

Together

magazine

WINTER 2022 #124

DINING
WHAT'S ON
EXHIBITIONS
CINEMA

FINANCE
Investing
Real Estate

Travel

FLORIDA
STOCKHOLM
TORONTO
LUXEMBOURG

FASHION

*Shopping
Beauty
Electric cars*

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Boost your immunity
Emotional intelligence
Making Music
Win-win mindset*

LILY
COLLINS

Interview



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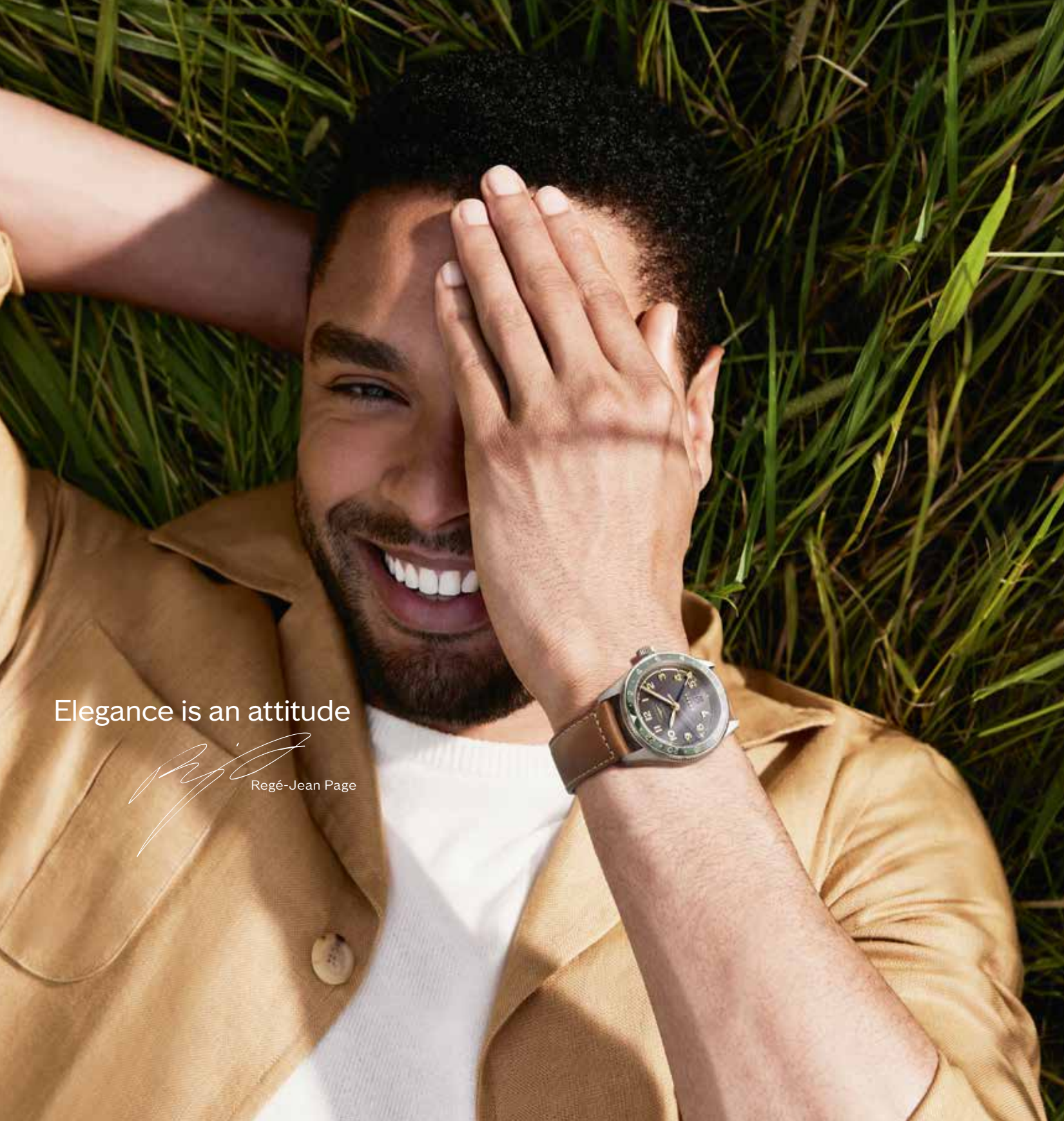
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Editor's LETTER

*Together:
Inspiring you
to reach your dreams...*



Lily Collins: "I've done a lot of self-reflection and a lot of work on myself"

Season's greetings!

Well done for making it to the end of 2022, another turbulent year! At around this time last year U.S. intelligence was raising the alarm over Russia's intentions towards Ukraine, the EU was incredulous. On 24 February the intelligence proved correct, the invasion was a harsh blow to Ukraine and to a world that was struggling to recover from the worst of the Covid pandemic. Thankfully, with international assistance, Ukrainians have shown an iron will that has sent Russian forces into retreat.

As Covid numbers edge up in Belgium, we urge our readers to get their booster jab and why not a flu jab. The body's immune system is amazing, but we could all do a bit more to help it out. New contributor, Liz Cassidy, offers some nutritional advice on what you can do to help your defences throughout the winter months. And for well-being throughout the year, check-out Aspria's top five fitness trends for 2023.

Sweden will hold the Presidency of the EU for the first six months of 2023. The rotating presidency puts the holder in the spotlight and is an opportunity to explore the cultural influences of each country. We have a Swedish thread running through this edition, from 'Swedish Ecstasy' at the Bozar, the Swedish duo 'First Aid Kit' and even a travel piece on Stockholm. Varsågod!

Catherine Feore
Editor

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Contents

WINTER 2022

- 10 Welcome letter
- 12 Contents & contributors
- 18 Together online
- 20 Starring in Belgium
- 22 Charity: Opération Thermos



Nutrition
Immune defence

32

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 27 **Fitness:** The 5 fitness trends for 2023
- 32 **Nutrition:** Immune defence
- 36 **Self-help:** Emotional intelligence
- 39 **Self-help:** Public speaking
- 42 **Self-help:** Making music
- 46 **Self-help:** Arnon Barnes
- 50 **Self-help:** Winter regeneration
- 57 **Self-help:** The elements of surprise
- 60 **Finance:** How to invest in 2023
- 67 **Real estate:** Inflation
- 75 **BeSuccessful:** Books
- 78 **Interview:** Pascale Hertay, BEPS International School
- 82 **Politics:** Are we witnessing the end of the 'strong man'?



Self-help
Making music

42



Fashion
Adagio

90

LIFESTYLE

- 85 **Luxury:** Electric cars
- 90 **Fashion:** Adagio
- 102 **Jewellery:** Esquisse jewels
- 104 **Fashion:** Maison Ullens
- 108 **Shopping:** Sézane Pop Up
- 111 **Shopping:** GINETTE NY
- 114 **Beauty:** Christmas beauty



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Contents

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Celebrity interview
Lily Collins

119

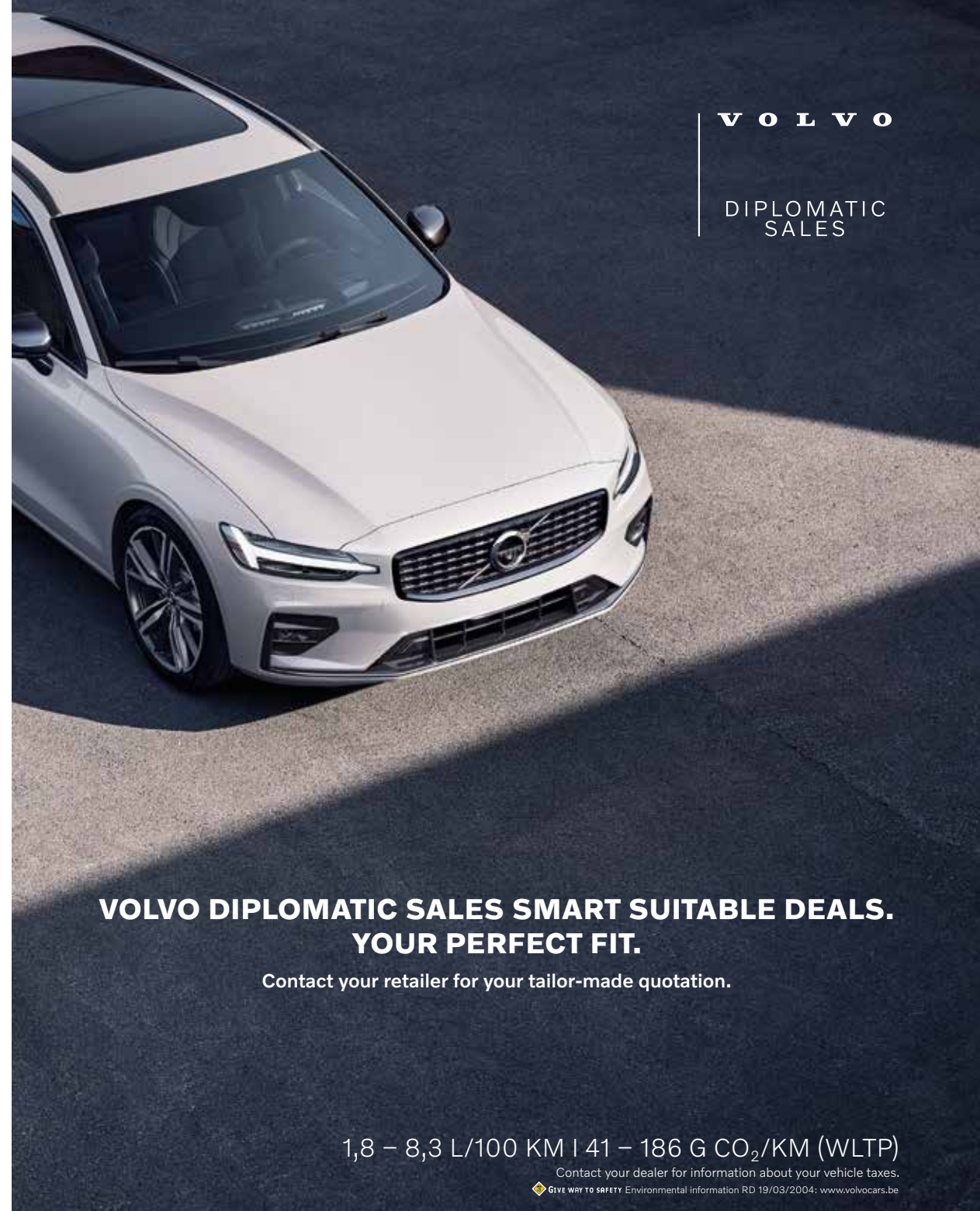


Travel International
Toronto

135

LIFE OF LEISURE

- 119 Celebrity interview:** Lily Collins
- 126 Travel international:** Fort Lauderdale
- 130 Travel international:** Stockholm
- 135 Travel international:** Toronto
- 138 Travel international:** Luxembourg
- 140 Wine:** Seasonal cheer
- 143 Dining:** Shanghai Kitchen
- 148 What's on Belgium**
- 158 What's on International**
- 160 Cinema releases**



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Improve your self awareness

Doug Gordon offers advice on carrying out a full self assessment to understand your strengths and weaknesses. Evaluating these more negative characteristics is the first step to addressing problems and then tackling them.

Lifestyle:

It's Electrifying!

Better for the environment and now with tax incentives that make them affordable, Together looks at the ever increasing choice in electric cars.

Life of leisure:

From Monet to Mitchell

Join us to find out what's on in Belgium and internationally, including a visit to the Monet-Mitchell exhibition at the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris.

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Moving forward
 together.

Starring in Belgium

We select three hot tickets for January and February



Eros Ramazzotti

Ramazzotti is celebrating 35 years of his career with his 'Battito Infinito' tour. With 14 studio albums, 70 million records sold and more than 2 billion views on YouTube, Ramazzotti may be one of Italy's most successful artists. Ramazzotti will celebrate his 60th birthday in October 2023, but he shows no signs of taking it easy while he's still filling stadiums across the world. Ramazzotti touches down in Brussels on 24 February.

www.forest-national.be



First Aid Kit

The Swedish duo returns in grand fashion with two new singles, 'Angels' and 'Out Of My Head', heralding a new album and, most importantly, a new tour! Klara and Johanna Söderberg will be on the AB stage on 8 February for a concert not to be missed. Inspiring folk with country/americana rhythms and heartwarming pop.

www.abconcerts.be



Rufus Wainwright

Canadian singer/songwriter Wainwright is no stranger to the classical world, apart from his 10 studio albums he has written two operas and set Shakespeare's sonnets to music for the theater. He has teamed up with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta, to perform a selection of orchestral arrangements of his own songs – both old and new – and selected covers, as well as classical pieces for string orchestra.

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Meet Opération Thermos

Céline Vivier, the president of Opération Thermos took some time from her very busy schedule to speak to *Together Magazine*



As the cold winter months settle in, many of us will think about the homeless people we sometimes come across on the street and how many people - even those with jobs - are struggling to get by with the higher cost of living. We wanted to highlight one organisation that is making a difference in Brussels and that's how we came across Opération Thermos.

What does Opération Thermos do?

Opération Thermos was established in 1987, initially it was aimed at helping homeless people, offering them some hot coffee and sandwiches. Over the years it has evolved to have a much larger scope, addressing poverty, and food poverty in general. Now,

we can offer a complete hot meal: soup, a hot dish, coffee or hot chocolate and dessert. We do this every evening during winter, we also have a service throughout the year. We try to use as much fresh food and vegetables as possible, we want to include healthy food to those who come to us.

