

Belgian Events

November 2012



French-Belgian film *Rust and Bone* (*Et D'os*) starring Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts and Oscar-winning actress Marion Cotillard, wins Best Film Prize at the London Film Festival.

Belgians in the international world of fashion

In April this year, Raf Simons signed a contract to become creative director with the prestigious French fashion house Dior, replacing the Spanish-British designer John Galliano. Simons, known for his trend-setting minimalistic designs, is heading both the ready-to-wear and high fashion collections and accessories range for ladies.

In September, barely three months after his appointment, Raf Simons passed his first test with flying colours with a refreshing and innovative prêt-à-porter collection in Paris that honoured the Dior name.

In fact, both the men's and ladies' collections at Dior are now run by Belgians. Kris Van Assche succeeded Hedi Slimane five years ago. Slimane's designs had enjoyed considerable attention from the media, but his collections did not sell well. Van Assche managed to stick to Slimane's modern approach while creating easier to wear and therefore better selling collections. Van Assche completed his studies at the Antwerp Fashion Academy in 1998 while Simons obtained a degree in industrial design, not fashion.



Raf Simons © Furinsider.com

Chanel, the other French house of high fashion, has also spotted Belgian fashion talents. In 2008, Antwerp local Peter Philips was appointed head of the makeup division, which made him the brain behind each season's new makeup colours. Philips graduated at the Antwerp fashion academy in 1993. Karl Lagerfeld, the face behind Chanel, also discovered the creative talent of Laetitia Crahay from Brussels when she headed the design studio of Brussels leather house Delvaux, and put her in charge of jewellery and accessories at Chanel's. Crahay studied styling at the Brussels college La Cambre and worked as art director for Olivier Theyskens who amazed Paris with his first theatrical Gothic collection in 1997. After the artistic direction of Rochas and Nina Ricci, Theyskens produced a line for an American label and named it Theyskens' Theory.

Another Belgian to gain international acclaim is Olivier Rizzo, a stylist who graduated from the Antwerp fashion academy in 1993 and went on to work closely with fellow student Willy Vanderperre, who later became a fashion photographer. In 2001, Marc Jacobs approached Rizzo to style a show for Louis Vuitton. With the help of Vanderperre, he casted the models and ended up staying with Vuitton as a consultant for three years before joining Dolce & Gabbana, Jil Sander and then Prada.

David Vandewal, another well-known Belgian stylist, graduated from the Brussels fashion academy in 1992 and made a name for himself in New York, where he worked as a stylist on magazines like *W Magazine*, *Interview*, *i-D* and *Vogue*. He is currently on the permanent payroll of 'T', the style magazine of the *New York Times*. www.dior.com, www.chanel.com, www.prada.com, www.jilsander.com, www.nytimes.com

Elite centre for sport research and training in Leuven

Next year, an ultramodern sports performance research and testing centre will open at the Leuven University Sport Centre campus. The new centre is an initiative of the Bakala Academy and is envisioned as a world-class academy for innovation in sports, with particular emphasis on endurance sports.

For Professor Peter Hespel, who heads the Research and Testing Department at Bakala Academy, the centre is a dream come true: "For the past ten years, our Elite Sport Coaching and Support Centre has built a strong reputation in providing guidance for top athletes, including the Omega Quick-Step Pro Cycling Team managed by Patrick Lefevere. He brought us into contact with Zdenek Bakala of Pro Cycling Holding, Bakala Academy's lead investor and namesake."

"We want to offer top athletes every available form of testing and support, grounded in scientific knowledge in order to improve their performance. The centre will specialise in cycling and triathlon and other endurance sports. Additionally, we want to become an important focus point for talent detection and the development of young cyclists."

"Facilities for endurance testing, body composition, aerodynamics, pedalling technique and bike positioning will be located on the ground floor," says Hespel. "The top floor will have a low-oxygen unit with six guest rooms and ample living and recreation space in a simulated high-altitude environment. Top athletes will be able to stay there for a few weeks and simulate a cycling stage at an altitude of 4,000 metres. The exposure to hypoxic air helps stimulate the production of red blood cells and athletes won't have to go abroad to train."

Recreational athletes will benefit from the facility as well, explains Hespel. "We want to be able to share our expertise with a wide range of clients, including recreational athletes preparing for a competition. We have worked with Belgium's elite athletes for some time, but now we will be able to operate at an international level."



