, which have the effect of ignoring children’s individual strengths and weaknesses in favour of whether they fit a pre-determined template. Test results become the single measure of educational success.

“Education is a broad project for pupils, with their diversity of talents and the need to bring all those children with all their different talents to a good end,” Standaert (pictured) says. “An atmosphere of test-driven competition, always trying to be the best and failing to take account of the children who are falling behind, results in problems for both society and the educational system. Children leave school without any qualifications, and then society has to pay the price in various ways.”

The root of the problem, he concludes, is the mistaken application of free-market dogma to education. This is spurred on by



© Courtesy Acco Uitgeverij

Professor Roger Standaert believes central examinations are a serious injustice for children

the business opportunities offered by the privatisation of education, he says, not to mention in designing standardised tests and coaching students to take them.

“The over-arching ideology is that the unrestricted free market is needed for schools. If you want to make economic progress, you have to promote competition, not only in commerce and in trade but also in education,” Standaert says. “The best will survive and will ensure your economic welfare. But that ignores what has to be done with children with educational arrears who cannot compete with the best. “Central examinations create a very serious injustice; schools with children who are behind will

always be behind. These schools will not attract the best teachers, and you have created a downward spiral, as those schools get worse and worse. The best schools will always be ahead in a free market, because people with more money can send their children to the best schools.”

For the time being, Flemish schools have escaped the quantification trend, says Standaert. “In Flanders at the moment, we have a philosophy that is rather moderate in that view, and I’d like it to stay that way – a broad education departing from the individual talents of each child, at least until the end of compulsory schooling, which is at age 18 in the case of Flanders.”

Reforms of Flemish secondary education announced before the elections by former education minister Pascal Smet contain another worthwhile proposal, in Standaert’s view: the introduction of a single broad stream for students in the first two years of secondary school. In August, new education minister Hilde Crevits said the reform would be implemented in unabridged form.

“This has the aim of delaying the choice of study direction until the age of 14,” explains Standaert. “At the moment, a student of 12 has to make that choice. The aim of the reform is to delay the choice, which gives you the chance in the

“There is a tendency, influenced by East Asia and the US, to move towards an education system based on technocracy

first year of secondary education to look at the students’ talents.” Under the reform, students will have a broad first cycle with a variety of subjects, “so students can experience different kinds of content, and teachers can see how they get on,” says Standaert. “On the basis of those two years, you can offer them much better advice on selecting a stream of study for the rest of their secondary education. That delay is a good thing.”

De becijferde school is published in Dutch by Acco

WEEK IN EDUCATION

New institute studies city life

Antwerp University (UA) has announced the launch of its Urban Studies Institute, which will examine all aspects of “the city”. The institute will focus on themes such as migration, poverty, mobility, sustainability and multilingualism. Eight research groups are part of the institute, including the Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies, Literature of the Modernity and the Visual & Digital Cultures Research Centre. “These research groups already worked together for certain projects,” explained Professor Stijn Oosterlynck, president of the institute. “But we lacked an interdisciplinary, educational and research structure, a vision on the city.”

School doctor is bottleneck job

The job of school doctor is becoming a bottleneck profession – a job that is difficult to fill – according to Antwerp University (UA) student Leen Verbraeken’s Master’s thesis. According to Verbraeken, fewer young doctors and medical students are showing an interest in posts in Flemish primary and secondary schools. Only 12 students are currently enrolled in the study discipline in Flanders, and about half usually change course before graduation. A school doctor is, among other things, responsible for the obligatory medical examination and vaccinations in a school. Verbraeken said doctors felt like outsiders at the pupil support agencies CLB. “CLB doctors experience a lack of appreciation, space and mandate inside the organisation,” she said.

2,000 students protest in Brussels

About 2,000 students from across Belgium, particularly from Dutch-speaking universities, demonstrated in Brussels last week against money-saving measures in higher education. In total, the government of Flanders needs to cut the education budget by €190 million, and higher education is bearing the brunt. Student associations fear the quality of education will decrease and registration fees will increase to the point that they will be a deterrent for lower-income students. Currently, students with no financial aid pay €620 a year in university fees. Led by the Flemish Association of Students, thousands of students marched from Brussels Central station to the Flemish Parliament. \ AF

Website launched for recognition of foreign diplomas

\ WWW.MYDIPLOMA.BE

Residents of Belgium with a diploma from another country now have one place they can go to find information on getting it recognised. The new website mydiploma.be is an initiative of Brussels employment and training agency Actiris to help local expats obtain recognition of the qualifications they acquired abroad.

According to Actiris, a full one-quarter of job-seekers registered with them have degrees in secondary or higher education from abroad. They often end up in jobs that are below their educational level or cannot continue their education in Belgium because their qualifications are not



recognised.

To launch the new user-friendly site, Actiris joined forces with the Brussels reception agency for integration (Bon) and the organisation Co-ordination and Initiatives for Foreigners and Refugees.

Through a few simple questions, mydiploma.be – in English, Dutch and French – offers solutions for getting foreign diplomas recognised in Belgium. Work-seekers are led to official information of the French-speaking Community and the Flemish department of the National Academic Recognition Information Centre, but are also offered various other practical tips. \ Andy Furniere

Your new guide to life in Belgium



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The Autumn issue of the Bulletin Newcomer is your guide to enjoying life and settling in Belgium. It mixes essential practical information with lifestyle features on finding a job, top cultural events, dating, keeping pets, sampling Belgian wine and spirits and joining a local theatre group. If you want to make the most of life in Belgium, this is the essential read.