“WE ENSURE A SMILE AND EYE CONTACT - SOMETHING WHICH IS OFTEN MISSING ON THE STREETS”

Since this summer we have been working with Frigo Solidaire to provide a place where people in a precarious situation can come and help themselves to food. It's situated at Hospice Pacheco, rue du Canal

12. It is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day.

We are also helping in the fight against food waste, we can recuperate unsold produce



from the morning market, bakeries and restaurants. Everybody is welcome at our distribution from 8:00 p.m. at Botanique metro station. We don't ask questions, we just offer people food. We keep it simple.

On your website it says that you also offer 'smiles, contacts and support'? Can you say something about your approach?

Besides food, we are also there to talk with the beneficiaries - if they feel like it - and to answer their questions.

Our many volunteers are present to welcome them warmly, offer a smile and eye contact - something which is often missing on the streets. We also from time to time, organise some more fun activities and some small gestures on Saint Nicolas and Christmas Day. Nothing big, but a gesture.

How has Operation Thermos developed over the years?

As I've said, we've come a long way from what we offered when Opération Thermos first started in 1987. We do think about what

we offer and try to make sure that it's both filling and nourishing - and as I said, delivered with warmth.

In February we opened a new kitchen in Molenbeek. It's more comfortable and provides more support to the people who come to us and can offer assistance from other agencies. It's also much more convenient for our distribution. Teams can come and cook there and it's a place where we're able to organise meetings.

“WE ARE ALSO HELPING IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FOOD WASTE”

Who are the main beneficiaries?

It used to be mostly homeless people.

Since Covid, in particular, we have more of the 'new poor' or people who have work. Increasingly it is people who have a job but who are struggling to afford food for themselves or for their family and children. There are more women and young people in their 30s to 40s than 10 years ago. Some migrants or people without papers to legally reside in Belgium come too these days, this is increasingly the case.

We can say that there is a crisis in the services that are there to support migrants. They have become a majority and it has become a problem because currently we only have the capacity to service 200 people per evening. That's already a lot for us, a lot to ask volunteers to do. It is the highest we've had in the entire lifetime of our organisation.

Do you think there will be more demand this year?

We had expected an increase of the number of beneficiaries, but not to this extent. It means that costs also increase and logistics get more complicated. We need more food, packaging and transportation. All of these things cost more than before and we need more volunteers to meet these expectations, but we also need security if we don't have enough for those who come for food.

On a personal note, how did you become involved in this project?

I got involved more than 12 years ago. I wanted to help those who found themselves in this very precarious situation – to do something concrete that would make a difference, and Opération Thermos needed volunteers.

I started in the field, then quickly became secretary, then vice-president (external affairs) and president during Covid.

It has certainly been a challenge, but then so are most things that are worth doing. Since I started we have created a new administrative structure which has helped us make big steps in the professionalisation of our activities and improving organisation. People who donate to charities like ours want to know that their money is put to good use and that it isn't wasted. We make sure that those resources get to the frontline.

How can people help?

We always need volunteers, especially for the station and teams willing to help for a



night by cooking the meal they've decided and distributing it. Sometimes schools, groups of friends, scouts and companies have rolled up their sleeves and got involved.

Donations are very welcome as we don't have subsidies or grants from the state. Food or other donations too. We sell goodies on the website: truffles, honey and soon our very own beer! Starting from December there will be various activities to mark our 35th anniversary (karaoke, theatre, gala dinner in 2024). And many other possibilities are under discussion.

Thank you, Céline!

If you want to volunteer or donate, please go to Opération Thermos's website: www.operationthermos.be 📍



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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Top tips to inspire you to ensure a healthy and prosperous 2023



The 5 fitness trends changing the way we train in 2023

Aspria experts share the top trends for the year ahead



It's that time of year when we think about our new year's resolutions and eye up the latest fitness trends as inspiration for our new healthy habits. And what's clear as we move into 2023 is that things haven't simply gone back to their pre-pandemic ways. Our expectations have changed and our habits with them.

This new approach is clear from the latest health and fitness trends we're reading about, as new priorities continue to embed themselves and evolve in the 'new normal' of health, fitness and wellbeing.

“WE’LL SEE AN EVEN GREATER SHIFT TOWARDS HOLISTIC WELLNESS AND WELLNESS COACHING”

1 - Fitness is dead. Long live wellness.

If we were to pick just one trend to talk about this year, it would be wellness – now a US\$1.5trn market globally according to McKinsey research, and growing by 5-10 per cent a year.

Identifying “multiple dimensions of wellness” – health, fitness, nutrition, appearance, sleep and mindfulness – McKinsey says wellness is now a top everyday

priority for 50 per cent of all consumers, while 81 per cent agree it's important.

We're delighted this thinking has become mainstream, because holistic wellbeing –



“ OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONALISATION WILL CONTINUE TO PROLIFERATE ”

physical, mental, emotional and spiritual – is what we're all about at Aspria. From spa to fitness, sport to nutrition, social to family time, we've always focused on how you feel, not simply how fit you are.

As wellness now hits the mainstream, the way people think about exercise will change for good. Where a few years ago it was all about HIIT workouts – high intensity interval training – in 2023 it's about balanced workout routines. This has its roots in the COVID-19 pandemic, when movement was the closest thing to self-care that many of us managed; when life felt hard, we found ourselves turning to gentler forms of exercise like stretching, breathing, mindfulness, meditation and mind-body workouts – yoga, pilates, t'ai chi.

And now these habits have stuck. That isn't to say a boxing or HIIT workout is off the cards; we all need cardio exercise and sometimes there's nothing quite like it for stress relief. But in 2023, the gym isn't a place where we always have to go hard, then harder still.

As this understanding continues to embed itself, we'll see an even greater shift towards holistic wellness and wellness coaching.

2 – Mental health matters

The reasons why we exercise are changing, too, and once again our new habits have their roots in the pandemic – specifically, the 25 per cent increase in anxiety and depression it triggered around the world. Set against this, a huge body of evidence that shows how physical activity can help mental health. There has been a widespread change in our long-term understanding of what exercise is for. Previously centred on weight loss and physical fitness, for many people exercise is now about mental health and happiness. Cue the continued growth of apps such as Calm and Headspace, the popularity of meditation classes on health club timetables – Aspria's included – and the continued high demand for the fun social interaction of group fitness classes generally.

This is one trend that's set to dramatically shape the agenda in 2023.

3 – Time to get personal

Across every facet of our lives, we now expect personalisation: think Netflix, Amazon and all those other businesses that remember you and your preferences on every visit.

Fitness is no different, and the good news is that – courtesy of the fitness apps, smartphones, smart watches and other wearable technology we carry around with us 24/7 – there's plenty of data to draw on. Whether we're in the gym, enjoying a home workout or taking part in outdoor activities, the devices we carry are now able to track a dizzying array of markers and measures.

At Aspria, we've taken it a step further still with our AspriaPro health check: a 360° wellbeing assessment that forms the basis of personalised, health-optimising recom-



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Fitness

mentations for our members. Assessments are conducted and monitored by our in-house experts, meaning members receive guidance and insight throughout, while programmes are able to tap in to an unparalleled range of wellbeing services in our clubs.

As we move into 2023, the opportunities for personalisation will continue to proliferate. Indeed, it's no longer futuristic to expect our individual wellness needs to be analysed round the clock, with tailored daily routines prescribed accordingly.

4 – Fitness is functional

The only one of our five fitness trends that hasn't really changed over the last few years is the continued dominance of functional training. That is, highly effective workouts that use small tools, free weights and bodyweight training to move and strengthen our bodies for everyday life.

Every Aspria gym has a huge functional training floor, and the fun and variety of these workouts ensure they're as popular as they've ever been for personal training, independent exercise and strength and conditioning classes alike.

But of course, the fact that the smaller, more affordable pieces of fitness equipment – the ones we all now have in our living rooms and home gyms since the pandemic – are all you really need for a great functional training session adds further fuel to this trend.

The long and short of it: wherever you are in 2023, functional training is a great, go-to form of exercise.

5 – A flexible future

It's that element of 'wherever you are' that brings us to our final fitness trend for 2023



– one that's backed up by Accenture research which found that brands are now expected to operate "in the digital world, the physical world, and through a blend of the two".

Put simply, this trend is about flexibility and convenience – a hybrid approach to fitness in which it's equally possible to get a great workout at home or in the gym.

This isn't about home workouts replacing fitness facilities. It's about empowering you,

the exerciser, with options that allow you to squeeze in a workout whatever else is going on in your life or your work on any given day. It's why Aspria doesn't only offer world-class wellness facilities, but also on-demand video content and workout inspiration to support our members beyond our four walls.

Our hope and belief for 2023? That this mixing and matching will lead to even more workouts being completed, driving improved health and wellbeing for everyone.

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Be kind to your immunity system throughout the winter chill

Together is delighted to introduce **Liz Cassidy**, Liz is a registered therapist and sports nutritionist. She offers personalized advice but has agreed to offer our readers some more general advice on how to bolster our immune system



Many factors can influence your immune system, like exercise, sleep, nutrition and managing stress. We should prepare for the cold season by maximising resilience against infections. In this edition we review some eating and drinking basics and key supplements to support your defences.

First things first – it's all about you!

We're not advocating narcissism. The tiny deviations in our genetic code can make some people more susceptible to communicable diseases, like the flu, common cold, or stomach bugs. The good news is that with quality rest, exercise and nutrition, avoiding overloads of stress and harmful exposures



help you to build a fighting-fit immune system.

An immune system's work is never done

If your immune system was an industry, it would be up there with energy-intensive sectors like steel and manufacturing. It's always slaving away, synthesising immune molecules like antibodies, T cells, B cells and a host of components to stave off or destroy invaders. Those can be pathogens like bacteria, viruses or other micro-organisms threatening your wellness. When you get ill, the immune system works harder. So it needs to be fed. Depriving yourself of enough energy is a no-go for recovery.

“MANY FACTORS CAN INFLUENCE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM”

ver, it's worth keeping good food in close supply, think of colourful fruit and veg, nuts, seeds and varied plant or animal protein. Those will give you the nutrient density you need. If the daily shop is too much, make sure you have some frozen veg in the freezer. Their nutritional composition doesn't diverge much from the fresh versions.

Your immune system will thank you for continuing to provide it with the energy and nutrients it needs and you'll thank yourself for protecting your immune system.

Fuel me up, little darling!

Your immune maintenance is part of your body's basic housekeeping. For moderate activity, women and men require over 2000 and 2500 calories respectively. We apportion energy according to the challenges we face. In winter, we need more energy to maintain temperature. A fired up immune response is fuel hungry. Don't struggle through work when you feel unwell, your

Nutrition

body needs that energy. You can promise yourself that you'll be even more productive when you return after a break to recover.

Our hypothalamus regulates energy balance. It helps the immune system get enough energy to function. Faced with competing demands and low energy availability, it may de-prioritise effective immune function. In effect you are depriving the immune system of what it needs to do its job.

Pump up the fluid volume

Adequate hydration underpins all aspects of health, including our physiological defences. Mild dehydration can increase fatigue and impair your cognition, mood and performance. Fluids supply mucous membranes in airways with plentiful moisture to carry out their work and decrease irritation. Mucous production is crucial to expelling unwanted invaders from our airways..

Eight glasses of water a day is a good rule

“ YOUR IMMUNE MAINTENANCE IS PART OF YOUR BODY’S BASIC HOUSEKEEPING ”

of thumb, though not a scientific maxim. Try to avoid coffee and alcohol which can dehydrate.

Gimme those vitamins!

Is there a snazzy vitamin to keep illness away? There's no quick fix. Our immune system is complex. It needs multiple micro-nutrients working in synergy, like vitamins A, D, C, E, B6, B12, and folate, and minerals zinc, iron, copper and selenium. Let's focus on the best-studied and evidenced, vitamin D, C and multi-nutrients.

Studies suggest vitamin D can improve resistance to nasal viruses or to bacteria like *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, behind respiratory disease. On viral or bacterial challenge, vitamin D stimulates our internal antimicrobial machinery and free radical activity, think of them as the first line of artillery against the invaders. Multiple studies also point to anti-inflammatory effects.

We synthesize most of our vitamin D after UV-b exposure. We gain a little from mainly animal products like oily fish, egg yolks, liver or Shiitake mushrooms, but 80% of us are below the recommended intake. Daily spring and summer sunshine, 15 minutes sunscreen-free, should be your go-to. Otherwise, expect low vitamin D status in winter. You might then need a supplement. A daily 400 international units is recommended across many countries. But with your unique genetics at play, get a nutritionist to test you and safely adjust that dose so your level stays optimal.

Go big on vitamin C

Vitamin C is well-studied for antimicrobial properties to fight infection. Scientists noticed it increased T cell activity in older people. These help adaptation to invaders. Antibodies went up too. Other studies suggest vitamin C may help lower pneumonia incidence. These studies used doses of around 500 mg daily, 10-12 times higher than the recommendation.

Opt for 5 to 7 portions of different coloured fruit and veg daily, this is the best way to ensure you get the variety of vitamins and minerals that you need.

A multi-nutrient supplement might help when your system is low.

In short: Keeping your immune responses robust before you are in close contact with colleagues or family will help your resist infections. Prevention is indeed better than cure! So, do everything you can to make sure your system is ready for any 'nasties' out there.

If you would like further personalized advice contact Liz Cassidy (MSc, PGDip, DipC-NELM). emeraldaspire@outlook.com



Together recommends some winter drinks to help you boost your health over winter.

Taking a tisane in the afternoon? Why not add a sprig of rosemary or thyme and a little organic honey.

Should you get a cold, our rescue drink that delivers immediate results, is a ginger, lemon and honey concoction. Mix half a squeezed lemon, some freshly grated ginger and a tablespoon of honey into a large glass, then add hot water.