An architectural rendering of the centre
© Bogdan & Van Broeck Architects

Based on information from <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/news/bakala-academy-plans-centre-for-elite-sport-research-and-training-at-ku-leuven>

Foreign film producers flock to Belgian film locations

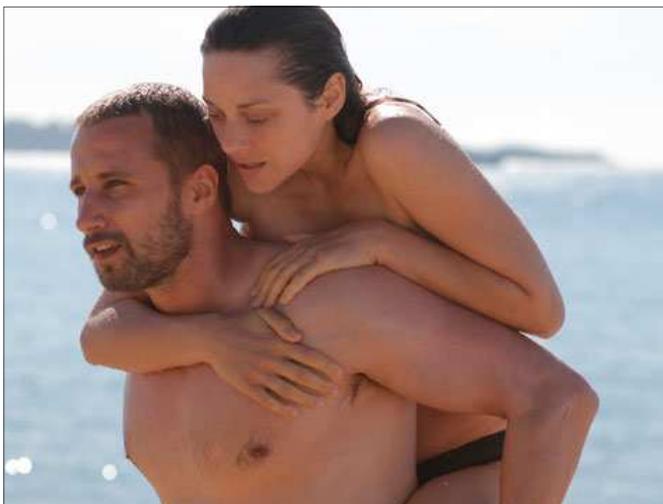
Foreign film producers are flocking to Belgium because of its favourable tax benefits, suitable film locations and skilled technical staff. Lars Von Trier is currently filming parts of his erotic drama, *The Nymphomaniac* in Ghent while the BBC is filming its new ten-part historic drama series *The White Queen* in Ghent and Bruges. The First World War series *Parades' End*, which was recently broadcast by the BBC, was also partly shot in Flemish cities and villages. Earlier this year, the filming of *The Expatriate* took place in Brussels and Wallonia.

The growing interest in Belgium among foreign film producers is to a large extent due to 'Location Flanders', the region's central film office, its Walloon-Brussels equivalent 'Wallimage/Bruxellimage' and the Brussels Film Office. They offer online catalogues which highlight the most attractive location settings and promote the tax benefits offered by the country. The tax shelter, a federal tax regulation for private investors, was established in 2003 and provides a tax exemption of 150% on the amount invested in the film or series on condition that a Belgian production house collaborates on the film.

Foreign producers interested in this favourable measure partner therefore with a Belgian film production company. Lars Von Tier collaborates with the production house *Caviar* and the BBC's partner for *The White Queen* is the Belgian production house *CZAR TV*.

www.locationflanders.com, www.wallimage.net, www.bruxellestournage.be

Rust and Bone wins Best Film Award at the London Film Festival



The French-Belgian film *Rust and Bone* starring Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts and the Oscar-winning actress Marion Cotillard, won the best film prize at the London Film Festival.

Rust and Bone, directed by Jacques Audiard, tells the story of the unlikely relationship between an impoverished bouncer, Ali (Matthias Schoenaerts) and a girl who trains killer whales in a marine park (Stéphanie, played by Marion Cotillard). The film is described as punchy, intensely moving and surprisingly poetic. The jury called the movie "full of life, violence and love."

For Matthias Schoenaerts this is just one more step towards international fame. After a solid career at home, Schoenaerts exploded onto the global film scene last year with his starring role in the Oscar-nominated production *Bullhead*. His performance in the film was well received and won him the FIPRESCI Award for best actor at Palm Springs International Film Festival in January this year. He also won the Magritte Award for Best Actor.

Rust and Bone is now on general release in the UK.

Thrombogenics, the success story of a Belgian biotech company



On 28 November, the yearly Scrip Awards Ceremony, the equivalent of the Oscars of the biotech sector, will take place in London. The Louvain-based Belgian company *Thrombogenics* has been nominated for the 'International biotech company of the year' award and its CEO Patrick De Haes will be in the running for the international title of 'CEO of the year'.



Peter Stalmans

The Belgian ophthalmologist Peter Stalmans is the brain behind the success of *Thrombogenics*. Stalmans and his team discovered that a simple injection with the protein ocriplasmin can resolve the retina disease, vitreomacular adhesion, suffered by millions of patients and render surgical interventions unnecessary. Last month, Thrombogenics successfully launched ocriplasmin in the US under the name '*Jetrea*'.