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Up on the roof

Gardening and eating meet atop Ghent social enterprise centre



Alan Hope
More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.ROOFFOOD.BE

A piece of advice: If you're walking around without lifting your gaze to the rooftops, you might be missing a business opportunity.

That's the moral of the story of Sabien Windels, the owner and half of the staff of Roof Food, a Ghent-based co-operative that intends to grow food on the roof of a business centre, then use it to make vegetarian meals for catering clients.

The idea didn't exactly come in a flash of inspiration, however. Windels, 26, works at the former KAHO Sint-Lieven, now a University of Leuven campus in Ghent. She is working on a European project on sustainable cities and also guiding the theses of Master's students in industrial engineering. "I was looking for a topic that combines industrial engineering with a personal interest in urban farming," she says. "That's what brought me to the subject of rooftop greenhouses. Last year I was on a study trip in the Netherlands, and I visited Dakaker, a 1,000-square-metre rooftop garden project in Rotterdam. I was inspired by that."

It's one thing to have a bright idea, but something else to turn it into a business. "The question was how to make this into something economically viable," Windels continues. "OK, urban farming



Sabien Windels will grow food on a rooftop to supply her vegetarian catering service Roof Food

is a cool subject, but it's tough to make it a business."

She struck up conversations on the subject with colleagues and friends. "I talked to a lot of people, then a friend told me her company was thinking about organising a Thursday Veggie Day, but they were having trouble finding a supplier who could bring 40 vegetarian meals on the day. I thought that would be the perfect combination with my rooftop, combining my two passions of eating and gardening."

The rooftop itself will belong to De Punt, a social enterprise centre planned for completion in 2016 in

the Gentbrugge district. "There was a time I was constantly looking at rooftops, contacting people and meeting with architects who advised me on which buildings were strong enough in the Ghent area. I contacted a lot of places, including De Lijn, which was working on a new bus garage, but in the end that wasn't ideal. They sent me to De Punt."

De Punt has a programme in support of entrepreneurs starting up with a sustainable social or economic vision. "I was really lucky to find this great partner because there are a lot of synergies between us."

While awaiting the rooftop, the catering business can get started. After a rigorous search, Windels has hired Nine Van Belle as a cook; she has been working in restaurants around Ghent for nine years. "I was looking for someone to cook but also to really be a partner in the venture and have a vision for the project," says Windels. "That got a lot of reaction, which was nice; 40 people applied for the job, even though it wasn't exactly a typical job vacancy. It's a bit of an adventure."

The two will start up later this month, working from a temporary location in Ghent, serving fresh lunches to customers at a different business centre every day, which allows them to work with a weekly menu without restricting the choices.

When the rooftop garden does come along, it will be about 500 square metres. For advice on how to get the best out of the soil, Windels will have the support of Velt, the association for ecological living and gardening.

"We're working together on a cultivation plan," says Windels. "I want to promote the ecological aspect of the enterprise. Roof Food will be a co-operative society, which means anyone can become a member. I'm aiming mainly at people from the area."

BITE

Make your own kaantjessaus

My in-laws from Meetjesland – an area of East Flanders between Ghent and Bruges – say plenty of things I don't understand. But one of the more recent words to exceed my vocabulary was *koantjessesse*.

From context, I could deduce that it had something to do with food and was something very scrumptious indeed. I heard my mother-in-law and aunt-in-law toss around words like bacon and vinegar, but that only added to my confusion. Was this some type of sauce you order at the *fritkot*?

It turns out that *koantjessesse* is dialect for a local dish called *kaantjessaus*. *Koantjes* (or *kaantjes*) are bits of bacon, while *sesse* (or *sau*) means sauce. And like most traditional Flemish specialties, this dish started out as meagre farmer food, or even "food for the poor". Today, it has risen to delicacy status, as most time-honoured dishes in Flanders tend to do.

Back when meat was a luxury product, the key to making a dish tasty was flavouring it with bits of pork

crackling or belly fat. Add to this a bit of vinegar, onion, some potatoes, lettuce and a boiled egg, and you have yourself a cheap and wholly satisfying meal.

Ingredients (serves 4)

1 head of lettuce
4 large potatoes
4 eggs
600g smoked bacon
2 medium onions
2 tbsp wine vinegar
2 tbsp water
1 tbsp cornstarch
butter for frying
salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

Peel and boil the potatoes. Soft-boil the eggs and plunge them in cold water. Wash the lettuce and pat it dry. Cut the bacon into strips or cubes and fry in butter on high heat, then add the chopped onions and sauté until soft.

Pour off any extra fat. Deglaze the bacon and onions with vinegar. Bring to a boil, add the water and



season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil again, and then bind the sauce with a little cornstarch mixed with water.

Prepare a plate with a few lettuce leaves on the bottom, and top with the boiled potato, warm sauce and soft-boiled egg. Some like to eat

their *kaantjessaus* all together like a kind of mash, but I prefer to keep the different elements separate, gathering them together on my fork for each delicious bite.