Make a hot chocolate and add a half teaspoon of powdered turmeric. Turmeric is a powerful antioxidant – and it will also make your drink taste creamier. Alternatively, adding some grated nutmeg or cinnamon to hot chocolate can also improve your health and give a flavour kick.

When you're really under the weather you may not feel much like eating. If you haven't got one, think about buying a juicer. Try carrot (3), apple (2), a stick of celery and a thumbnail of ginger, feel free to add any plant-based protein supplement to add to the nutritional kick. ❶



Charge yourself up for success in life and business!

Five times award-winning coach, author and professional speaker **Doug Gordon** suggests taking a look inward to help us deliver results



Having interviewed more than 300 successful New York Times bestsellers, film stars, sport stars and multinational CEOs to understand what makes people successful in life, my conclusion is that it comes down to an inner self confidence or self-love. Since love is an emotion, if you can improve your emotional intelligence, you will improve your chances of success in life, work and in relationships.

You might ask what is the definition of emotional intelligence? Maybe it's easier to understand by considering what the overall

heading includes: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, conscious communication and being able to motivate yourself and people around you. Emotional intelligence shapes how you deal with all situations, especially stressful ones.

Improving awareness is one of the most important factors. Self-awareness, for example, is almost like doing a SWOT analysis of yourself in terms of understanding your strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are something we can often pick up on but sometimes we do not see our own

“ THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK ”

weaknesses such as ego or not actively listening, this can trigger harmful reactions that can damage relationships both in business and in our personal lives. It's worth evaluating these more negative characteristics, because if we can't see the problem, we can't tackle it.

This links into business and understanding team awareness and knowing that there are lots of different characters with different personalities and ways of perceiving things. It's useful to add to this organisational awareness and the understanding that different departments within a firm will have different agendas. It can also be applied to client awareness, in terms of understanding what the client wants and matching your response to the client's needs.

The important thing is that you have awareness to create WIN-WIN interactions in life. Think before you speak, put yourself in the other person's shoes and understand their perspective by asking the right questions rather than just bulldozing your own opinions. This is where empathy comes in. We are all a product of our parents, our teachers and our past experiences so we all see things and communicate in different ways. Understand other people's ways of understanding and thinking and you will improve your relationships very quickly. With better teamwork and leadership skills you will get more done in less time with less stress.

Imprint and seed the subconscious brain with positive language voicing for example “I am grateful for sunshine and blue sky” rather than “I hope it doesn't rain today.” To paraphrase Lao Tzu your thoughts lead to



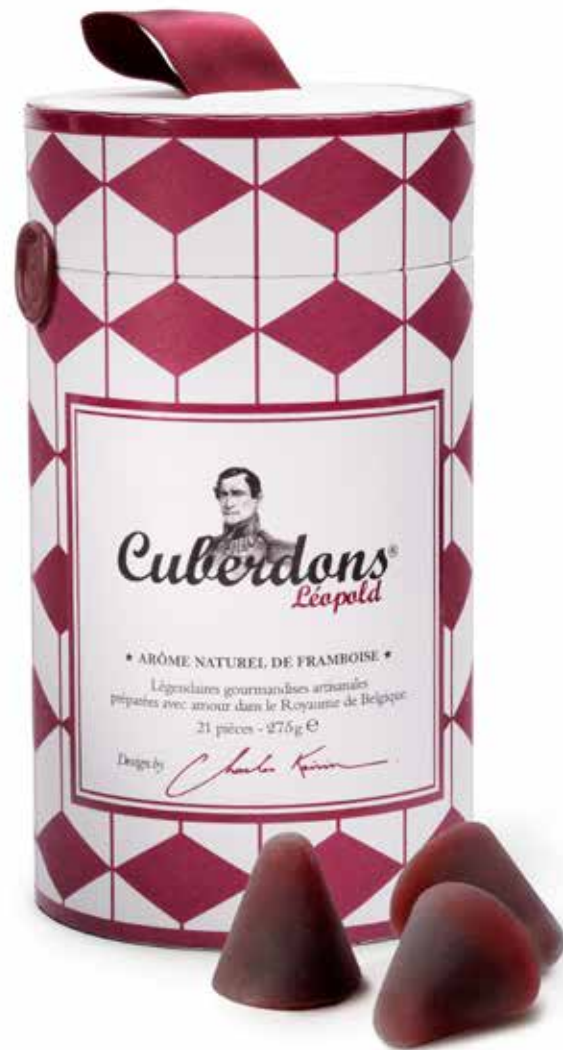
words, words lead to actions, actions lead to habits and habits lead to destiny, so start with a positive thought and you will end with a positive destiny.

Finally, improve the way you motivate yourself, every day turn up as your best self. I always say motivation comes from the word motive, which is a reason, which is outside of you. Whereas inspiration comes from the words “In Spirit” which comes from inside of you and a place of love. So if you can find what you truly love doing every day you will love what you do, love the people around you and love the people you serve if in business. LOVE in my opinion is also an acronym for LOTS OF VIBRANT ENERGY. If you optimise your energy you are going to optimise your performance in life, in work and in your relationships.

Doug Gordon, is a 5X award winning speaker, coach, trainer, radio presenter and author of the upcoming book out later this month called “Charge yourself up for success – Energizing your life, work and relationships” the book has testimonials from 3 NY TIMES bestsellers, a Hollywood Star Wars Actress and many more. Doug works with some of the top C-level execs in the world, with film stars, sports stars and is rated as one of the top inspirational speakers in the world. ①

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Personal Empowerment Promise for 2023: Transform your communications

Together is introducing our readers to a Public Speaking Master Class from a pro, **Matthew Cossolotto**. Effective communicators are more effective leaders, so join us on this journey!



Matthew's career as a communications expert spans both sides of the Atlantic, from NATO Headquarters in Brussels to the Speaker's Office in the U.S. House of Representatives. Here he will share some of his lessons learnt along the way and included in his book, "The Joy of Public Speaking":

If you're planning set certain goals or resolutions for 2023, I have two suggestions:

1) Turn a few of your New Year's Resolutions into heartfelt promises. A promise is much more powerful. It's like a goal on steroids.

2) Consider making a promise to improve your public speaking skills in 2023 by participating in *Together Magazine's* public speaking master class.

Let's Talk About Why

Why is it important to improve your ability to speak with confidence to audiences of all sizes, both in person and virtually? There are three overlapping reasons: Career Advancement, Leadership Enhancement, and Personal Empowerment.

Advance Your Career. Speaking effective-



“ SPEAKING EFFECTIVENESS IS CLOSELY LINKED TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT ”

ness is closely linked to career advancement. It's fairly simple. A confident, commanding presence on the podium will help you advance your career in just about any field.

Have no fear though because the list of well-known people who have suffered from stage fright is long and sometimes surprising, from Warren Buffet to Barbara Streisand.

Banish the fear and boost your career!

Enhance Your Leadership Skills. Closely linked to career success, effective speaking is also a widely recognized leadership imperative. Leaders speak and followers listen. There's nothing wrong with being a follower, all leaders need them. But if you aspire to a leadership role, you will need to sharpen up your speaking skills.

Bear in mind that leaders are not always great orators at the outset. In a May 20, 2007, New York Times Magazine interview, former Vice President Al Gore commented on the importance of presentation skills. Addressing his unsuccessful (despite winning the popular vote by 500,000 votes) presidential campaign in 2000, Gore said that if he had the “presentation skills” he has since learnt, “I think I'd be in my second term as president.” When it comes to leadership, the message here is that presentation skills matter – big time!

Speak your way to the peak!

The two benefits above are widely appreciated and universally acknowledged. But the third, to empower yourself, often goes unnoticed, so I want to delve into this benefit in detail. It's actually one of the main reasons I wrote *The Joy of Public Speaking* and why I conduct PodiumPower! workshops and provide one-on-one speech coaching.

Some perspective is in order. I've always been drawn to what President Kennedy used to refer to as the Greek definition of happiness. He was once asked at a press conference whether he enjoyed being president. Kennedy said he did and he cited the Greek definition of happiness: “The full use of your powers along lines of excellence.” Think about that. The full use of your powers.

That notion has stuck with me over the years. I believe speaking to audiences – with confidence, comfort and even joy – is an important skill to develop because it helps us achieve “the full use” of our powers – which is to say our full potential.

The power of speech is a critical human ability, we fall short of making full use of our powers as human beings if we don't use it to the full. Failing to find our voice and tell our stories ultimately diminishes our level of personal happiness.

My books and my related programs are dedicated to helping others – millions of others – reach their peak potential both on and off the podium. That means tapping into the joy of speaking. Not merely because it's a career booster or a leadership skill – important as those reasons are – but also because it's a personal empowerment tool.

When we feel we are reaching our full potential, there is a corresponding feeling of fulfillment and happiness. The joy of speaking, therefore, is about the joy of reaching your full potential as a person.

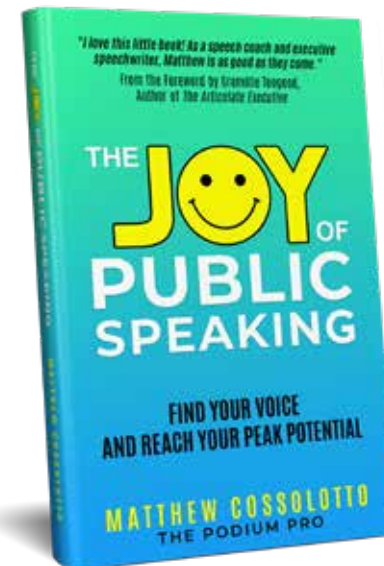
Personal Empowerment and Positive Change

Given the state of the world, I'd say it's long past time for a new wave of speakers and


leaders, for new voices to emerge from their self-imposed silence, to speak up and be heard. I hope that I can embolden and empower more people to find their voices, speak and stand up, reach their peak potential on the podium and in life more generally, and in the process make a positive difference in the world.

The next article in this public speaking master class delves more deeply into the important question: Why is it so critical to turn stage fright into stage delight? Subsequent articles in the series will provide you with practical, how-to steps for finding your voice and reaching your peak potential, on and off the podium. Thank you in advance for being part of this exciting personal empowerment journey.

“ FAILING TO FIND OUR VOICE AND TELL OUR STORIES ULTIMATELY DIMINISHES OUR LEVEL OF PERSONAL HAPPINESS ”



About the Author

A former NATO speechwriter, Matthew Cossolotto is the author of *The Joy of Public Speaking* (available on Amazon.com) and the forthcoming *Embrace Your Promise Power* with a foreword by Jack Canfield, co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series. Matthew provides coaching and conducts public speaking workshops and other Personal Empowerment Programs (PEP Talks) in Brussels and beyond. www.ThePodiumPro.com. 

Could this be the year for making music?

Ever wanted to learn to sing or play the piano? So many of us do, but it's often difficult to find the right teacher. *Together* met with **Steffi Pacson**, an artist who also has a passion for coaching, to learn a bit about her and her made-to-measure approach to music coaching.



Photo © Christian.Kw.

Together : What is your background?

Steffi : So, I was born in Manila, the Philippines. When I was eight years old we moved to Queens, New York. We eventually moved to the east end of Long Island, New York. My passion for music started when I was 15 years old when I was asked to sing a country song for a musical in my high school. It was surprising to everyone - even to me - that I could sing.

I was asked to be part of more theater shows and concerts at school and my passion for music started to blossom. During the learning process, I became very aware of the fact that I did not want to simply be a singer, but I wanted to be as independent as I possibly could be as an artist. I wanted to learn an instrument and I chose the piano. At 17 years old, I took the courage to ask a piano teacher to start teaching me Chopin

and Erik Satie to prepare for a university audition as a music performance major.

After one year, I was able to learn Chopin Nocturne's Opus 9 No. 1 in B flat minor and Erik Satie's Gymnopédie No. 1. I absolutely do not know how I did it, because looking back now, after all these years, these were incredibly hard pieces. But I think by force of drive, passion, and inspiration, I was able to perform and memorize the pieces. I passed the audition and was accepted into Adelphi University's music program as a music performance major in classical piano.

During the next 4 bachelor years, I put my absolute best into learning all the piano techniques that I could. In my journey, I had to become aware of my learning styles and deal with a lot of self-doubt and anxieties that come with learning an instrument. At the end of the day, it is like learning about yourself, because learning and playing an instrument is a mode of self-expression and self-expression is exercised through the exploration of oneself and finding a way to put words or performance to that.

During my university years, I started to learn how to write songs through membership and regular attendance at songwriting workshops held by the New York Songwriter Circle and the Nashville Songwriters Association International.

I graduated *magna cum laude* with the highest distinction from Adelphi University as a music performance major with a concentration on piano. Shortly after, I attended SAE, School of Audio Engineering in New York City.

After my studies, I was able to channel all my experience and studies to perform in

concerts in New York, Luxembourg, London and Belgium.

What brought you to Brussels, other than beer and chocolate?

I came to Brussels for a musical collaboration, called SEY. We were playing concerts around Belgium. We were the first act to open the Nivelles Summer Festival 2018. After we disbanded, I decided to stay in Belgium because I loved the tight-knit musical community and the support that artists receive. I also love the open-mindedness of European culture and how Brussels is a city that connects people from so many different backgrounds.

What do you do now?

So, I am a music artist entrepreneur. I am also a piano coach, vocal coach, and artist coach. Due to my well-rounded experience as a pianist, performer, singer, songwriter, and recording engineer, I am able to understand music from all angles. And due to my intense immersion in these sectors, I am able to understand the psychological perspective in stepping into these roles. As a coach, I am able to communicate with my students on a human level the process of understanding oneself through learning an instrument through a structured way of learning.