Stalmans expects worldwide ocriplasmin treatment within the next few years. "Global interest is immense. Since the publication of our research results in the *New England Journal of Medicine* the telephone has not stopped ringing," says Stalmans, who personally treats two to three new patients each week.

According to *Thrombogenics*' CEO Patrick De Haes, his company is writing history. "Belgian biotech businesses traditionally opt to co-operate with one of the larger affluent pharma companies. We are the first to develop and market a drug entirely independently." Analysts expect that at its peak, *Jetrea* will have a turnover in excess of 700 million euros in Europe and the US.



Patrick De Haes

Thrombogenics is now researching the possibility of also using ocriplasm to treat eye diseases related to diabetes, in which case the treatment could bring relief for about 150 million patients each year.

<http://thrombogenics.com>

Dr Jan-Emmanuel De Neve is Assistant Professor in Political Economy and Behavioural Science at UCL and a research associate at LSE. where he obtained his PhD. He was a Fulbright scholar at Harvard University and has prior work experience at the Harvard Business School, European Commission and United Nations. His research and commentary regularly feature in the media, including in *The Economist*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, *El Pais*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *BBC World*.

Could you explain to our readers what your current academic positions at University College London and the London School of Economics entail?

Thank you. At UCL I teach a required course on Public Economics to about 200 Master students and a smaller elective course on Political Economy. It's exciting to teach and interact with so many bright students drawn from all over the world and I find that I learn a lot in the process. Next to being on the faculty at UCL I also have a research position at the LSE Centre for Economic Performance in order to spearhead research into the economics of well-being. Happiness has always been an important subject—not in the least because it is happiness that most individuals care most about—but economists have been late in developing a more scientific understanding of well-being and of what can be done to raise happiness and reduce misery. Striving for economic growth and efficiency is not a recipe that necessarily increases the average well-being in a society, as many decades of data now tell us. As such, economics is undergoing something of a quiet revolution and our team is trying to make a scientific contribution to this important development. Combining the positions at UCL and LSE is not always easy (nor is having to move between my offices all the time!) but I feel like I'm getting the best of two worlds and that's doubly stimulating.

The Economist recently mentioned you and the paper on the 'genetics of happiness' of which you are the main author. Are human beings really born with a potential degree of happiness or is that too simple a statement?

As most people would intuitively accept, our behaviour and our emotional states are the result of both nature and nurture, as well as the complex interaction between the two. It is no different for human happiness. We first explored the influence of genetic variation on happiness by looking at identical and non-identical twin pairs. Identical twins respond a lot more alike to questions on happiness leading us to calculate that about one-third of the variation in happiness can be traced back to genetic variation. Heritability thus plays an important role in shaping one's happiness but the more important influences remain environmental such as social ties, health, and income. Of course, twin studies do not tell you which particular genotypes may matter and that's what we set out to do next. We have access to a large data set that also contains much genotypic information about the individuals that participate. What we found is that there is a functional variant in the serotonin transporter gene that has some influence on happiness levels but much more research needs to be done to verify and understand these effects.

Can you tell us about your current research projects?

There are three research projects that I am particularly excited about. The first one builds on the earlier findings in the genetics of happiness. Here I coordinate about thirty research teams from all over the world to bring together all available data sets that contain both genome-wide DNA data and information on these individuals' happiness. This way we are able to run comprehensive genetic analyses on a very large number of individuals that represent all corners of the world. By bringing all these scientists and their data together we have a pooled sample size of approximately 100,000 individuals. It is a big undertaking but one that should produce solid scientific results.

The second research project reverses the classic question of whether ‘money buys happiness’. Here we study whether happier individuals perhaps perform better financially in the first place. This is not with a view to putting money centre-stage at the expense of happiness but, to the contrary, to show that happiness and income are in a dynamic relationship and that happiness does not necessarily flow from greater income even when there appears to be a positive relationship. To find out we studied the happiness levels of about 15,000 adolescents and young adults and compared that with their earnings when they became about 30 years of age. The results are striking. Early happiness is a strong predictor of later income even when controlling for a great many other possible influences. This work is now published and received a lot of media attention, including an invitation to the BBC studios for a live interview. I think it’s increasingly important for academics to be able to effectively spread our research findings beyond the ivory tower.