And, to fit in with the in-laws, I also throw in a dollop of homemade mayonnaise. \ Robyn Boyle

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Forest Week

The theme for 2014 is the Great War as seen from nature's perspective, with a focus on seven parks that played a role in the First World War. Kick-off event on October 12 in Antwerp's Mastenbos, where traces of the war can still be seen, with guided tours of the trenches and bunkers, plus bike tours, live music, food and drink. *12-19 October; free*
\ www.weekvanhetbos.be

Sint-Truiden by Lights

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening, starting at sundown, 12 historic monuments and architectural sites are illuminated with creative light installations. Download the map and follow the 4km walking trail, starting at the Begijnhof and ending on the Grote Markt. *Until 23 November, Sint-Truiden*
\ www.toerisme-sint-truiden.be

Mechelen Beer Festival

More than 30 Belgian breweries and 120 speciality beers will be present on the historic Grote Markt. *11 October, 17.00-23.00; 12 October, 12.00-19.00; free*

\ www.facebook.com/BierfestivalMechelen

Antwerp Ghost Walk

Walk in the footsteps of murderers and relive the fatal adventures of saints and sinners on this guided storytelling tour through Antwerp. *Every Saturday at 20.30, meet at the entrance of Het Steen, Steenplein; €10*
\ www.ghostwalk.be

Beervelde Garden Days

The largest and oldest garden show in Belgium, on the grounds of an aristocratic country house. The theme is fairy gardens. Cooking demos, gardening workshops, alpacas, children's activities and more. *10-12 October, 10.00-17.00, Park van Beervelde, Beervelde-Dorp 75, Beervelde (East Flanders); €10*
\ www.parkvanbeervelde.be

Night of Darkness

Annual event to draw attention to light pollution in Flanders. Many cities will dim street lights and organise candlelight gatherings and stargazing parties. See website for activities in your area. *11 October; free*
\ www.bondbeterleefmilieu.be

Art in times of war

Antwerp exhibition uncovers impact of First World War on Flemish arts scene



Christophe Verbiest

More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

WWW.KMSKA.BE

The Great War is currently being commemorated in many historical exhibitions across the country, but in Antwerp you can enjoy a particularly interesting one about the influence of the First World War on the local arts scene. *The Moderns: Art during the Great War* zooms in on six giants of Flemish visual and literary arts who each responded to the war differently, yet all yearned for the same sense of community

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (RMFA) will be closed for renovation works until the end of 2017. To be able to show at least part of its collection in the meantime, the museum has been staging exhibitions at other locations, including the Koningin Fabiolazaal, a stone's throw from the museum.

The new show there, *The Moderns: Art during the Great War*, puts the spotlight on the work of mainly Belgian artists during the First World War. Organised in collaboration with the Antwerp museum of literature Letterenhuis and the Provinciaal Museum Emile Verhaeren, the exhibition encompasses more than just the visual arts. With letters, newspaper clippings and contracts, there is also plenty of historical written material.

Although there's some interaction between the visual artworks and the literature, the latter has to contend with that particular tension inherent in literary exhibitions – most of the artefacts on display are not really made to be read by people bent over glass cases.

The Moderns zooms in on six central figures, among them writers Paul van Ostaïjen and Emile Verhaeren, and visual artists Rik Wouters and Jules Schmalzigaug. None of these artists died on the battlefields, and only one of them, Wouters, was drafted as a soldier.

"They all followed a different trajectory," says Nanny Schrijvers, the RMFA curator responsible for the visual arts in the exhibition. "Some of them left the country, while others stayed behind. Some saw their work change under the influence of the war; others just continued in their usual vein."

During the Great War, contacts between the artists became more intense – as if they were in need of a deeper solidarity than in times of peace. Schrijvers gives the example of Wouters, a Mechelen-born painter and prisoner of war in the Netherlands who was released because he had cancer.

Wouters stayed in the Netherlands, where his wife joined him – first in



"Bolspelers" by Ramah, a pseudonym for Henri François Raemakers, offers a reminder of the RMFA's rich collection

Amersfoort, afterwards in Amsterdam. "This happened thanks to a group of people who cared about him very much," explains Schrijvers. "It gave him the chance to undergo surgery by some famous surgeons." Wouters is one of the artists whose work doesn't seem to have changed under the influence of the war. He continued to paint and draw the same themes he had in the past – interiors, landscapes, himself and his wife Nel of course – the love of his life and the inspiration for many of his works.

"The only difference with his life

before the war is that, due to practicalities, he can't sculpt," says Schrijvers. Only "Nachtmerrie – oorlog" (Nightmare – War), an almost abstract work by Wouters, seems to refer to the battlefield atrocities, and only really in the title.

There are only two oil paintings between the 20 Wouters works on view, and there's a logical explanation for this surprising choice. Because of the major renovation works at RMFA, the highlights of its vast Wouters collection have been on show in the Schepenhuis museum in Mechelen for the past

three years. "Moreover, the drawings presented here aren't often exhibited, so this was a great opportunity to show them," says Schrijvers.

And they certainly deserve the attention. With a sparse number of often dancing and squirming lines, he achieves maximal expression. The latter is also true of the

“He wasn't only geographically but also mentally isolated from his former artistic friends

1915 "Zelfportret met groene hoed" (Self-Portrait with a Green Hat), one of his last paintings and the last self-portrait he would make. In a nearby case, there's a letter from Wouters asking friends in Antwerp to send him a number of specific paint pigments he needed.

Jules Schmalzigaug – who was incidentally born in a house facing the Koningin Fabiolazaal – is one of the artists whose work did radically change during the war. The oldest son of a rich coffee roaster, he frequently travelled to Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. At one point, he went to Paris where he discovered an exhibition focussed on the Italian futurists. Deeply impressed by the show, he

moved to Venice. "In the spring of 1914, he was part of an important futurist exhibition," Schrijvers explains. "He stated loudly and clearly: 'I'm becoming a futurist'."