You have a different teaching approach to most, how does it work?

My motto is this: «*Bring out your potential, express your unique voice, and cultivate a love for your instrument through holistic and goal-oriented coaching*»

I plan my courses in 10 sessions with an end goal in mind. The lessons are geared towards achieving this goal. Transparency is important to me, so I create and share a 10-session plan of action with my students.

“ MY PASSION FOR MUSIC STARTED WHEN I WAS 15 YEARS OLD ”



Photo © Christian.Kw.

The plan of action is carefully planned, keeping in mind my students' life outside of our sessions. The action plan is subject to change and is regularly updated depending on the student's progress.

The whole idea of this concept is to have a structured approach to learning but at the same keeping in mind the human element of unexpected life events. In addition, seeing physical proof of progress (multiple versions of the 10 plan action plan) helps in building confidence in oneself.

What sort of level of student do you work with, is it mostly children or adults?

My courses are perfect for students of all ages. For kids, I am able to introduce them to a structured progress plan which is also a good model for them to follow outside of our music courses. This sets them up for good habits to follow through in their adolescence and eventually adult years. Through my holistic and goal-oriented approach, kids build confidence in themselves through progress which they see through their lesson plan. In addition, we have fun because it brings me joy to see them light up when they conquer a passage or a certain piece that they want to play.

Adults also enjoy my lessons because it is well-structured and goal-oriented. Due to my attentive, empathetic, and detail-oriented nature, they feel supported

“ MY COURSES ARE PERFECT FOR STUDENTS OF ALL AGES: KIDS, ADULTS AND SEMI-PROS ”

“ PLAYING AN INSTRUMENT IS A MODE OF SELF-EXPRESSION AND REQUIRES AN EXPLORATION OF ONESELF ”

through their musical progress and trust me in being there to guide them in their understanding of themselves through learning their instrument, both vocal and piano. I have both beginner and intermediate-level students.

Semi-pro artists also trust me because they know that I understand the global overview of the artistic process. I am able to support them from every angle, whether that is on a technical level or a human level.

My teaching style is empathetic and compassionate but at the same time well structured. I encourage all my students to be present and be aware of themselves in their learning progress. This awareness also encourages steady results and confidence.

I am proud of my students and their progress. And it brings me joy to help them as pianists, vocalists, and artists. But above all, I feel honored to witness them blossom as individuals.

Do you yourself perform? And do you have any concerts planned?

As a music artist entrepreneur, yes I have concerts planned till the end of 2022. I have concerts in *Hard Rock Cafe* and *Scotts Bar* in Brussels. You can find all the info on my website: steffipacson.com ❶

The win-win mindset

Did you know that almost everything you do in life involves a negotiation? **Arnon Barnes** guides us through how to achieve success with good negotiation skills



Think about this: Everything you want right now. The money you want. The success you want. The house you desire. Pretty much everything you want in life right now is owned by somebody else. Which means that you're going to have to go out and negotiate your way to owning, having or experiencing that. It is very important to understand that negotiations don't just happen, stop or start in business.

My son sometimes wakes up in the morning and says to me at 7 a.m.: 'I want some ice

cream.' At that instant he and I are in a negotiation, right. Have you ever negotiated with a kid at 7 a.m in the morning and explained to him that there's no ice cream? We all know how that negotiation goes. The best negotiators on planet Earth are children!"

Let's talk about some key elements. When you want to be a better negotiator in your business you need to understand, grow and master certain skills.

There's a great book that I read a couple of

“ NEGOTIATIONS DON'T JUST HAPPEN, STOP OR START IN BUSINESS ”

years ago. Basically, the book talks about BATNA. BATNA stands for the Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement. So, what does that mean? At what point in your negotiation do you think to yourself and say: 'That's it I'm done. I cannot give you any more or I cannot do better than this offer, this proposal. The first key thing you need to have clarity on before you walk into any negotiation is your BATNA.

What is your bottom line?

What is the point that signals to you that you're not willing to negotiate any further?

As you know, I do a lot of Mergers and Acquisitions. I bought a lot of companies and helped a lot of my clients to negotiate the buying of companies to expand their businesses. I've worked with a lot of amazing entrepreneurs and business owners from all over the world. And before we negotiate a deal I will always ask my clients: What is our BATNA? Once we understand that we're very empowered and then I know that we can negotiate and make a great deal.

Let me tell it to you in a story about the second thing that is very powerful in a negotiation. When I'm buying a company and I'm sitting with the principal, the seller of the business, I always tell them there has to be four wins. The first win is for the seller. The seller has to win. The second win is for the team, right? When you're buying a company there's an existing team. That team has to win, right? The third win is for the existing

customers of that business. They have to win as well. The fact that I'm doing a deal and that I'm buying the company has to be in some shape or form a win for the clients. Maybe I can offer them better services, more insights, more tools, more strategy, more XYZ. Whatever it is the seller has to win. The team has to win and the clients have to win. And then obviously me, the buyer, has to win.

Win-Win-Win-Win

I want to put such a spotlight on that mindset because a lot of people when they go into a negotiation will feel like it's me against you. They come in with the 'I-have-to-beat-you' mentality and that's the wrong approach. I'm telling you right now, there is nothing more powerful than doing a fair deal. Plus, if you're a person like me, who's buying companies for myself and my clients: I don't want to get known as the person that squeezes the other party until there's nothing left. So, I'm big on doing Fair Deals, but most importantly on creating a win-win-win-win scenario. It has to be fair.

“ NEVER BURN ANY BRIDGES ”





Nobody ever wants to leave the negotiation table feeling that they got screwed. That's never a good place. Now, of course, when I negotiate on behalf of my clients I want it to be in our favour. That's very important. We want to win and at the same time we have got to make sure that the other party also wins in some way, shape or form. Sometimes the win is a financial win. Sometimes the win is mental, emotional or spiritual. There are many ways to create wins. Just make sure the other side also feel like they're winning as well.

Number one is: Know your BATNA, your best alternative to a negotiated agreement. Number two is: Create a win-win situation. The third thing which is very important is you've got to always act out of integrity and honesty. Whether you come to a deal or you don't agree in the end make sure you come

as a friend and leave as a friend. Oftentimes when people don't manage to agree on a deal they get upset or frustrated and they leave with a bitter taste in their mouth. And maybe even worse they leave the other party feeling horrible.

Now guess what? The world is a small place. You might meet this person another time on another day in a different situation. If you behave badly and leave a negotiation because you did not get what you wanted and you leave that other person feeling bad, then guess what that person will remember? People will not always remember what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel.

Ultimately when I buy companies even if the deal doesn't happen because we can't agree on the price or on the terms, I always prefer to leave the negotiation with doors always open. I will tell them that if they ever change their mind, please contact me because I'd love to do some business together. NEVER burn your bridges. Stay in your power and remember to be kind. The world needs more kindness now, more than ever before. Go out and help people do good business.

Want to meet and work with Arnon Barnes live? Join one of his next upcoming offline or online events. For more information on the events or coaching, contact his office via info@arnon-barnes.com or check out his website www.arnon-barnes.com. To watch his interviews and podcast appearances subscribe to

his Instagram and YouTube Channel. ①

**“ THE OTHER PARTY
ALSO NEEDS TO WIN
IN SOME WAY,
SHAPE OR FORM ”**



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Winter regeneration

Sarbani Sen offers alternative solutions to getting through the winter months



In these dark days of winter and another couple of months of cold and rain ahead, our minds slowly drift down the drain of depression if we don't pay attention to it. How do Nordic people survive these long months? How do they keep boosting their creativity and joy when there is no light? What do we need when we're working long hours and exhausting our bodies and minds - and may I say our souls too? I've been giving it a long thought and started exploring the concept of 'regeneration.'

What is regeneration?

In biology, regeneration is the process of

renewal, restoration and growth that makes genomes, cells, organisms and ecosystems resilient to natural fluctuations or events that cause disturbance or damage.

In the Christian perspective, regeneration is rebirth. The new birth is a spiritual, holy and heavenly birth that results in our being made alive spiritually. This happens when we place our faith in Christ.

What I actually mean with regeneration is to reset the body and mind to zero, to default, come back to the original state of freshness we had before attempting heavy tasks for

long hours - usually sitting inside. To me this is vital in order to avoid burnout and heavy physical injuries such as a stiff back, throw your back out, painful neck or other severe physical damage which is caused solely by stress and overworking. At the end of the day we are a funny bunch of workaholics out there and most of us are not so connected to our bodies so we don't read the signals of alarm.

When do I need to regenerate?

What are the symptoms that show me that I need a break? When I start having negative thoughts, when I hear myself criticizing others or myself, when it gets tough to do simple things I usually do easily, when I can no longer sit up straight and my body seems to sink into the desk. Doctors all agree that negativity is linked to fatigue or bad food. It is kind of chemical.

So, what to do in those moments?

There are various paths to self-empowerment and improving our physical and mental state. Here are my top five tips for surviving winter:

1. Stuff yourself with oxygen

Embrace the Swedish saying «There is no bad weather, there is only bad clothing.» With a dose of optimism, two layers of long underwear, a heavy parka and one of those hats with ear flaps, no snowstorm can stop you from enjoying the day. So, get out the door, go for a run, breath in nature, open your arms wide open and get that vital dose of fresh air. Oxygen regenerate cells, suppling them with energy. Oxygen deprivation effects can be severe - pollution and poor indoor air the chief suspects.

2. Melt into the 'cosiness'

Hygge is not just a name for an Ikea sofa, it is also part of the Nordic lifestyle and means 'cosiness.' Simply put, it is the warm

and fuzzy feeling you experience when you enjoy something like an intimate dinner with friends, sipping a glass of wine, in front of a crackling fireplace, cuddling on the couch or taking an aromatherapy bath. It can also be watching the raindrops trickle down the windowpane as you ride the bus. Maybe we can call it mindfulness at its best?

Mindful cosiness of the now. How wonderful it is to fill your mind with sweetness tenderness and warmth. An 8-minute session of Mindfulness meditation regenerates the mind powerfully. Try heartfelt meditation with transmission which has a cleansing effect on the mind too.

May I add that while you're in the sofa you might as well indulge in some hugging and caressing? Caresses are vital for the mood too. It is often associated with sexual intercourse which is a pity in a way because the body ends up not getting much of the much-needed caresses.

“ THIS IS VITAL IN ORDER TO AVOID BURNOUT ”

3. The vital break

While coffee has its benefits on the brain's functions, and has a proven ability to enhance mood, it is more about the break than the coffee. Feeling chilly at your desk? Time for a coffee break. You can do this as often as needed, especially in winter, but I would suggest you only have one coffee a day and sip instead on some fruits or flowers the rest of the day to avoid the horrible mouth smell, the stomach upset and the artificial energy kick you get that is usually followed by a coming down.

Another way to take a soothing break is music. We often forget or are too lazy to choose something we really like, that really suits us and end up listening to soup radio mixes. Take the time to choose something really deeply comforting for a change. Music has



amazing effects on the brain and helps reorganize our cells into more harmonious combinations. If possible, play it loud.

4. Cardio, water and heat

If you dedicate yourself to points two and three, you may eventually want to hit the gym or the pool, which is of course amazing for mood. Sports and cardio effort in general (it could be swimming or dancing!) is the perfect mood enhancer as it lifts your body adrenaline and endorphin levels. Go take a quintessential Nordic sauna or the oriental Hammam steam bath. The heat will ease your muscles and relax the body after a good workout. And if you choose to do it with some friends, it's a nice moment to talk, unwind, exchange feelings in an intimate

cocoon. Bikram Yoga is a good option too (allying heat and effort, personally I love it) but I would only advise it to advanced yoga or dance students.

Check out YogaRoom (Uccle and Ixelles) for a smooth hot yoga experience.

No need to describe the benefits of water. It's great for your lungs because when your face is under water, oxygen is at a premium so your body adapts to use oxygen more efficiently, increasing your endurance capacity. Being submerged in water also dulls the amount of sensory information that bombards your body, helping to bring on feelings of calm. Researchers found that regular flotation tank sessions are effective at relieving symptoms in patients suffering from conditions related to chronic stress, like soaking in a hot bathtub with some essential oils and some relaxing music. Check out thegreatboost.com

5. Good food and good thoughts

While in the winter we usually indulge in heavy food and greasy sauces, I realized I felt worse after those wintry dinners. I found out that I felt best after my morning juice. I use an extractor and have a glass of carrots-orange- apple-celery and some ginger if I feel a flu is coming on. I can feel my cells expanding with joy! But then again, that's me and by body. You need to find what gives you more benefits in the long run. Veggie lunches or dinners full of greens, lentils, sesame or almond pasta (my indulgence) and grains. Although my kids still enjoy a heavy meaty saucy dinner, they started observing how their food affects their moods and their physical state, and reduced the sugar in the morning and I am very happy about that.

Today, choose to put yourself into a peak state, daily, in harmony with your deep feeling and needs. ❶



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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Couples

The elements of surprise



Whether you say it with flowers, rent a plane to write it in the sky or simply just do something sweet, you can't go far wrong with a nice surprise. **Kimberley Lovato** investigates

We are all so busy with life, it's often hard to remember to tell, and more importantly to show, our husbands, wives, and lovers just how much they mean to us. It wasn't always that way. Remember the beginning? It was easy then. Romantic dates, love notes scrolled in the steamed up bathroom mirror; generous courtesies performed without threat of breakup or bodily harm. Ah, those were the days.

