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NEWS ♦ BUSINESS ♦ ARTS ♦ ACTIVE ♦ LIVING ♦ AGENDA ♦ INTERVIEW

Maybe baby..... 6

Thousands of couples a year come from across the globe to the world-class fertility clinic at the hospital of the Free University of Brussels (VUB). Some are making a last-ditch effort, some fleeing restrictive policies in their home countries



Lady and the band 9

Her name is Lien De Greef, but everybody in Flanders knows her as Lady Linn. The jazz singer with big-band stylings is the darling of every stage in this year's ample festival circuit



Kissing cousins .. 10

If you've never heard of Baarle-Hertog, put on your reading glasses and clear your mind – have we got a story for you. Come with us to the city that is both Belgian and Dutch, sometimes in the same square metre



In the summer, in the city

In the fast-paced world of summer festivals, Antwerp plays slow, sultry and hard to get

REBECCA BENOOT

During the summer, most people are dying to get out of the city. Heat, humidity, traffic fumes – all of that leaves us gasping for cool breezes and wide open spaces.

So how come thousands of people voluntarily decide to spend their lazy days in one of the busiest cities in Belgium? (For those of you who were wondering, that would be Antwerp.) The answer is actually quite simple and consists

of those three little words you long to hear: Zomer van Antwerpen.

That means Summer of Antwerp, and it isn't just a lot of hot air. This annual festival has become an entertainment phenomenon, attracting pleasure seekers from all over Belgium, of course, but also tourists. Aside from making *Antwerpenaars* even more proud than they already are, it reminds the rest of the country just how quirky and dynamic this divine

little city by the Scheldt really is.

Until 30 August, Antwerp's gobs of activities lure in the very little and the terribly mature, the punk rock renegades and the culture crusaders. Every year, internationally acclaimed acts brighten up the metropolis in various wacky locations together with established and beloved landmarks. Needless to say, there's never a dull moment.

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Kris Peeters launches new government

Flemish ministers named – and others cut

ANJIE OTTE

Bart De Wever, president of the N-VA, had hoped to wind up the Flemish coalition talks before his wedding day on 11 July, the Flemish holiday. He got what he wanted: a new coalition agreement and a new Flemish government.

The Christian-Democrat CD&V may be the leading party in the new Flemish government, but the coalition agreement (titled "A Vigorous Flanders in Deciding Times") bears the hallmarks of the two coalition partners – the socialist SP.A and the nationalist N-VA.

The SP.A has brought a strong social accent to the agreement, so the new Flemish government will invest in **extra child care**, make sure **nursing home bills** are no longer higher than people's pensions and give grants to schoolchildren. It will also invest heavily in public transport with the symbolic promise of

"a tramline in every province".

The nationalists, meanwhile, have brought a new tone. Five years ago, Flemish demands for state reform were spelled out in full (whereas this is really up to the federal government to decide). No such thing this time. The Flemish government is now mainly waiting for signals from the French speakers to begin new talks. In the meantime, it will exploit its own competences "to the maximum".

One way of doing this is to introduce a **child bonus** for children up to three years old, to complement the federal child benefit. This has outraged the French speakers, who see it is an attack on the federal social security. They speak of discrimination ("a child is a child").

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© Catherine De Saegher



Phuong Nguyen

In the summer, in the city

Antwerp's festival has become a European hot-spot

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Whereas other cities turn their summer festivals into a short but tantalising adrenaline rush, Antwerp likes to take its time and savour every minute.

This is why the multiple genres of activities have been spread over two months, giving everyone the chance to participate whenever they feel like it. There's no rush, just countless possibilities.

Besides its historical, artistic and international allure, Antwerp has remained a fairly compact city, with an eclectic mix of cultures and districts. This diversity plays an important role in the music, theatre, circus, film and parties of Zomer van Antwerpen – a means of making sure that everyone enjoys the different layers that make Antwerp so unique.

Thanks to numerous festivities situated at sometimes unknown locations, we get to know the city – and its inhabitants – a little better. While, god willing, basking in the summer sun.