Another big research project also extends beyond the ivory tower and aims to influence tax policy for the better. We are currently running experiments to see whether allowing taxpayers to express their preferences about tax spending results in greater satisfaction and tax compliance. When citizens file their taxes it is a unique opportunity to involve them by providing information on what public goods their tax contributions support and to allow them to state their preferences about policy priorities. We know from prior research that involving citizens in the policy process raises satisfaction but our intuition is that it may also increase tax compliance. Given that the “tax gap” in the UK is about £42 billion or about 9% of total tax liability, even a small positive effect on tax compliance resulting from allowing people to express tax preferences would be an important result. To test whether this effect exists we are hoping to move from lab experiments to a large-scale field experiment and we are currently in touch with the UK Cabinet Office to discuss the feasibility of such a field experiment to be rolled out across the UK.



Are you pleased to be working in London? How does it compare with life in Australia and the US where you have also lived?

London is a phenomenal city and I am very pleased to be working here because I don't think there is an academically more stimulating environment in Europe. I have studied and lived in Australia and the United States prior to coming to London and I would argue that London comes perhaps closest to having a similar energy and dynamism as New York City. London is very cosmopolitan, radiates economic vibrancy and has a cultural scene that seems endless. While the weather is not nearly as nice as in Australia it is not as bad as people make it out to be and, not unimportantly, over the past 4 years I have never felt unsafe in the city.

Have you still got strong ties with Belgium on both a personal and professional level?

Yes. Notwithstanding having spent the better part of the last decade abroad I feel strongly about our country and return often. Needless to say, the strongest ties remain family and friendships. I also keep up-to-date with what's happening in Belgium and read De Standaard newspaper almost daily. Together with my fiancée, who's also Belgian, we have long been preoccupied and worried about the political situation in our country, the political gridlock and the growing polarization of public opinion in both Flanders and Wallonia. Last year we decided to actually do something and, inspired by the work of a group of academics around Philippe Van Parijs and Dave Sinardet, we decided to initiate a large-scale online petition in favor of a federal constituency and to recruit signatures of famous Belgians. The result is the petition website www.be4democracy.be and by now over 27,000 people have signed including about 100 famous Belgians. The goal is not to reconstruct a unified Belgium; the goal is to make an increasingly decentralized country work more efficiently and democratically by linking all citizens to their federal government and giving federal politicians the electoral incentive to engage with people across both linguistic communities. A federal constituency would generate the space needed for the kind of politician that will want to assume responsibility for our entire federal state and give them the democratic legitimacy to actually do so.

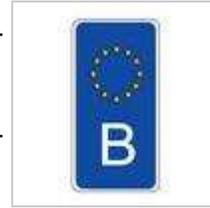
Can you see yourself ever moving back to Belgium?

Yes. As much as I like London and the academic possibilities of UCL and LSE, the city does pose one major problem for young professionals such as us and that are the prohibitive real estate prices. With a limited supply of housing but an ever-increasing and moneyed demand I understand that these high prices are warranted. It does, however, make it almost impossible for us to settle in central London longer-term without having to make many compromises. Furthermore, what is typical for expats I believe is that arriving in a country at a later stage necessarily means that one will never be fully integrated in the social fabric of the host country and I do miss that feeling. There are cultural subtleties that one only acquires when growing up in the country. As such, I do see us moving towards a situation that, on the one hand, allows for a better work-life balance and, on the other hand, would reconnect us with the place we know most intimately and that's our home country of Belgium.

Changes in the Belgian Nationality Code

The House of Representatives has recently passed a significant and profound change in the Belgian Nationality Code.

People who are not legally residing in Belgium will no longer have the opportunity to acquire Belgian nationality voluntarily from abroad.



Consequently, as from 31/12/2012, the Embassy of Belgium in London cannot receive any nationality applications of the following categories:

- Declaration of option will only be possible for people who are legally resident in Belgium
- Declaration of recovery of the Belgian nationality will not be possible from abroad
- The naturalisation of persons who are not legally resident in Belgium will not be possible
- The declaration of possession of Belgian state will be removed

To enable us to process on time all nationality files already introduced at the Embassy, and any request that would be submitted before the entry comes into force (01/01/2013) (according to the provisions mentioned above) please send without delay - to the attention of the Nationality Department - the documents listed in the newsletters sent before 06/11/2012. All documents must arrive at the Embassy no later than 08/11/2012.