The exhibition has three futurist paintings from that year; they offer wild geometrical rhythms – not fully abstract, however – brushed in heavily contrasting colours.

When the war broke out, Schmalzigaug returned to Antwerp. He tried to enlist but was declared unfit for military service for medical reasons. The artist and his family then moved to The Hague, where Schmalzigaug started teaching in a girls' school.

And his art transformed drastically. "He was very interested in the way you could create depth with colours without relying on the perspective," Schrijvers explains. Two beautiful aquarelles testify to that change.

In the process, Schmalzigaug also lost his previous interest in futurism. "That was much more than just an artistic movement," says Schrijvers. "Futurism got very political, and the Italian futurists were strongly in favour of the war. For them, it was a solution to get rid of the old Europe and wipe the slate clean. Schmalzigaug didn't agree with this viewpoint. This means that he isn't only geographically, but also mentally, isolated from his former artistic friends."

Alienated and depressed, the man who intensely longed to be a futurist killed himself in 1917.

An intriguing still life by Marthe Donas, also from Antwerp, hangs in the same room where Schmal-

zigaug's works are shown. "She moved with her sister to Dublin during the war, where she worked in a studio where stained-glass windows were created," Schrijvers explains. "Influenced by that work and after a move to Paris in 1916, her art changed from quite traditional, a form of luminism, to a cubism with strong lines and colours that are reminiscent of stained-glass windows. And she became part of the cubist avant-garde. Sadly, she's one of those modernist women artists that have been forgotten by history."

The most surprising painting in *The Moderns* is a very recognisable nude by Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani, one of a few non-Belgians



From left: Paul van Ostaïjen, Floris Jespers and Oscar Jespers in Floris' workshop in Mortsel



Marthe Donas embraced a cubism with strong lines and colours after a move to Paris

in the show. “Painter Hippolyte Daeye stayed in London during the war, where he visited a Modigliani exhibition,” says Schrijvers. “It impressed him deeply and made him change his style. This Modigliani was shown at that London exhibition, so we are certain that Daeye saw it there. Since it’s part of our

“Futurism got very political, and the Italian futurists were strongly in favour of the war

collection, it was the ideal occasion to show it here.”

Indeed, Daeye’s “Sereniteit” (Serenity) portrait of a woman clearly shows the influence of Modigliani, especially in the way the eyes are painted.

Antwerp writer and poet Paul van Ostaijen was only 18 when the war broke out. “It’s remarkable to see,” notes Schrijvers, “that around that period in Antwerp quite a lot of young men became very interested in the new times, among them of course Van Ostaijen.”

His enthusiasm infected the brothers Floris and Oscar Jaspers, sons of a traditional sculptor. Van Ostaijen tried to convince them to leave the old forms behind and to choose a new course. The 1917 expressionist sculpture by Oscar “De man met de trui” (The Man with the Jumper) is the first one that got Van Ostaijen’s approval.

Van Ostaijen also befriended the Antwerp painter Paul Joostens, currently the focus of a fascinating, two-part exhibition at Mu.Zee

in Ostend. “We have loads of drawings by Joostens, but apart from in Ostend, those have rarely been shown. And for this expo, I only chose drawings from 1917, to go with the sculpture,” Schrijvers explains.

The exhibition ends with a second group of Antwerp painters who also strove for renewal. Among them are abstractionist Jos Leonard (always a treat) and the little-known Jan Kiemeneij, who alternated between geometrical abstraction and paintings set against the backdrop of the

world of dance.

With many more artists included in the show, *The Moderns* offers yet another reminder of what a rich collection of modernist art the RMFA holds. Let’s hope that there will be enough space in the renovated building to show a great part of this particular treasure trove.

Until then, the Koningin Fabiolazaal is the place to be, with a new *The Moderns: Tour de France* exhibition already lined up for January.



Antwerp writer and poet Paul van Ostaijen was just 18 when the war broke out

Until 11 January

Koningin Fabiolazaal
Jezusstraat 28, Antwerpen

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Graanmarkt 13 best veggie restaurant in Flanders

\ WWW.GAULTMILLAU.BE

Among a selection of more than 300 veggie hot spots in the Benelux – ranging from vegetarian and gluten-free restaurants to soup bars to markets – the “green” version of the influential French food bible Gault&Millau has chosen the Antwerp restaurant Graanmarkt 13 as the best vegetarian restaurant in Flanders.

Although Graanmarkt 13 is not purely a vegetarian restaurant, chef Seppe Nobels (*pictured*) was praised for his creative use of “forgotten” vegetables and his three-course vegetarian dinner menu.

The Green Gault&Millau 2015 Benelux, which concentrates on fine dining establishments, also rewarded chef Giovanni Oosters of Vous lé Vous in Hasselt for the high percentage of fruit and vegetables on its plates.

Kortrijk-based Taste and Colours, meanwhile, was mentioned for its vivid presentation of vegetables and its unique concept of putting the customers in the kitchen with the cooks.



Hopefully one of these places can create a vibe concerning the award the green Benelux Gault&Millau didn’t give away this year: the one combining creativity and child-friendliness.

This second edition of Gault&Millau’s veggie and healthy food guide to the Benelux contains double the number of restaurants and eateries as the first. It was developed through a partnership between the guide and Flemish veggie chef Frank Fol. \ Tom Peeters

Night of the Proms documentary wins Emmy

\ WWW.NOTPCOM

The 13-part documentary series about Flanders’ Night of the Proms has won an Emmy Award, the highest honour in American television. The series won a regional Mid-America Emmy in the category Arts Programme or Special.