Lust then love

Slowly, life, career and kids turned that nubile infatuation phase into something fuelled by respect, love, and a need for more sleep. I don't mean this negatively. While I warmly recall those lustful days of yore, I also love being with someone who really knows me,

and loves me exactly that way. Still, there's no harm in injecting a little spice into the relationship now and again, and the element of surprise itself can be a strong aphrodisiac. I polled some friends – married and single, men and women – and asked them about surprises in their relationships, what stuck with them the most, and why. The results were surprisingly non-sexual. I expected stories of French maid costumes or handcuffs and leather chaps (I have some kinky friends), but in my unofficial poll what 95% of people cited were simple and considerate gestures like flowers for no reason, taking charge of dinner, or even vacuuming the house. Here are a few other notable mentions. Names have been changed to protect the innocent, and guilty.

Couples

Points of view

'C' from Brussels said: "While out for dinner with a girlfriend, my boyfriend sent me a text message that said, 'I miss you and love you and want you to have fun with your friend tonight.' It made me smile and actually made me want to be home with him instead. Perhaps this was his intention all along!"

'F' from Los Angeles said: "My husband drove my car to take our daughter to the bus stop. When I got into the car next, I realized he had not only filled the car with petrol, but had also changed my clock (daylight saving was quite some time ago). Both made me remember how kind he is, and why I married him in the first place."

'T' from London said: "I had just (reluctantly) given my boyfriend the key to my apartment when I had to leave for a business trip. When I got home, he had assembled a ceiling fan I had purchased that came in about 30 different pieces, set up my TV, and had all my bath towels and dishes put away. I'm glad I gave him the key!"

One of the funniest surprise stories I have ever heard, and definitely not for the faint of heart, came from a good friend of mine 'L' in Florida. She surprised her husband with their wedding! She said: "He thought we were attending a client open-house at a restored mansion. You should have seen his face when he saw his parents and a priest." 'S' responds: "Man that was a big surprise. We've been married 20 years this September. I remember after it was over someone asked if I had had thoughts of running. I replied: With her father coming down the stairs behind me and 150 people in front of me – where was I going to go?"

While most surprises are sweet, some can be sour. 'T' in Florida had this to say: "My husband won a cruise, a sales incentive from his office. He asked me to come along but since we had school-aged children, I

“ YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIS FACE WHEN HE SAW HIS PARENTS AND A PRIEST ”

felt I should stay behind. A day later, friends all pitched in to help me with the kids. So I boarded a plane to surprise my husband at his first port of call. The surprise was on me when I discovered he had invited another woman in my absence. No wonder he didn't protest when I offered to stay behind!"

And of course, sexy surprises are always saucy. 'P' of Brussels told me: "When I arrived home from work, my girlfriend had all the toppings for an ice cream sundae (cherries, whipping cream, hot chocolate sauce) set up on a tray with a note asking me to bring it to the bedroom. Needless to say, there was no ice cream and we had one hot and sticky night."

Pivotal gestures

I've been married 18 years and my husband and I still hold hands, say I love you multiple times a day, and call each other every day we are away from one another. Still, I can't recall the last time we surprised one another. He reminded me that once when he was packing for a long business trip, I had tucked little love notes and sexy suggestions into his luggage, into his socks, and his shoes, so he'd find them over several days. I reminded him of the time I came home to find a hand-written clue on the door, which led to another clue, and another, all through the house, finally ending with a little silver heart necklace that I had spotted one day.

Maybe the biggest surprise of all for me was to realize how pivotal these small gestures, sexy or simple, can be and how little time it actually takes to sneak them back into your love life.

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Are financial markets on the road to recovery?

Dave Deruytter looks ahead to the new year and calls for cautious optimism



It has been a dramatic year for the financial markets. Most news was bad with few bright spots. Data was particularly troubling on inflation, led by energy and food prices. Consequently, most indicators have been largely negative for financial markets.

There's been a lot of negative news to swallow. Double-digit inflation in many countries, gas prices in particular, running at alarmingly high levels. Business supply chains are still dealing with disruptions from Covid and have taken more time than anticipated

to recover, particularly for microchips. Critical raw materials for batteries and IT equipment have been expensive and in short supply. Big Tech has been struggling, while crypto currencies and exchanges have seen deep dives, not assisted by a series of insolvencies from Luna to FTX. The geopolitical situation from Russia's invasion of Ukraine to a further cooling of US/China relations have all added a certain chill. Still, it is always darkest before the dawn. When some of these problems are resolved or even stabilized, the outlook will improve.

Have we hit the bottom on the financial markets?

Nobody has a crystal ball, but more and more observers believe glimmers of light are appearing. Markets are likely to stay choppy for a while though, because of the structural inertia of some large institutional investors, such as pension funds, and the general feeling of caution making investors hesitant after such a tumultuous time. For those who have a greater appetite for risk, gradually investing in riskier assets in a downturn can prove beneficial in the longer term.

“NOBODY HAS A CRYSTAL BALL, BUT MORE AND MORE OBSERVERS BELIEVE GLIMMERS OF LIGHT ARE APPEARING”

One area worth looking at will be the bond markets, there are already signs that inflation is stabilizing, if not yet on an obvious downward trajectory. While the U.S. Federal Reserve remains cautious, there are signs that inflation is going in the right direction, it is anticipated that the EU will have a similar response. Though bonds are seen as

a conservative investment option, there is always the fear that their value will erode with inflation. However, if you invest while interest rates are high and inflation is going down this becomes much more interesting as an investment.

We are already seeing clear signs that inflation is going down in the U.S. The EU should get there soon too, save for unexpected hiccups. After 2023, one can only hope that inflation and interest rates keep on decreasing to further build on the projected good year for bonds to come in 2023.

On the equity side, though shares typically benefit from lower interest rates too, there are other uncertainties that need to be tackled to reassure investors.

Trends to look out for include the “glocalization” drive. The pandemic and a more





complicated geopolitical environment have caused governments and businesses to rethink and readjust their supply chains. Also, we could see some of the equity markets, for example, in the tech and possibly the cyber world rebound with a more favourable economic outlook.

One thing is very clear at this moment and that is that the crypto world needs to be thoroughly cleaned up if it wants to attract new investors. Until there are signs that this has been done, it would be advisable for any investor to proceed with caution.

“TRENDS TO LOOK OUT FOR INCLUDE THE ‘GLOCALIZATION’ DRIVE”

In short, markets will only return to a comfortable and sustainable level once the economic conditions improve. However, looking at historical price earnings levels, many markets are cheap or neutral at current prices.

What about art and other investments? The upper end of the art scene does not seem to be hindered by the difficult economic and political situation. The new kids on the block like non-fungible tokens (NFT) thrived for a while, but are down a lot in the second half of this year – much like their blockchain fellow travellers. Like with any art, it is a question of hype and taste.

In conclusion, bright spots are emerging in the financial markets. They are not moving fully in sync yet, some regular buying to build up riskier positions again may be worth considering, but always stay true to your investor profile and time horizon. Invest in what you understand, anything else is gambling. There's nothing wrong with the occasional flutter, but it should be kept to your spare change. ❶



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Real estate inflation?

Yannick Callens looks at the prospects for the real estate market in 2023



Photo © Nina Alizada

In recent months we have been shaken up by the consequences of the war in Ukraine, lack of supplies in several areas including construction materials, and of course the cost of energy.

Does this have an impact on real estate and the value of your property?

**“ WE ARE CURRENTLY
SENSING A TENSION BETWEEN
SUPPLY AND DEMAND ”**

Directly and indirectly, of course! In the short term, we are currently sensing a tension between supply and demand. A year

ago the market was favourable for sellers. There were enough buyers for a seller to feel comfortable.

Today, we are in a market where the buyer has more strength to negotiate the offer one wishes to make, the conditions one wishes to make

and the ability to negotiate in favour of a better price. It is easier today to negotiate up to 20 - 25% of the price depending on the property. I want to qualify this, because



“ WE ARE IN
A MARKET
WHERE
THE BUYER
HAS MORE
STRENGTH TO
NEGOTIATE ”

good buildings and good apartments with good locations will keep their values and will not be easy to negotiate, they could even be described as non-negotiable.

Regarding renovations and new buildings, we are seeing a slowdown, or a rescheduling. Investors are postponing renovations and developers are putting some construction projects on hold. Inflation affects all levels. From the small one-bedroom investor to the developer of several hundred apartments.

In the long term, I would say that this is a good time to position yourself. This reminds me of the 2007 crisis, a very calm market in real estate, fewer buyers and more time to properly prepare and negotiate their offer. 2023 could be a great year in real estate. If you inform yourself about the market and develop your negotiation skills this could be a very good moment to invest.


For bank interest rates, I would say that they have risen to a normal level and that we will have to get used to the new normal. For those who've enjoyed fixed rates at very

low levels, this might be a bitter pill to swallow, but while interest rates may stabilize in 2023, they are unlikely to return to very low levels seen in the last decades.

Will real estate keep up with inflation? I'm not so sure. Apart from the rising cost of materials, energy and bank rates there is also reduced purchasing power. Will this be like the crisis in 2011? I don't think so, because that was a financial crisis and banks - we are told - are now in more robust shape having tightened up their approach to lending.

In summary, in the short-term in real estate will be less easy, but in the long term you can - if you put in the work - find good deals.

Become informed, educate yourself and surround yourself with the right people in real estate.

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Be successful

Winter is a great time to snuggle up with some books. We recommend a couple of the finest personal development books from 2022

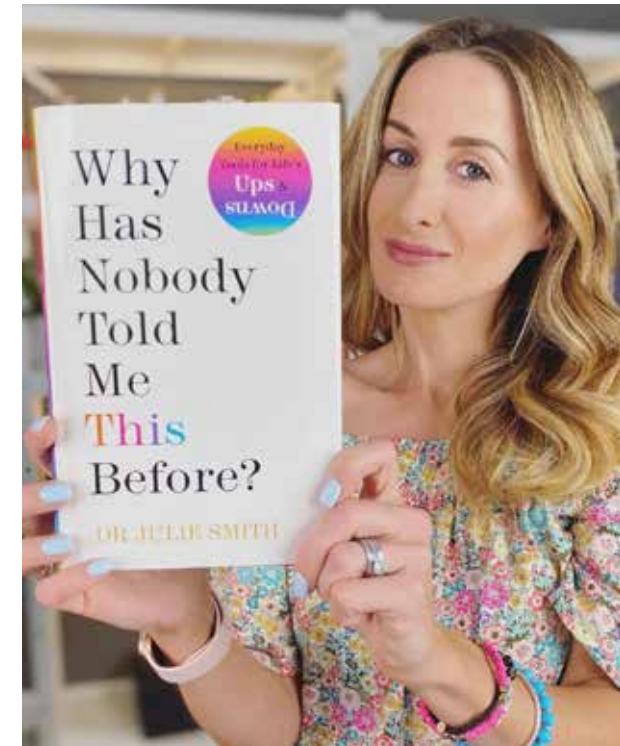
Why has nobody told me this before? By Julie Smith

Dr Julie Smith draws on years of experience as a clinical psychologist, sharing all the skills you need to get through life's ups and downs. Smith was inspired to write the book by one of her patients. After weeks of therapy where the patient had made profound progress in dealing with her issues - often through well tested and simple advice - she asked Smith, "Why has nobody told me this before?"

The book provoked Smith to think about how these lessons could reach a wider audience. While some people will need more in-depth therapy, there are many people who just need to learn about how their mind works and what can be done to help to manage their mental health on a day-to-day basis.

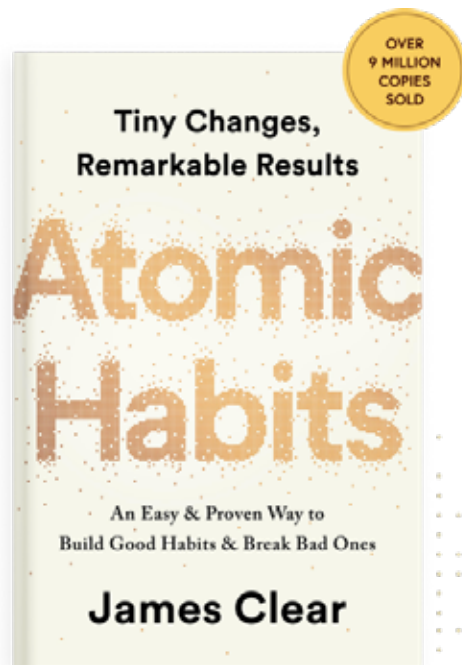
Filled with secrets from a therapist's toolkit, this is a must-have handbook for optimizing your mental health. Smith's simple but expert advice and powerful coping techniques will help you stay resilient no matter what life throws your way.

The book covers everything from managing anxiety, dealing with criticism or battling low mood, to building self-confidence, finding motivation or learning to forgive yourself. The book tackles the everyday issues that affect us all and offers easy, practical solutions that might just change your life. Written in short, bite-sized entries, you can turn straight to the section you need depend



ding on the challenge you're facing - and immediately find the appropriate tools to help.

Smith was particularly inspired by the high amount of misleading advice that was online and wanted to provide people with tried and tested approaches. If you prefer videos to reading she has a huge selection of short videos on many of the issues addressed in the book. www.doctorjuliesmith.com



Atomic Habits By James Clear

This book is reassuring as it explains how small changes can make a big difference. James Clear uncovers a handful of simple life hacks and delves into cutting-edge psychology and neuroscience to explain why they work. Along the way, he shares the stories of Olympic gold medalists, leading CEOs, and distinguished scientists who have used the science of tiny habits to stay productive, motivated, and happy.

People think that when you want to change your life, you need to think big. But Clear has discovered another way. He argues that real change comes from the compound effect of hundreds of small decisions: doing two push-ups a day, waking up five minutes earlier, or holding a single short phone call. He calls them atomic habits.