After this date, we cannot guarantee the processing of your application. Also, may we draw your attention to the fact that only complete applications received on 30/11/2012 will be processed by us before the deadline of 31/12/2012.

Did you know ?

Belgian designs WWI Commemorative Garden in London

In 2014, a garden commemorating the centenary of World War I will open at The Guard's Museum adjacent to Buckingham Palace. The Memorial Garden 'In Flanders Fields' was designed by the Bruges landscape architect Piet Blanckaert and made possible by a grant from the Government of Flanders. The garden spanning 200 square metres, will be constructed near the Guard's Chapel, where the British Royal Guard meets. A portion of the garden, which is just one of many WWI commemorative gardens promoted by Flanders across the world, will be filled with soil from British cemeteries in the Western Front area, the so-called Westhoek.

The commemorative garden was donated by Flanders to Great Britain in gratitude for their assistance during the war. "We hope this project will make young people realise what their ancestors fought for and prevent them from having to go through the same thing," stated Piet Blanckaert.

Interested parties who are keen to sponsor the initiative will be invited to a launch event on 5 December 2012.

www.memoral2014.com

Bilingual education

In September, no less than 3 bilingual schools with French options opened their doors in the South-East. The 'Ecole Internationale Franco-Anglaise' near Regent's Park offers bilingual education to children aged 3 to 11 years old. Its curriculum is based on the French National curriculum and classes are taught 50% in French and 50% in English.

The 'European School UK' opened on 4 September in Oxfordshire. It is state-funded and multi-lingual with a strong European ethos. The school will grow year by year to cover all ages from 4 to 19 years by 2017.

'Arpeggios' is a new French music and art school academy based in West London for everyone from the age of 8 and upwards.

For more information and contact details of these and other French and Dutch schooling options in and around London, please contact the Information department at the Belgian Embassy.

www.ecole-ifa.com; www.europaschooluk.org; www.artpeggios.com



Back in 2010, academia from the George Mason University (USA), the University of Pécs (Hungary) and Imperial College Business School in London came up with the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index (GEDI) to compare the entrepreneurial characteristics of 78 nations and identify the entrepreneurial strengths and weaknesses of their economies. The 2012 edition uses mid-2010 data.

Country	GEDI 2011	Rank 2011	GEDI 2012	Rank 2012
United States	0.64	3	0.60	1
Sweden	0.59	5	0.57	2
Australia	0.51	11	0.56	3
Iceland	0.57	6	0.55	4
Denmark	0.67	1	0.55	5
Canada	0.65	2	0.54	6
Switzerland	0.56	7	0.54	7
Belgium	0.50	12	0.50	8
Norway	0.53	10	0.49	9
Netherlands	0.54	8	0.48	10
Taiwan	-	-	0.48	10

When comparing the GEDI's of the 10 most entrepreneurial countries this year with their respective figures in 2011, a drop is observed in most countries. This is likely a reflection of the deteriorating conditions in the world of the established economies.

Newcomer and the first Asian country in the top 10, is Taiwan. Australia, which moved into the top 10 from 11th place, has become a strong performer, avoiding the financial crisis, housing bubble and the great recession. Belgium also performed well and rose from 12th to 8th position with an unchanged GEDI.

According to the academics behind the GEDI, the UK is currently ranked 14th. They claim that the country would jump to the top of the rankings if it resolved the 'lack of aspiration' among business founders and problems in accessing early-stage risk capital.

www.thegdi.org

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The Anglo-Belgian Society promotes Anglo-Belgian friendship and culture. Information on membership and application forms can be obtained, with all enquiries, from the Hon. Secretary, Mr Patrick Bresnan, www.anglo-belgiansoc.co.uk, secretary@anglo-belgiansoc.co.uk

The Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce. Your one-stop shop for doing business in UK since 1890. Visit www.blcc.co.uk for a list of our business services and our busy calendar. Alternatively, contact Michel Vanhoonacker at info@blcc.co.uk; BLCC, Westwood House, Annie Med Lane, South Cave, HU15 2HG, tel. 0207 127 4292, fax 0870 429 2148

The Young Chamber. Contact: Aurelien Huynen. All Belgians welcome to meet in informal atmosphere. www.theyoungchamber.com, info@theyoungchamber.com