Something old, something new

Sadly, Strantwerpen, the much-loved beach by the Scheldt, had to make way this year for a new bar. But the bar – in a forest – may turn out to be as popular. A cosy, dream-like oasis has been built where you order up a chilly cocktail and sip it in a hammock or underneath a giant straw parasol while the kids play in the sand. The trees are filled with hundreds of lights, making the evenings by the water even more enchanting. Oh yes, this is the real-deal feel of the summer holidays.

Another annual classic could not be halted: the gorgeous sunset on the Scheldt, otherwise known as *De Mooiste Show op Aarde* (*The Most Beautiful Show on Earth*). A special grandstand has been constructed where you can sit back and relax with friends – or a more intimate companion – while watching the orange-red skies and the sun glistening in the water. Not a bad way to end a busy day, particularly when you notice the barbecue at your disposal.

A lot of Zomer van Antwerpen is free. There are concerts on squares across town with music from all over the globe, but possi-

bly the most popular activity is the open-air cinema along the Scheldt. Bring your own chair, plopping it down in front of the huge screen and soaking up the atmosphere provided by the city itself.

Movie buffs, *Antwerpenaars* and holiday makers mingle in the sand and relish the free films (and sweets). The movies tend towards recent releases: *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *The Wrestler*, *I'm Not There* and *Milk* are all on the agenda.

Antwerp is still talking about its festival of 2006, when French artist François Delarozière, famed for bringing together artists, designers and engineers to create bizarre and beautiful mechanical contraptions for both stage and street theatre, stirred up a commotion with his majestic parade *De Olifant en de kleine reizin* (*The Elephant and the Tiny Giantess*). This year he's back with one of this summer's highlights: *De Vierkante Molen*, or *The Square Carousel*. This curious ride is decorated with giant buffaloes, insects and huge fish heads that go up and down, round and round. Adults are climbing aboard at an equal rate to the kids.

For paid performances, it's usually necessary to buy tickets in advance, but don't let that turn you off. There's plenty to go around, and you've got two months. So order another cocktail and take your time. ♦

→ www.zomervanantwerpen.be

Step right up

Circus and theatre – and some other stuff we can't classify

This year Antwerp is graced by four different circus-like performances:

- *Mijn Dorp* (*My Village*) by Lang Toi who have made a poetic representation of everyday life in their homeland of Vietnam (photo above). Musicians, acrobats and a lot of bamboo were used to recreate a typical yet magical Vietnamese village.
- *La Piste Là* by Cirque Aïtal also features acrobats, only this time seasoned with a dash of comedy and a very unusual band. This award-winning French act is an ode to old-time circus, spiced up with a hint of 21st-century Surrealism.
- *Un Horizonte Cuadrado* (*A Square Horizon*) by Compañía De Pasa, coming all the way from Chile, finds six trapeze artists seemingly going beyond the boundaries of their own physical limitations. Contained in a huge metal construction, they twirl downward aided by trance-like music and fluent motions, emphasising the difficulty in making connections in this world – and maybe even in the next.
- Finally, in *Tabú* by Nofitstate, you are free to wander about in a giant silver UFO while the performers skate by you and the music is pumping.

This contemporary combination of circus and rock from Wales features videos, performance and startling surprises.

Though theatre-like performances aren't keen to be outdone:

- *Tussen Hond en Wolf* (*Between Dog and Wolf*) takes you to the left bank of the Scheldt, Linkeroever, and is best described as a love story on the road (see photo, front page). Inspired by the movie *Before Sunrise*, it's a bittersweet tale about the impossibility of a burning desire (in Dutch).
- If you prefer your weather hot and your theatre droll, try *Altijd 'tzelfde* (*Always the Same*) by Tristero. This long-running French hit, translated here into Dutch, won the prestigious Molière prize in 1995 and takes place in a typical Belgian café. Family is the main focus in this hilarious and oh-so-relatable comedy.
- A bit more intimate is *U bevindt zich hier* (*You Are Here*) by Dries Verhoeven, in which you enter a hotel room all by yourself and listen as a voice narrates a story about you and everyone else. As your story intertwines with those of others, you get to know yourself and your surroundings in a simple, comforting way (in Dutch).