The Night of the Proms concert series, which famously marries pop and classical music, celebrates its 30th edition in Antwerp next month, but 2014 was the first year it took its successful formula to the US. The first four concerts took place between 19 and 22 June in Dallas, Texas; Little Rock, Arkansas; Kansas City, Missouri; and Omaha, Nebraska. The tour included The Pointer Sisters and Nile Rodgers of Chic fame.

The US leg of the concert series was produced by the St Louis-based Emery Entertainment and intro-

duced by a 13-part documentary and a 90 minute compilation about the event, broadcast by local public broadcasting channels.

Promoting the first US tour of the Flemish concept, designed by Jan Vereecke and Jan Van Esbroeck, the programme *Night of the Proms: Classic Meets Pop* includes interviews and live and backstage footage from previous editions, which featured the classical orchestra Il Novecento, the choir Fine Fleur and international pop stars such as Sting, James Brown, Meatloaf, Donna Summer and En Vogue.

The producer, International Media Partners, is now trying to set up a national broadcast, perfect for launching next year’s 40-date US tour. Night of the Proms takes place in Antwerp’s Sportpaleis from 7-15 November. \ TP

Sea salt particles threaten Flanders’ artworks

\ WWW.NOTPCOM

Antwerp University (UA) researchers have determined that sea salt causes discolouration in paintings located far from the coast. The wind transports fine salt particles from the North Sea – hundreds of kilometres inland, where it threatens works in museums and churches.

“This has never before been ascertained, and it is something art curators should take into account,” UA chemistry professor Koen Janssens told *Gazet Van Antwerpen*. Janssens was a co-promoter of the innovative research of PhD student Willemien Anaf, who discovered the process. The salt particles, in combination with light, cause chemical processes that taint paintings. In

red paint pigments, for instance, the particles lead to the formation of fluid mercury, which causes the brilliant vermilion red, favoured by painters such as Pieter Paul Rubens and Pieter Bruegel, to turn dark. Cadmium yellow, a favourite colour of painter James Ensor, degrades into white cadmium sulphate because of oxidation due to light and water-absorbing salt particulates.

Researchers offer no immediate solution to the problem, though museums, they said, can try to improve their ventilation and filtering systems. \ Andy Fourniere

Double-duty

Flanders' favourite drummer, Isolde Lasoen, grabs the mic in debut album



Christophe Verbiest
More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.ISOLDEETLESBENS.COM

With Isolde et Les Bens, drummer Isolde Lasoen is outing herself as a singer and frontwoman. Her first album, *L'Inconnu* (The Unknown), proves that move was a wise one. Even if she still sometimes squirms under the limelight.

“It was never a burning ambition to become the face of a band,” says Gent-based musician Isolde Lasoen. “People encouraged me to do it and, step by step, I tried it. Without fully realising it, I ended up there.” Two years ago, Lasoen (pictured), a well-respected drummer mostly known for her work with Flemish singer Daan, started Isolde et Les Bens (Isolde and The Bens) – just for fun. She had always had a soft spot for *Yé-Yé*, the poignant French rock from the 1960s. Throw in a couple of catchy English-language songs from the same decade, and you’ve got the set list for those first Isolde et Les Bens shows in 2012. “I chose music that makes me happy but isn’t devoid of a melancholic twist.”

The idea was to play a couple of low-key concerts, but that proved difficult. “Apparently, I was too well known, so there was immediately a lot of attention for the band,” she explains.

So, a more permanent and officious outing followed, with Lasoen writing her own songs in the vein of the music that formed the basis for Isolde et Les Bens.

This move resulted in *L'Inconnu*, with Lasoen penning five of the album’s songs. She also included her version of the signature tune



© Piet Stelamans

from the 1974 cult film *Emmanuelle* by composer Pierre Bachelet. Other songs like “Perdu” (Lost) and “Aluminium Folie” perfectly emulate the *Yé-Yé* style.

songs, especially the ones by Serge Gainsbourg, are the hidden meanings,” Lasoen explains. “The lyrics for ‘Perdu’ were written as a small ad for a stray cat. I noticed that the

“I see myself as a drummer first and foremost

Some songs on the EP masterfully deal in double entendres. On the face of it, “Perdu” for instance seems to deal with a dangerous cat. “What I like in those French

characteristics of stray tomcats also goes for guys. So the song can also be about them. But I leave those interpretations to the imagination of the listener.”

One of the other striking songs on *L'Inconnu* is “Samba des Diables” (Devils’ Samba). Last year, Radio 1 invited Lasoen to present her favourite bossa nova tracks. She says there are two simple reasons for her love of Brazilian music. “The combination of melancholy and the sensuality. It’s beautiful music, different from Western music.”

The song, which was released as a single last May, sounds like an anthem for the national football team. But Lasoen says it’s not that simple. “I found it too cheap to explicitly sing about football. I looked for a subject that was linked to it. I started thinking about the

devil and the imagery that goes along with him. But I made it into a plural – my wink to the Red Devils. I wanted to have a song that I’d still be able to play in five years, when everyone has forgotten the hype around the Red Devils at the football World Cup in Brazil.”

Lasoen first started playing the drums at a young age. “As often is the case with me, it just happened!” she says, laughing. “My whole family was playing in a brass band, and my older brother was a percussionist; it seemed logical that I would do the same. I was too young – six I think – to call it a deliberate decision.”