Belgian Tourist Office, Brussels-Wallonia, 217 Marsh Wall, London E14 9FJ, tel. 0207 531 0391, www.belgiumtheplaceto.be, info@belgiumtheplaceto.be

Tourism Flanders-Brussels, Flanders House, 1A Cavendish Square, London W1G OLD. Tel: 0207 307 7730, info@visitflanders.co.uk

Vlaamse Club in Londen, organises activities for Flemish and Dutch-speaking people in the London area, thus creating a meeting place and a network opportunity for the many Flemings in the UK, www.vlaamseclublonden.com, info@vlaamseclublonden.com

Vlamingen in de Wereld, representative in UK Mr David Vermylen, davidvermylen@yahoo.co.uk

Union Francophone des Belges à l'Etranger, representative in the UK Mr Didier Denayer, 20 West Heath Close, London NW3 7NJ, ufbe_uk@yahoo.co.uk

Vlamingen in Surrey organise meetings and events for Flemish people living in the Surrey area. Contact: Brit Deckers-Beckers, Chase Manor, Kingfield Road, Woking, GU22 9AA, tel. 01483 726 760, Britbeckers@yahoo.co.uk, www.vlamingeninsurrey.co.uk

Orde Van den Prince promotes the unity of the Dutch language and culture, stimulating cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands. Bimonthly meetings in London. Enquiries: Bruno Stalmans at brunostalmans@aol.com, tel. 01483 893522

- 5 Oct - 17 Nov Luc Tuymans' exhibition '*Allo!*' is the first event at the new David Zwirner Gallery in London. www.davidzwirner.com
- 5 - 9 Nov Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and her company Rosas perform '*En Atendant/ Cesena*' at Sadler's Wells. www.sadlerswells.com
- 5 - 17 Nov Belgian performance company 'Ontroerend Goed' brings their latest show '*All That is Wrong*', Drum Theatre, Plymouth, 7.45pm. www.theatreroyal.com
- 6 November ABS: First Tuesday Drinks with H.E. Mr Alphonse Berns, Ambassador of Luxembourg in London, in Club Quarters, Trafalgar Square, 6.30pm
- 8 - 10 Nov Screening of the Belgian film '*Mobile Home*' (François Pirot) at the '*Festival du Film Francophone*' in Edinburgh, <http://frenchfilmfestival.org.uk/FFF2012>
- 8 - 29 Nov Retrospective of the Belgian film producer Chantal Akerman at '*Festival du Film Francophone*' in Edinburgh, <http://frenchfilmfestival.org.uk/FFF2012>
- 11 November VIS: Autumn walk in Box Hill - 'Natural Play Trail' and afternoon tea at the Burford Bridge Hotel, start 1.30pm
- 15 November BLCC: Yearly 'Golden Bridge Awards', Club Quarters, Trafalgar Square, 7pm
- 18 November *The Nederlands Comité Surrey* invites VIS-families to the UK première of the new Dutch-Flemish St Nicholas film '*Sint & Diego - De Magische Bron van Myra*' at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford, 12 o'clock and 3pm. www.nederlandscomitesurrey.co.uk
- 20 November Belgian choreographer Jan Martens brings '*A small guide on how to treat your lifetime companion*', The Place, London, 6pm. www.theplace.org.uk
- 21 - 26 Nov Children's author Mario Ramos is invited by the Institut Français to participate in the South Ken Kids Festival, www.southkenkidsfestival.co.uk
- 21 November Lecture by Leo Bormans, author of the international bestseller *The World Book of Happiness*, Conway Hall, LSE. www.conwayhall.org.uk
- 22 November VIS: Ladies Night @ Kwan Thai, Oxshott, 7.30pm
- 23 - 25 Nov Belgian-Tunisian producer Jamel is at the Sallis Benney Theatre in Brighton for the presentation of his film '*Hymen National*'
- 24 November VIS: St Nicholas Party
- 25 November Concert by the Belgian ensemble 'Chinthurst Consort' at the St Augustine's Ab bey, Chilworth, Guildford, 3pm (free entry)
- 28 November Concert by the Congolese/Belgian artist Baloji with his Orchestre de la Katuba, Village Underground, 54 Holywell Lane, London EC2, <http://villageunderground.co.uk/events/baloji>
- 16 December VIS: Christmas drinks

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Website: http://countries.diplomatie.belgium.be/en/united_kingdom/

Reactions and contributions by outsiders are welcome