There is more to the book than this one idea. Clear also explains other concepts such as the three-later concentric circle for behaviour change, which divides into outcome, process and identity change. People usually address these levels of change in this order, however, Clear says that the best way to drive yourself is through identity first, focusing on who we wish to become. There's some other great and seemingly simple advice, like tying an old habit to a new habit you want to create. For example, after I have my morning coffee I spend ten minutes studying Chinese.

Another hack is to apply a two-minute rule this means that a new habit should be very achievable at first, once that is established it should be built up, but the first two minutes should always be easy. We also need to reward ourselves, that can be by simply noting that we've performed the habit. This very achievable and rewarding nature of a habit creates a positive state of mind and the desire to really make a task or a behaviour a habit for life. ①



The Van der Valk Hotel Nivelles-Sud is the perfect location for festive season

With experienced staff, a stylish and comfortable setting, as well as easy access from all parts of Belgium, Van der Valk sets the foundation for the successful festivities of the end and beginning new year.

During this festive season, the four star, Van der Valk Hotel in Nivelles-Sud offers finesse, comfort and style at an affordable price. What started in 1929 with Café de Gouden Leeuw in Voorschoten has grown into a proud hotel chain with more than 100 hotels and restaurants worldwide. Listening and tending to customers wishes is the backbone of the Van der Valk business mantra, enabling it to distinguish itself from competitors by making comfort accessible and friendly. The hotel is currently managed by the young family members, Bob and Emilie Wohrmann.

The hotel and restaurant offers a variety of local and international gastronomical delicacies.

Guests are looked after by a loyal staff with over 30 years' experience. The bar regularly hosts music events on Thursdays, where the bar staff offer a 'perfect serve' that amplifies any cocktail experience. The Van der Valk Hotel Nivelles-Sud also boasts 155 rooms, a fitness, a spa and free parking.

Be sure to check out the festive menus and events by contacting the Van der Valk team at the following number, and they will be more than happy to give you more information: +32 (0)67 21 87 21.
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BEPS celebrates 50 years with an exceptional year

Catherine Feore met Pascale Hertay, the Director of BEPS International School, to find out why parents love the school, how it delivers for all its students and what lies ahead



2022 marks the 50th anniversary of BEPS International School, but it also marks a moment of transformation, with the school moving into new premises on Avenue Franklin Roosevelt with state-of-the-art facilities and the means to educate children from the early years right through to the end of their secondary education.

Brussels English Primary School, as it was then, was established by a British couple in 1972. It was one of the first English-speaking schools in Brussels. The current director,

Pascale Hertay, joined the school almost nine years ago after having taught at international schools in Abu Dhabi, Egypt and the Netherlands.

It wasn't Hertay's intention to return to Belgium originally, but she saw the potential of the school to develop into an international school with a different approach. She also had a vision of how children should be educated. At the time the school only provided early years and primary education.

Together: Congratulations on reaching 50. This is a seminal year for BEPS in many ways, was it a 'Big Bang' moment to cover secondary education?

Hertay: I had always worked with international schools that covered both primary and secondary education. However, when I started at BEPS my first task was to turn the school into the best international school in Belgium.

Firstly, that meant bringing the curriculum up to date, moving from a knowledge-based to a more skills-based approach and

taking a whole-child perspective. Parents greatly appreciated this and wanted their children to continue to benefit from it, they wanted a secondary education that offered

the same philosophy. We've built that up and can now offer the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP), the Diploma Programme (IBDP) and the IB Career-related Certificate (IBCP).

For us it is about a mindset for learning. It's an authentic approach to learning that accompanies the child throughout their life. We need to prepare children to be able to constantly adapt and learn in an ever-changing, fast-moving world.

This year was the year everything we've been working on has come to pass. The last piece of the puzzle has slotted into place and it's now complete. We are fully implementing the curriculum that we believe in from early years to eighteen. It's really something we are proud of and that we want to celebrate.

How would you describe the school's ethos? Is this something that is impor-

tant for parents when they're choosing a school?

I would say this is the most important issue for parents. We aren't the only school offering the International Baccalaureate. The point is that we implement the curriculum in a very different way. We want the learning to be authentic, to be hands on. Our teachers are more like facilitators of learning, they are helping the children to ask questions, to enquire, to find solutions.

It is very important for us to recruit teachers who share this outlook, our teachers are

“ WE MOVED FROM A KNOWLEDGE-BASED TO A MORE SKILLS-BASED APPROACH AND TAKING A WHOLE-CHILD PERSPECTIVE ”

also learning and staying abreast with the latest research and developments. This is very important for us, because we want the teacher to keep up to date.

We don't want to become a school where we have three, four or five classes per year, we want to remain a community, we want to continue to know every single one of our students and to be able to support them to the extent that they need. We have grown as a school, but the board has decided that we also want to keep our identity as a family size school. We won't go beyond 400 - 450 students.



For some parents, the main concern will be getting good results.

This is probably where we are also unique compared to maybe some more traditional schools. We're not going to look at the results of our kids to market the school by showing how great results are. We expect the child who is capable of achieving high grades, but we are equally proud of those who don't necessarily get the highest grades but who are able to achieve their dreams. We want every child to be successful in their own way. That could be going to university or choosing a different path. It doesn't matter.

We also have a learning support team to work with the kids. Many children have specific learning requirements, some have ADHD, Aspergers or dyslexia. We can cater for the individual needs of children. Having small classes of not more than 18 students means that teachers can manage classes with mixed levels of ability and students who have different learning needs. We can also identify specific needs and in partnership with parents we can suggest specialized after-school support on some issues.

What are the new facilities like?

A year and a half ago we acquired a building from Lycée Molière and we then carried out extensive renovations. We applied the latest research of neuroscience, the new realities of working life, like co-working space. In short, we have designed the interior not like a traditional secondary school with corridors and different classrooms. What we've done is create a co-learning space, similar to a co-working area, where you have space for the individual to work independently, you have spaces for collaborative work and you have classrooms for specific subjects, like the science labs, which are to a standard similar to a university.

What is the student body like?

The last time we looked into it we found that



Pascale Hertay

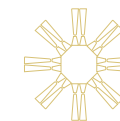
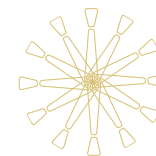
“WE WANT TO REMAIN A COMMUNITY, WE WANT TO CONTINUE TO KNOW EVERY SINGLE ONE OF OUR STUDENTS”

the school had students from more than 50 different nationalities. The parents are from the diplomatic service, from the European institutions, the private sector and many other fields. It's a good mix.

What would your advice be to parents?

I always say to parents, you must visit the school, don't believe what's on the website, go and see for yourself. The moment you step foot in the school and see the students, you will see for yourself how the school is different, how it is organized in a different way, you will see for yourself that community atmosphere you can feel from the moment you arrive.

Thank you! ①



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Are we witnessing the end of the ‘strong man’?

Catherine Feore reflects on whether 2022 is a turning point



I've always thought the term "strong man" to describe people like Putin, Erdogan, Trump and Orban was a misnomer. If you're strong you don't try to rig the system. We've seen how this can be done both overtly or covertly, by silencing opposition, through media ownership, jobs for the boys, as well as the gift of dishing out contracts and funds to your supporters. The so-called strong men are actually weak men who can't corral support without tipping the scales, or removing them altogether.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has received a doughty response from a population he referred to as "Little Russians"

When not playing the Tzar, Putin plays the victim, but for over 20 years his imperialist tendencies and his disrespect for international law have been on display. His decision to invade Ukraine on 24 February was the point where he finally pushed his luck too far. This was, apart from all else, a massive strategic error. Putin is finished.

We've learnt from the U.S. this autumn that winning the backing of a certain Donald J. Trump to represent your party in Congressional elections is not an anointment. The Republican Party seems to be slowly waking up to the fact that Trump is electoral death. His most obsequious supporters in

the highly partisan U.S. media have more or less withdrawn their support. He is seen as a loser, in fact he is seen as the worst sort of loser, a sore loser; one who is shouting into the void on *Truth Social*, still in denial that the people have spoken. Add to this the travails of the Trump Organisation being found guilty of multiple counts of criminal tax fraud, Congress is now in possession of his tax returns and the January 6th Committee investigating the assault on the capitol will be issuing their final report soon. I am going to put my neck out and say that Trump is finished.

Brazil's Bolsonaro was ousted in a narrow vote, but without repercussions. He is finished - at least for the next four years.

**" IF YOU'RE STRONG
YOU DON'T TRY TO
RIG THE SYSTEM "**

Protests in two of the world's most oppressive countries, China and Iran, have also shown that they are not quite as immutable as they appear. China is finally relaxing its draconian Covid provisions after open dissent and Iran is considering the abolition of their infamous morality police following the protests linked to the arrest and death of Mahsa Amini.

Closer to home

Despite the best efforts of a coalition of opposition forces in Hungary, Orban won elections in April, however Macron won decisively against Marine Le Pen in April's presidential elections. The victory of a neo-fascist in Italy is no doubt worrying and Poland's assault on the rule of law means that Europe is far from out of the woods.

The EU has been woefully ineffectual at reigning in its very own, homegrown, wannabe autocrats; some have argued that European funds and failure of European political groups (of all colours) have aided and abetted some of Europe's worst. The hesitancy of EU heads of government to

act decisively has also been somewhat disheartening. Europe's autocrats don't really have much to fear, the EU's plodding efforts through annual reports, Article 7 procedures, infringement procedures, the rule of law conditionality mechanism... have, as yet, been ineffectual. Change, if it is to happen, will have to come from within each administration and here I feel there are signs that the sands are shifting.

One of the baked-in features of authoritarian governments is that they aren't very good at governing. It is fair to say that political leaders who favour liberal democracy haven't always had a perfect record in government either, but they've always allowed the voter the chance to let them know through free and fair elections, permitting the peaceful transfer of power.

Looking at Hungary, we've recently seen mass protests at the treatment of teachers and the poor education system. Orban might have an iron grip at the moment, but when people see their future corroding before their eyes the tide can turn. Questioned by a parliamentary committee the governor of Hungary's central bank said: "We have to face the fact that the Hungarian economic crisis is imminent. We must face up to the fact that the macroeconomic indicators for finance are the second worst in the European Union, next year we will be the worst, if there is no turnaround it will be a lost decade."

It may be too early to say either way, but recent developments suggest that the tide is turning and people are turning against those who cultivate a stranglehold on power and the inevitable corruption that comes with that power. ❶



‘It’s electrifying!’

Bob Monard takes us on a tour of the latest in electric cars



Peugeot e-2008

Better for the environment and now with fiscal incentives that make it more affordable, the electric car is leading the way. We take an overview of what’s out there.

Among the best-selling models, the standouts are the Tesla, the VW with its ID 3 and ID 4, the Porsche Taycan, the Audi e-tron Sportback and e-tron SUV such as the Nissan Leaf, Peugeot e-2008 and Volvo XC40 Recharge.

Electric vehicles are present in all areas of the market.

In the city car segment, the battle is raging between the Mini Electric (€36,500), the Honda e (€40,160) and the Peugeot e-2008 (€36,165).

Renaut Zoe (€38,125), with its very long range (240 km) and formidable road holding, stands out as the leader in its category ahead of the less expensive Dacia Spring (€19,990) and the Fiat 500e Cabriolet



**“ THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF CHOICE
FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR AN ELECTRIC CAR
THAT MEETS THEIR NEEDS ”**

(€36,790), with its very sexy silhouette that can still welcomes four people on board.

Within the small compact and city SUVs, look to those that offer space on board and versatility on a budget. The Kia e-Niro (€45,490) scores with its presentation and technology, along with attractive pricing. Its cousin, the Hyundai Kona Electric (€43,999),

is just as powerful (204 hp), with good performance, but it is penalized on wet ground.

The most stylish is undoubtedly the Peugeot e-2008 (€40,865) which is the most comfortable and also most fuel-efficient and also refuels quickly.

In the family clan, the benchmark is the Tes-





Ford Mustang Mach-E

la Model 3 (€52,990), for its authentic sports performance with delectable road control and a remarkable finish. Compact and homogeneous, the VW ID3 (€45,110) is the first electric from the German giant and is pleasant, efficient and comfortable.

Original and cozy, the Hyundai Ioniq 5 (€52,499) is on the run and refuels quickly.

The Skoda Enyaq iV (€46,650) steals the mechanics of its VW ID 3 and ID4 cousins (€50,465). Lively, pleasant and spacious, it is enjoyable and sleek. Derived from the model 3, the Tesla Model Y (€49,990) has a generous and bright interior. The third musketeer is the Ford Mustang Mach-E (€61,700),

with several layers of comfort, elegantly presented and generously furnished. At the top of the range, we are eyeing the Porsche Taycan (€92,689), the liveliness of which takes your breath away: elegant, sporty and slender. The Audi e-Tron SUV (€78,500) has 408 hp at its disposal. Spacious and luxurious it is among the most comfortable of its peers. In the most techno genre, the Tesla Model S comes out on top, a large sedan that has evolved on all fronts for 11 years.