Today, Lasoen still has a busy musical life outside of her new band. Most of her time goes to Daan, whose drummer she’s been for more than a decade, and she’s not giving up that gig just yet. “I don’t want to continually be in the spotlight,” she says. “I would really miss it if I couldn’t drum for other artists anymore. I need the variety. It makes me uncomfortable if people call me a singer. I see myself as a drummer first and foremost.”

When playing as Isolde et Les Bens, she both sings and drums, which she admits isn’t the easiest of combinations. “I have the feeling I can’t fully accomplish both at the same time,” she says. “On the other hand, it also has an important advantage since I’m leading the rhythm. Lately, I’ve sung with some other musicians without being the drummer a few times. It’s a weird feeling not to be in control of the groove.”

MORE NEW ALBUMS THIS WEEK

Strand

Strand • Unday

Prolific artist Bert Dockx (of Flying Horseman and Dans Dans fame) has released his first Dutch-language album with *Strand*, which means “beach” though it can also be used as the imperative of “to strand”. It stands among the Antwerp artist’s best works, and that’s something. Accompanied only by his acoustic guitar, he sings 10 haunting songs. Though you can discern folk and jazz influences, he goes beyond the genre conventions to create a musical style that’s fully him. Dockx once again demonstrates he’s one of Flanders’ most gifted and original musicians and songwriters. A must-listen even if you don’t understand Dutch; you

might just find yourself mesmerised by his voice and music. ★★★★★

\ WWW.BESTOV.BE

Mon-O-Phone

Escapism • Mr and Ms Phono Records

How did the Limburg duo Mon-O-Phone follow up on their 2011 uppercut *The Great Depression of Mr and Ms Phono* that left us all KO? Not with a carbon copy. Though at times, they still rock the windows off their hinges, the songs on *Escapism* are a bit more restrained. There’s a slight shifting of focus from merciless guitars to fleshed-out electronics. The music is still anchored by the both sensual and ominous voice of Ciska Vanhoyland, which

guides you through a fairy-tale forest that turns out to be a place where darkness rules. ★★★★★

\ WWW.MON-O-PHONE.BE

Gabriel Rios

This Marauder’s Midnight • Angelhead

Over the last year, the Ghent-based Puerto Rican Gabriel Rios has released one song every third Monday of the month. Now, the twelve songs have been compiled in *This Marauder’s Midnight*, with a bonus EP thrown in. The singer and guitar player has come a long way since he first caught our attention 10 years ago with the joyful “Broad Daylight”. Most of the new songs float on subdued arrangements, with ample room for cello, trumpet, trombone,



French horns and piano. Never exuberant, always gratifying, this is music to quietly listen to. ★★★★★

\ WWW.GABRIELRIOS.COM

Fixkes

Weeral halfacht • Excelsior

Having your debut single top the charts for 16 (!) weeks is an amaz-

ing feat that can become a milestone around your neck, since the only way is down. Commercially speaking at least, since Fixkes, who hail from the Antwerp suburb of Stabroek, survived that initial success and have proven that it’s possible to have a more stable career after such an explosive start. At times, their third album, *Weeral halfacht* (7.30 Again), sounds brawnier than we’re used to, but it’s the quieter songs that catch your ear. In his semi-dialect, Sam Valkenborgh sings about daily life, expresses his admiration for Woody Allen and dreams of finding Jodie Foster in his bed. Charming. ★★★★★

\ FIXKES.WIX.COM/FIXKES

The muses and the muscles

Robert Mapplethorpe

Until 28 February

Charles Riva Collection, Brussels
WWW.CHARLESRIVACOLLECTION.COM

The highly stylised black-and-white studio photography of the late New York avant-garde artist Robert Mapplethorpe is hot in Europe. Last year the Brussels gallery Xavier Hufkens presented his early work. Earlier this year there was a big retrospective at Grand Palais in Paris, displaying his Polaroids from the early 1970s as well as portraits from the late 1980s, touching on his sculptural nudes and still lifes, and sadomasochism.

Photographs & Polaroids at Charles Riva in Brussels focuses on the two women playing an important role throughout Mapplethorpe's career – the rock singer/poet Patti

Smith and the bodybuilder Lisa Lyon – and on a few members of the New-York gay and SM scene. Through these subjects, Mapplethorpe projected his ambiguous relationship with the human body and sexuality, mixing both male and female characteristics.

Smith was Mapplethorpe's muse and accomplice straight from when she arrived in New York at the end of the 1960s. The couple lived the boho life in worn-out rental rooms and the infamous Chelsea Hotel. They were lovers until Mapplethorpe came out of the closet, then stayed friends. When Smith released her iconic debut *Horses*, it was Mapplethorpe who created the



legendary cover shoot, introducing her androgynous style to the world, as the exhibition shows.

Lyon (*pictured*) posed for Mapplethorpe many times, and though she was trained by Arnold Schwarzenegger – another iconic subject on show here – she rarely adopted the stereotypical macho

poses of bodybuilders. Her outfits were instead inspired by sadomasochism.

Mapplethorpe's Polaroids of male nudes, meanwhile, have a more theatrical appeal, as they were inspired by classic architecture and sculpture. The photographer was always in search of the perfect line. The exhibition demonstrates that what created a scandal in the 1970s is now historical – and even tongue-in-cheek – documentation of a particular generation and an era in American underground culture. Mapplethorpe illustrated a scene that would have been otherwise inaccessible to general audiences. \ Tom Peeters

FESTIVAL

Another Wave Festival

11 October, from 20.00

Magasin 4, Brussels
WWW.MAGASIN4.BE

1980s "nostalgia" is qualitatively different to that wistful longing for the suburban naïvety of the '50s or the headier still hedonism of the '60s or the headier still hedonism of the '70s. Those moments have all passed, but the '80s really haven't. We still live in the neoliberal dystopia created by Reagan, Thatcher and Gorbachev. So we can still understand the glacial pessimism felt by all during that decade, a feeling expressed in the synth drones, electric guitar angles and alienated near-melodies of the New Wave. This festival brings together two generations of genre acts. Newer groups include Berlin's Schwefelgelb and London-based Italian artist M!R!M. \ Georgio Valentino



Find London's KVB at Another Wave

CLASSICAL

Brussels Harp Festival

10-12 October

Solvay Library, Brussels
WWW.BRUSSELSHARPFESTIVAL.COM

The harp is the Rodney Dangerfield of every orchestra: It gets no respect. This festival was inaugurated in 2008 to give this complex and harmonious instrument its due. Guest artists are invited from around the world to show the versatility of the instrument. The harp comes in all shapes and sizes

and is used in styles as diverse as folk, world and electronic music. The fourth edition of this biennial event features players from Belgium, France, Greece and Réunion. The festival includes a special Sunday morning programme, *Trolls and Other Legends*, just for kids. \ GV



CONCERT

An Pierlé

10 October, 20.15

Sint-Jacobs Church, Ghent
WWW.HANDELSBEURS.BE

Flemish singer An Pierlé returns to Ghent's imposing Sint-Jacobs, where two years ago she hatched the idea of a full tour of Belgium's churches after wowing audiences at the city's annual Odegand. This wasn't a spiritual turn on her part; rather, the pop singer was keen to use the holy father's instrument of choice: the pipe organ. Pierlé (*pictured*) has since become something of a regular church-goer, performing frequently as a solo artist or in a duo with her producer and accompanist Koen Gisen. This return to where it all started sees Pierlé and Gisen joined at the altar by three multi-instrumentalists and backing singers along with support act Strand. It's heavenly. \ GV



© Athos Burez

FAIR

Bis

Until 12 October

Flanders Expo, Ghent
WWW.BISBEURS.BE

Flanders' biggest home construction and renovation fair is in full swing. The annual Bis is a sprawling affair occupying all seven halls of Flanders Expo. Hundreds of exhibitors are on hand – from contractors to interior designers to financial consultants – to help you with your home improvements. It's all quite impressive, and on Friday night, Bis gets even more user-friendly. The Nacht van Bis combines extended hours with a festival atmosphere. Exhibitors wine and dine their potential clients as musicians perform throughout the halls. This is easily the highlight of the entire fair. \ GV



CONCERT

Brussels

Nadia & Rodolfo: Brazilian duo influenced by Bossa Nova, jazz and blues for a sound that is a mix between music and poetry. 9 October 20.00, Art Base, Zandstraat 29
WWW.ART-BASE.BE

CLASSICAL

Brussels

Chamber music concert: Flautist Marc Grauwels and accordionist Christophe Delporte perform works by Astor Piazzolla and *Danse de l'Arlequin*, specially written for the duo by young Canadian composer Daniel Mehdizadeh. 10 October 20.00, D'Ieteren Gallery, Maliestraat 50
WWW.TINYURL.COM/CHAMBERMUSICCONCERT

THEATRE

Brussels

Hamlet Unplugged: Brussels Shakespeare Society performs an abridged version of Hamlet, using only Hamlet's dialogue, with four actors playing one of Shakespeare's most classic roles (in the original English). 13-18 October 14.00/20.00, Warehouse Studio Theatre, Waelhemstraat 69a
WWW.SHAKSOC.THEATRE-INBRUSSELS.COM

VISUAL ARTS

Antwerp

Allegory of the Cave Painting: Works inspired by the prehistoric Bradshaw cave paintings in Australia, images that are continually etched deeper into the rock and made more vivid by a unique colony of living micro-organisms. Until 7 December, Extra City Kunsthall, Eikelstraat 25
WWW.EXTRACITYKUNSTHAL.ORG

FOOD&DRINK

Bilzen (Limburg)

Europom: Europe's largest fruit market and meeting between producers and about 20 non-profits from 15 countries engaged in the preservation of old apple, pear, cherry and plum varieties, featuring demonstrations, tastings and more. 11-13 October, Alden Biesen Castle, Kasteelstraat 6
WWW.EUROPOM.EU

Zottegem

(East Flanders)

National Beer Event: More than 20 small-scale and local brewers serve about 1,500 visitors, an opportunity to taste more than 100 rare beers, as well as a variety of regional products from the Flemish Ardennes. 11 October 14.00-22.00, Bevegense Vijvers, Zwembadstraat
WWW.BLES.BE

Talking Dutch

A few of our favourite words



Derek Blyth
More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

Everyone who starts to learn Dutch soon comes across the *Dikke Van Dale* – Fat Van Dale. This is the definitive dictionary of the Dutch language that scholars have been updating every year for the past 150 years. The *Dikke Van Dale* (pictured) takes its name from a nit-picking schoolteacher in Sluis, the Netherlands, who steadfastly created the first-ever edition. But he didn't really enjoy the task. *Het schrijven van een woordenboek is een ondankbaaren verdrietig werk* – writing a dictionary is a thankless and melancholy task, he said. But the dictionary earned Van Dale a place in the history books as well as a statue in Sluis. There is even a hotel called the Dikke Van Dale in the town where he toiled over his project for many years. The publishers of the *Dikke Van Dale* recently went in search of the *Van Dale Jubileumwoord* – the Van Dale Jubilee Word – to celebrate its 150th anniversary. A shortlist was drawn up of 150 possible words. People were invited to vote on Facebook, Twitter and radio programmes. *Tussen 28 augustus tot en met 22 septem-*