In short, there is no shortage of choice for those looking for an electric car that meets their lifestyle needs. ①



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① DONNONS PRIORITÉ À LA SÉCURITÉ. Informations environnementales (AR 19/03/2004): www.honda.be. Véhicule illustré avec des options ou accessoires. *Prêt à tempérament avec dernière mensualité majorée. Montant du crédit : 25.569,38 €. Acompte (facultatif) : 6.220,62 €. Prix comptant : 31.790 €. TAEG (Taux Annuel Effectif Global) de 3,89 %, taux débiteur annuel fixe : 3,89 %. Durée du crédit : 48 mois. Remboursable en 47 mensualités de 299 €. Dernière mensualité majorée : 14.604,50 €. Action valable du 01/09/2022 au 31/10/2022. Montant total dû : 28.657,50 €. Durée limitée à 48 mois. Cet exemple est basé sur la Civic Hybride Elegance. Sous réserve d'acceptation de votre demande de crédit par Alpha Credit s.a., prêteur, Montagne du Parc 8C, 1000 Bruxelles, TVA BE 0445.781.316, RPM Bruxelles. Annonceur : Honda Motor Europe Ltd. Belgian Branch - Doornveld 180 - B-1731 Zellik - Numéro de TVA : BE 0467.016.396. Votre prêt à tempérament est soumis à la législation relative au crédit à la consommation, et plus spécifiquement au livre VII du Code de droit économique en Belgique et au livre 2 de la partie législative du Code consommation au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

Attention, emprunter de l'argent coûte aussi de l'argent.

A D A G I O

*Photographer Xavier F.Martin Art Director Nicholas Sirot
Hair & Make up Elke Binnemans using SISLEY COSMETICS,
for Hair Elke Binnemans using Moroccanoil.
Model Léa de Wouters @ Dominiquemodels.com
Special thanks to Silo Brussels Rue de Meudon 54, 1120 Brussels
Email event@silo.brussels
Special thanks to Fabrice D'Alcantara
Special thanks to yelle@livingroom.be for photo retouching*



*Bra: Chantelle Panties: Eres
Thights: Falke Earrings: Tollet*



Top: Dolly sport Panties: Eres Tights: Falke Bracelet: slave asymmetric Van Esser Earrings: Tollet



*Coat: Marni for Uniqlo
Earrings: Tollet
Make up using: Sisley Cosmetics
Teint: Instant Perfect, Sisleya le teint Or vanilla
Eyes: Phyto-cernes éclate n°1, Les Phyto-ombres 12 silky rose
Blush: Phyto blush twist 7 Berry
Eyebrows: Phyto-sourcils Fix 0 transparent
Lips: Le Photo rouge 21 rose Noumea*



Earrings: Tollet Coat: Lacoste Hair using: Moroccanoil : Smoothing Lotion, Luminous hairspray Strong



Panties: Eres Tights: Falke Rings: Tollet



*Panties: Eres Tights: Falke Rings & Earrings: Tollet Horse's Head: Equus Caballus
Espèces Jewellery by Marie Artamonoff*



*Jacket: Ataman Label
Rings: Chameleon Van Esser
Earrings: Tollet*



Handbag: **LADY D-LITE MEDIUM Dior** Sunglasses: **Dior** Lip glow burgundy n°035: **Dior Addict**
Lip maximizer burgundy n°035: **Dior Addict** Eau de parfum J'ADORE PARFUM D'EAU: **Dior**



Mini handbag & Oversleeves: **Chanel** Lip colour « Rouge Allure L'EXTRAIT » n°827: **Chanel**
« Les 4 Ombres » Multi-Effect quadra eyeshadow n°937: **Chanel**



Wallet: **Le Tanneur** High-performance grooming essentials for men: **Rituals Still Waterfles**: **Dopper Timepiece**: **Rodania**
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 Photo - teint Nude n°1w & 5c: **Sisley** Photo -touch sun glow bronzing: **Sisley**
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 Supreme Baume at night anti -aging cream: **Sisley**
 Phyto-rouge shine sheer color & hydration n°20 &42: **Sisley**

Esquisse jewels

Meet Sergiu Lom, the co-founder of the boutique Esquisse



Photo © Guillaume Kayacan

**“ SERGIU LOM IS
A VERSATILE
AND SELF-TAUGHT
CREATOR OF
BESPOKE
JEWELLERY ”**

Sergiu Lom is a versatile and self-taught creator of bespoke jewellery. Sergiu has boundless curiosity and a multi-disciplinary creative background that includes: architecture, tattoo art, craft design, industrial design and of course jewellery. This has provided him with the skills to create bespoke pieces where human values are front and centre.

What is the philosophy of Esquisse jewels?

A jewel is the reflection of our history and the materialization of our emotions.

How did you come up with the idea of opening a store?

I wanted to create a place that feels and looks like a precious jewellery box, a miniature Place Vendôme. As soon as you push the door of the shop, the magic happens, much more than an experience, it's a moment for the creation of memories.

My fiancée, Aude Solyga is a Parisian passionate gemologist. In this way, with Esquisse jewels, I wanted to bring a little piece of Paris to Brussels.

How would you describe your Esquisse jewels?

What makes us distinctive is that Esquisse jewels is tailor made from A to Z. We leave nothing to chance. I'm thinking specifically of the play of light that inspires confidence from the first moment of your visit.

What services do you offer?

Our main activity is creating your bespoke jewel. We also have a wide choice of unique pieces of jewellery to offer, to appreciate, wi-



thout taking the tailor-made approach.

We engrave your treasures. Engraving is an ancient art. I'm one of the last hand-engravers in Belgium. Engraving is a personalization that adds an additional symbolic dimension to your favorite objects. By this, I mean we place one or more gems in your jewellery. We also do our settings ourselves. We do all this in our workshop which is under our shop that you can visit.

We work with lapidarists in Brussels and Antwerp to magnify the gem of your choice. Everything is possible in the hands of these talented experts. We can also recut or repolish your gems that may have been damaged over time. It is also possible to engrave a stone to create an exceptional signet ring.

How do you find the right gems?

We work with expert gemologists to confirm the nature and quality of the stones we se-

“ CONFIDENCE POUR UN BIJOU ”

lect. Their passion allows us to unearth fabulous treasures for you: from the most classic (diamond, sapphire, topaz, etc.) to the most original (moss agate, rutiled quartz, parti sapphire, etc.). We also make every effort to work with gems from ethical sources.

We have a room entirely dedicated to gems that will allow you to discover all kinds of stones and fall in love with them.

At Esquisse jewels, each person is unique and for this each person deserves a unique jewel with a true significance for them. Sergiu Lom will design the piece that suits you.

We can also, at your request, present you with a 3D model or a wax model of your future jewel so that you can have a concrete idea of what it will look like.

If you have some old jewels that no longer suits you or has suffered damage, we can transform or repair it. Our workshops are extremely well equipped. Don't leave the jewels you no longer wear at the bottom of your drawers, we can help you transform them and give them a second life.

What are your plans?

We will keep finding exceptional gems for you and creating the unique pieces of your dreams. At the end of the day, I want to inspire our clients on a daily basis.

A word for the end?

Have a great holiday, come and visit us so that Esquisse jewels can help you to create a work that is unique. ❶

Maison Ullens celebrates its tenth anniversary

The Belgian luxury label is marking its ten years with an ode to what have become iconic classics of their brand



Maison Ullens celebrated its tenth anniversary this autumn, a luxurious ode to its iconic classics.

When it was founded in 2012 by baroness and philanthropist Myriam Ullens, the Belgian luxury label had no intention of revolutionizing fashion. On the contrary, since its launch, the Brussels House has excelled in discreet luxury of the highest quality.

“ DISCREET LUXURY OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY ”

Over the years, this House has become an established, but discreet favourite among fashion connoisseurs in the luxury segment. The deep-rooted craftsmanship and unpretentious luxurious nature of the brand owes its reputation to acclaimed collaborations with Véronique Leroy and Haider Ackermann, among others.

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“TIMELESS PIECES OF THE FINEST QUALITY AND IMPECCABLE STYLE ”

La Maison Ullens, was launched by Baroness Myriam «Mimi» Ullens, a fervent lover of art, culture, crafts and aesthetics in 2012. Since then Myriam's love of luxury and aesthetics has reigned supreme through sensual, powerful and timeless silhouettes. Ullens introduces you to the essence of top-of-the-range knitwear, made in renowned and artisanal Italian workshops, sublime cuts and sumptuous materials. The knits are accompanied by timeless signature pieces in high-quality leather. Maison Ullens blends Italian tradition, European innovation and Belgian design to create timeless pieces of the finest quality, made for those who appreciate impeccable style.

Maison Ullens has been creating its own universe of timeless and sophisticated creations since 2012. Leroy, for example, introduced its inimitable and relaxed cuts she is famous for, which explore the border between oversize and elegance. While Ackermann, in turn, introduced an ever-undulating interplay between androgynous and ultra-feminine. Creations that Maison Ullens then seamlessly integrated into its DNA.

The new autumn-winter collection from Maison Ullens is marked by a contemporary reinterpretation of a series of iconic pieces that the brand has presented in recent years. The result is a subtle fusion of clean, fluid and vaporous silhouettes, counterbalanced by a series of architectural and modern shapes. Maison Ullens is inextricably linked to the Ullens Foundation, the philanthropic artistic foundation created by Guy Ullens, husband of Myriam Ullens. Each collection therefore has a close link with the world of art. The colour palette of this fall-winter col-



lection has its origins in the work of Sonia Delaunay. From a search for pure colors and the movement of simultaneous shades, the new autumn-winter collection colors white, beige and vanilla towards lemon, cognac and camayeux, completed by a lively gradient of parrot green, of bright blue, sakura and amaryllis.

The AW22-23 collection is available from September in select multi-brand boutiques, including Neiman Marcus, Le Bon Marché and Farfetch. You can also find the collection in Maison Ullens boutiques on Madison Avenue (New York), rue de Marignan (Paris) and East Hopkins Avenue (Aspen), and online: www.maisonullens.com. 

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Shopping

LIFESTYLE

'Je ne sais quoi' for all

Together popped by the Sézane Pop Up, a veritable treasure trove and a delight to visit

I've lived in Brussels for many years and know Rue de Namur well, now home to several coffee shops. It has had its ups and downs but it's always been a great location running between Porte de Namur and Mont des Arts. I had never noticed this space before Sézane chose it as the place to install their POP UP presence in Brussels. It is unique and eminently suited to the style of this quirky, but also very wearable brand.

I learnt that they had been interested in setting up a shop in Brussels for many years but had been looking for the right spot that reflected their style. It's hard to describe exactly what that style is, but it is a style that reflects the designer's story. There's a love of vintage, a respect for the artisanale with a contemporary twist, it's a bit discombobulating. What I particularly like is that there is a

built-to-last feel to the items, they're gentle statements that underwrite Sézane's commitment to sustainability.

We're told that the story of Sézane begins with a forgotten suitcase and a love of vintage. Upon discovering an abandoned collection of vintage clothing, Morgane Sézallory began making slight adjustments to the pieces, and selling her finds online under the name 'Les Composantes.' Her monthly drops, or rendez-vous, became an anticipated event in France. By 2013, Morgane realized she had found her calling: she began supplementing her vintage pieces with her own designs & Sézane was born.

The commitment to sustainability of the products goes beyond the environmental element. Sézane is officially B Corp certified,



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which means it meets the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability to balance profit and purpose. One example of this is that 10% of proceeds from a dedicated solidarity piece are given to their philanthropic program DEMAIN and Sos Village d'Enfants in Belgium, which supports and protects the interests and rights of children. And if that doesn't warm the cockles of your heart I think you really need to invest in one of Sézane's baby alpaca wool scarves and hats: brightly coloured, scrumptious and with a tiny bit of elastane to give you the warm hug you need on a winter's day. ❶

GINETTE NY: 'Inspiration, sensuality, Paris-NYC lifestyle'

Looking for the ideal present for someone you love? *Together* welcomes GINETTE NY to Brussels and finds out what drives the designer



GINETTE NY designer Frédérique Dessemmond has finally established a presence in Brussels. Born in Marseille, Dessemmond grew up in "la Cité Radieuse" an architectural complex designed by French architect Le Corbusier. Recognised by UNESCO, Corbusier was known for minimalism and pure geographical lines, a clear influence on the designer's world outlook.

After studying art history Dessemmond moved to New York in 1999. In 2002 she started

the story of GINETTE NY, a brand dedicated to strong women, aware of their own power and uniqueness.

GINETTE NY created a world where each woman can invent her own modernity, made of a subtle balance of achievements, emotions, and sensuality. The constants behind Dessemmond's vision are pure materials and natural stones, architectural and design inspiration and purity of shapes.

Historic House of De Witte

“A BRAND DEDICATED
TO STRONG WOMEN,
AWARE OF THEIR OWN
POWER AND
UNIQUENESS”



The collections are the reflection of a unique artistic expression. Heavily influenced by new vintage and the Paris-NYC lifestyle, there is also a more subliminal connection between the jewels and the skin, that can be seen most clearly with the disc rings which are in contact with the skin but also project onto the world around us, an extension of oneself, of your personality, a link between what lies within and the message we transmit about ourselves and to those around us.

①



An independent
family boutique
in the heart
of Brussels

Located in the historic jewellery district of old Brussels, with a view of the Grand-Place, De Witte is one of the oldest independent Brussels jewellery boutiques in Belgium.

De Witte was launched in 1932, driven by the passion of Paul de Witte. It was the year when Coco Chanel launched her first collection of jewellery and when Tintin hopped across the Atlantic to America. That spirit of adventure also infused De Witte, who was inspired to open his boutique on Petite rue au Beurre. De Witte and his descendants have always taken great care to innovate, to capture the style of their time and the elegance of their tradition. The brand is synonymous with prestige.

Since then, the women of the family have taken the helm of the company. After Nicole, Martine and Géraldine, today it is Valérie and Colombine who are leading the way.



Surrounded by the best watchmakers and independent jewellers, in two boutiques, the team is happy to answer your questions or offer their expert advice on the choice of a watch or a piece of jewellery that matches your desires and exceeds your expectations.

①

Christmas Beauty

Nicholas Sirot offers some festive suggestions

At the end of every year we dare to dream. Discover all the wonderful holiday products. Beautiful gifts to put under the tree, or just to have fun with. Now is the appointed hour for beauty in all its forms. Happy holidays!