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ber werden uiteindelijk ruim 12.500 stemmen uitgebracht – Some 12,500 votes were cast between 28 August and 22 September. *De meeste stemmen gingen naar 'bolleboos'* – the largest number of votes went to the word *bolleboos*. This is an old Dutch word, which means, according to the dictionary, *een bijzonder knap mensch; iemand die in iets uitmunt* – an exceptionally gifted person; someone who is outstanding in a particular area. *De top drie wordt vervolledigd door 'regelneef' (1977) en 'bekokstoven' (1900)* – the top three places were rounded off by *regelneef* (a word coined in 1977 meaning a person who likes to have everything organised down to the last detail) and *bekokstoven* (a word from 1900 meaning to cook up or concoct something).

Op de vierde plaats kwam 'selfie' uit (2013), op vijf 'prima' (1868) – in fourth place was the word *selfie* (last year's word of the year) while fifth place was taken by *prima* (a word that originally meant "first-rate" but is now used interchangeably with "super!"). *Bolleboos* struck some people as an odd choice for the best word from the past 150 years. *Het woord is ontleend uit het Jiddisch en betekende oorspronkelijk 'heer de huizes'* – the word comes from Yiddish and originally meant the head of the household. *"Ik vind de keuze zeer opmerkelijk"* – "I found it a very remarkable choice," said Ruud Hendrickx, the Flemish editor of the *Dikke Van Dale*. *"Want het is ook een van de oudste woorden uit de selectie. Het dateert uit 1866"* – "Because it's also one of the oldest words in the selection. It dates from 1866," he explained. But, he admitted, *"Het is ook een mooi woord. Het klinkt gewoon mooi"* – "It's also a beautiful word. It simply sounds beautiful." So a very old and almost forgotten word is suddenly being used again. *Prima!*

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



In response to: *Graanmarkt 13 best veggie restaurant in Flanders*

Sunita Mizar

Been to this restaurant a few times in the past years. Will be interesting to find out what the all veggie dinner will turn out to be.



Passenger

EUROPE – it's the first show of the tour tonight in ANTWERP and I'm delighted to say that its now sold out 5000 PEOPLE !!!!! Can't quite believe how far this thing has come.



In response to: *Colruyt launches new supermarket concept*

Babak Jahedmanesh

I saw this same concept in Poland, Thailand and also Germany. It should be done for so many reasons. In all major shops.



Slate @Slate

Bruges has decided an underground beer pipeline is "a win-win situation for everyone": <http://slate.me/1vxeBko>



Jonathan Berger @Jon_M_Berger

Brussels is gorgeous. Who knew? #BrusselsMarathon



In response to: *Sea salt particles blowing across Flanders threaten artworks*

SourGrapes @SourGrapes

@flanderstoday Let's hope at least it's a decent brand, like Maldon.



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THE LAST WORD

Capital crime

"We're not going to take the metro or visit the European Parliament. Every day we read about terrorist threats against those places. The safety of children and staff is a priority." Filip Kuijpers, head of the Raperingen primary school in Hasselt, cancelled a three-day school trip to Brussels

Weather protection

"There's nothing more unpleasant than going to an amusement park in the rain. In cases like that, we want to make sure people still feel good about visiting." Bellewaerde fun park in Ypres is offering rain insurance of €2 on top of the €31 entry

Sporting foul

"Painful, regrettable and avoidable." Sports minister Philippe Muyters spoke out against a suspension for athlete Thomas Van der Plaetsen, suspected of doping. In fact the athlete's high hormone levels were a sign of cancer

Selfie-absorbed

"One hundred thousand people, these days that means one hundred thousand cameras. Some people took pictures of each of the tugs and every soldier on the bridge, as well as selfies from every angle, turning round to be sure to get the cathedral in the background." Colonel Dirk Verhaeghe explains the pontoon fiasco in Antwerp (see p2)

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Poll

UGent researchers think unhealthy, processed food should come with an added tax. Do you?

a. Sure. Unhealthy eating is a choice that leads to increased medical costs. Those who eat it ought to foot the bill

46%

b. Yes, but only if fresh produce and meat gets cheaper

38%

c. No, it doesn't work. Taxes on cigarettes and alcohol are huge, but people still buy them

15%

A majority this week is in favour of the so-called "fat tax", a suggestion from researchers at Ghent University, whose recent study shows that a tax on unhealthy foods would not only help fund health care, it would encourage consumers to avoid processed foods high in sugar and saturated fats, improv-

ing public health overall. Much like taxes on alcohol and tobacco, you reason, those who want to eat the foods should pay the price – literally. More than one in three of you, though, wanted the tax to come with an alternative: make healthy foods – fresh meat and veggies, for

instance – cheaper. That evens out the food bill and encourages people to replace processed foods with fresh ones. That seems reasonable, but farmers are already complaining about rock-bottom prices for meat and produce.

\ Next week's question:

Belgium has the fifth largest carbon footprint in the world, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature (see p4). What would you be prepared to give up to help improve the situation?

Log in to the Flanders Today website at www.flanderstoday.eu and click on VOTE