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LIFE OF LEISURE

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LIFE OF LEISURE

Interview

Lily Collins returns to the City of Light

In this edition's celebrity interview, *Together* meets **Lily Collins** who is returning to her role as the positive, can-do, solution-driven Emily, for season three of *Emily in Paris*.



Lily Collins was born into show business. The daughter of singing legend Phil Collins, she was always primed for success. Vivacious and sparkling in person, she speaks in an upbeat and confident manner, ever smiling and gracious and even asks if I'd like a coffee before starting the interview.

While the 33-year-old's ascent into the mainstream hasn't quite been as accelerated as her father's was when his Genesis band started making waves at the end of the 1970s, she is a singer and actress who has considerable clout, and who made a breakthrough in 2019 opposite Zac Efron in the movie *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil*

Interview

and *Vile*, a dark crime thriller that told the story of serial killer Ted Bundy.

The film is merely one more creative undertaking for Collins who has also published her first book, *Unfiltered: No Shame, No Regrets, Just Me* which led to *To The Bone*, in which she plays a young woman struggling with anorexia.

"I am at the stage where lots of opportunities come crashing in at once. That's no bad thing, but it does put the pressure on selecting the right one."

Most recently, the return of *Emily in Paris* for a third season suggests presence and longevity away from the somewhat more unstable world of film work.

Following American beauty executive Emily Cooper as she moves from Chicago to the French capital for a job opportunity, the show is not only a delight visually – teetering down the grand avenues of the French capital in divine couture outfits, swooning in Parisian patisseries and salons, and relishing the obligatory scene with the Eiffel Tower as a shimmering backdrop – it is also fun, a little bit sexy and deeply romantic. In short, it was the perfect panacea for a pandemic, when Collins allowed us to enjoy Paris vicariously with one click of her perfectly manicured fingernails.

Certainly, if her career can play out in quite the same length as her father's, she will be happy, although piggybacking on his success has never been of interest. She wants to carve her own niche... and appears to be doing a pretty good job.



**“ I AM AT THE STAGE
WHERE LOTS OF
OPPORTUNITIES COME
CRASHING IN AT ONCE ”**

Together: Returning to Paris must have been a big thing for you, both in terms of the city itself and the fact it validates the success of the series, *Emily in Paris*?

Lily : Paris is perhaps the only city where, when you go there to work, it still feels like you are on a holiday or city break.

I am mesmerized by its charm and always feel, on each visit, it is revealing more of its secrets to me. I only hope I get the chance to explore it more, in future; but yes, it's always lovely going back, and the success of the series has been so warming.

Things have really gathered pace for you over the past few years...

I guess so. I've never wanted to be too greedy or impatient with roles, but I do feel there is lots to look forward to now, and I haven't always had offers coming left, right and centre, so it's easy when that happens.

Who has had the biggest influence on your career?

I would probably say Warren Beatty, who I worked with on 'Rules Don't Apply' – he would tell us great stories about old Hollywood. When working with him he had such a talent to isolate us from our environment and take us away from the 21st Century tag.

Warren was like a true mentor to me. How many young actors get the chance to have someone so smart and kind and who knows everything about the business spend a lot of time trying to guide you and impart their knowledge to you.

When it came to acting, his main advice was to be very present and allow yourself to surprise yourself. That way you can be true to all the emotions your character is experiencing and allow yourself to be more

spontaneous and real rather than acting in the strict sense.

You're the daughter of a very famous singer and show business personality. How much has that influenced your understanding and passion for the industry?

I was raised in a house that was immersed in Hollywood culture and history. My mother is very interested in the history of the film industry and our house is full of memorabilia. My grandmother was a ballerina during that period and I studied a lot of her photos and watched a lot of movies of that era to get a feel for how people carried themselves and spoke.

There's something so mysterious and alluring about old Hollywood – I've always admired legendary actresses like Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, Natalie Wood, and Lana Turner. I love the way the camera lingered on an actress of that era. You see them take in information and respond to it and how they would allow their characters to reveal themselves to audiences.

Has it been a relief to see that your investment is being realized?

Of course! (Laughs) I've wanted to do this for a long time. At 15 I was writing stories for magazines and then by 16 I was aware of the bigger picture. From a young age, I just felt this drive – as if it were meant to happen.

Growing up, did your father sing or read to you at night?

I remember he would read stories to me at night and he loved to imitate different voices for the characters. That inspired me in part to want to act myself. My father also has a great sense of humour. He has taught me a lot about being creative and also being self-critical. That's helped me to be able to distance myself from my work so that I can

Interview

judge my work from a balanced and objective perspective.

Has it been important for you to make your mark in the business without relying on your father for help?

I've made a very conscious effort during my career not to ask my father for support. I didn't want that to be a factor in my career. I adore him and we stay very close and he's really my best friend, but I wanted to be able to feel that whatever success I've achieved I earned it on my own... I would never even use my father's name to get into parties (in Los Angeles).

You're also noted for your fashion sensibility. What is your favourite kind of fashion?

I've always loved vintage because my mother was always wearing vintage. I love going to vintage shops and finding old clothes - also furniture. I love the sensation of hunting and discovering objects that you rarely see. I don't get a chance to do that as often as I used to, but when I do, I just love it!

Do you look at writing and your own work as a journalist [she has written often for *Seventeen* and *Vogue* - ED] as something you want to continue doing in addition to your acting career?

I love to write, and I still consider journalism to be something which makes me more attentive to the world and a lot of the critical issues we are facing. I'm from a small town, like my father Phil. And earlier on when I was more involved in journalism, I developed a keen sense of awareness and interest in politics and culture and so many subjects.

There was a time in my life when I wanted to be able to voice my thoughts and deal with a lot of the questions that were very significant to my generation. Wanting to be able to

put down in writing my observations on the world is still a major part of my life.

I keep a daily journal and I enjoy noting down my observations and thoughts on what is going on in my life and the world around me.

What do you like to recall about growing up?

I was raised in the countryside. I remember that I loved the ballet, something I inherited from my grandmother, and I've been doing classical dance for years. I was also fascinated by fairy tales. It was this magical world for me, and I would run in the garden imagining myself to be a fairy and playing with the animals and the elves of the woods. I was convinced that they existed and were around me and I wasn't playing alone.

Your life underwent a dramatic change when your parents divorced, and you moved from England to Los Angeles when you were a young girl. What are your memories of that time?

We moved to Beverly Hills when I was five years old and what immediately struck me was how different people's accents were. When I started elementary school, the other kids were constantly kidding and teasing me.

That made me want to start speaking with an American accent as fast as possible and started watching one American movie after another and tried to imitate all their expressions and pronunciation.

When did you know that you wanted to be an actress?

I always loved watching movies but it was only when I turned 16 that I decided that acting would be my profession. I was sitting down with my mother one evening and





**“ I’VE DONE A LOT OF
SELF-REFLECTION AND
A LOT OF WORK ON
MYSELF ”**

suddenly I felt it was the right time to tell her what I wanted to do. She was very open and receptive and soon I began talking to agents and people in the business to get my career going.

What did it mean for you to publish your first book and open up in a very deep way about your personal life?

I wanted to explore what it’s like to become a young woman. I wanted to expose a lot of the taboos that girls do not like to talk about: the relationships we have with ourselves, with our parents, with the other sex, and with our bodies.

As soon as you start discussing these issues and dealing with these feelings you realise that you’re not alone. I felt very vulnerable and exposed while writing it, but I tried to be honest.

You seem to carry with you an energy and a zest for life...

As far as health and wellbeing goes, I’m glad we’ve got to the point that it’s almost as unusual to find someone who doesn’t look after themselves, than it is to find someone who does. When my dad was at the peak of the entertainment world in the 1980s, the notion that the stars of the day would work out, think about mental health, have personal trainers and keep an eye on their nutrition, was something out of leftfield.

You look at it now and this is the norm, and I take that seriously myself. There is no better way to start the day than getting up and out and exercising, and it really sets me up, mentally and physically.

Are you quite regimented about your fitness schedule?

Actually, not as much as I used to be. In the past I would give myself a hard time if I



missed a gym session, but I think you have to be realistic in terms of the time you have and the priorities in your life.

I know that if I miss a session it’s for a good reason, and I am okay with that, and I’ll always try to catch up.

Are you a gym bunny or an outdoors type?

Definitely a gym bunny. I admire people who can go for long runs, but I haven’t got the stamina or the concentration.

I would rather be doing some sort of circuit training plan that means I can mix up exercises, routines and moves. I’m one of those people who needs to keep things fresh and renewed.

What do you think you’ve learnt about yourself over the past few years with the work you’ve done as an actress and your work as a writer?

I’ve done a lot of self-reflection and a lot of work on myself. I see myself as a young woman who wants to evolve and learn as much as she can about herself and the world around her. I’ve thought a lot about my relationships that did not work out, and I discovered a lot about myself that I hadn’t really understood or appreciated before. And one thing in particular that I’ve figured out is that everything always happens for a reason.

Collins also stars and is a producer in a thriller called *Windfall* on release next year. Expect a very different role to that of *Emily in Paris*. ❶

Winter Sun in Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Mark Browne takes us on a trip to warmer climes for some winter sunshine



As another cold winter looms, there is nothing more uplifting than the thought of escaping to warmer climes to relax by the ocean beneath the warm glow of gentle winter sunshine. Florida, «The Sunshine State», has long been the American venue of choice for “snowbirds” escaping harsh northern winters. With increased connectivity and flight options it is now increasingly accessible from Europe too. The state boasts multiple potential venues, each with their own attractions and charm but one which has seen exponential

growth in recent years is the beachside city of Fort Lauderdale.

Located approximately 30 miles north of Miami it is one of the fastest growing spots in this, the fastest growing state in the US. Its popularity is due not just to its perfect beaches but also its massive network of inland waterways and canals that provide perfect harbours for a fleet of recreational boats as well as an aquatic environment away from the potentially more tempestuous waters of the open ocean – giving it

“RELAX BY
THE OCEAN
BENEATH THE
WARM GLOW
OF GENTLE
WINTER
SUNSHINE ”



the tongue-in-cheek nickname of the Venice of Florida.

Historically associated with “spring break” and student antics, the renewed popularity of the city with an older and more well-heeled clientele is evident not just in the yachts moored in its waterways, but also in the luxury goods stores and restaurants that now line its central Los Olas Boulevard, running perpendicular to the coastal strip. For those wishing to further indulge their shopping habit there are also other nearby options such as the epically sized Aventura Mall or, further afield, huge discount outlet malls such as Sawgrass Mills.

Southern Florida has long been famous for its fresh seafood restaurants and these are now supplemented by the full range of international cuisines, with an emphasis on those featuring local seafood ingredients to best advantage.

Where to stay

The beachfront esplanade of Fort Lauderdale is lined and resplendent with brand name marquee hotels in modern buildings, while the parallel streets behind them re-

main packed with more modestly priced traditional style Florida accommodation generally harking back to an older period. However, our recommendation, which combines the convenience of a location directly on the beach and all the comforts of a modern resort with the history of an earlier era of Florida tourism, is the B Ocean Resort of Fort Lauderdale. Formerly known as the Yankee Clipper, it has played host to numerous American icons over the years including Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe. Fully upgraded and modernised in recent years, its perfect beach location is now augmented with all the comforts one might expect, such as two pools, spa, 24

“SOUTHERN FLORIDA
HAS LONG BEEN
FAMOUS FOR ITS
FRESH SEAFOOD
RESTAURANTS ”



“THE BEACHFRONT ESPLANADE IS LINED
AND RESPLENDENT WITH BRAND NAME
MARQUEE HOTELS”

hour gym, four restaurants and three bars. However, one of its more unique aspects is its mermaid show which takes place in the huge aquarium inside its onsite “Wreck Bar”. Both family friendly and, what is billed as, a slightly more risqué burlesque version are hosted. Definitely worth a visit for novelty value and entertainment whether you are a hotel guest or not and can be combined with brunch or dinner options to make an occasion of it.

How to get there

Fort Lauderdale boasts its own substantial international airport only a couple of miles from the town centre and Los Olas Boulevard, so this may generally represent the most convenient access route. However, as the airport has relatively few direct flights to Europe this would typically involve a change of plane for our readers, typically in one of the northern US cities. An alternative route therefore is to fly to Miami international airport, which offers multiple direct flight options. Transfers can be arranged with a taxi or Uber taking around an hour, or even less

up the I95 expressway. It is also possible for visitors to arrive by train. The Brightline service arrives from both central Miami to the south and Palm Beach to the north and offers a fantastic alternative with its clean, inexpensive and spacious trains. It is also prompt, with the service from Miami taking only 35 minutes. Not only is the service inexpensive, it also offers free shuttles for travellers to within a 5 mile radius! While these are the most convenient options, flying into one of the other Florida airports, such as Orlando, Tampa or Palm Beach, and then transferring by rental car or shuttle are also practical possibilities, especially for those intending on renting a car throughout their stay anyway.

Mark Browne was a guest of the B Ocean Resort in Fort Lauderdale. ①

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Take a trip to Stockholm



Stockholm, the capital of Sweden laden with history, offers visitors a veritable treasure trove of attractions. Join **Mark Browne** for a trip to the Stockholm Archipelago

Originally constructed across an archipelago of 14 islands, which are now connected by 57 bridges, its location at the mouth of the Baltic Sea ensures that it retains the freshness that sea air can bring, and the city has numerous well-preserved green areas and parks to further accentuate its natural charms.

Places to See

The central island of Gamla Stan, contains the well preserved medieval old town, including the imposing royal palace and cathedral. Viewing these imposing buildings brings home the fact that for a number of centuries Sweden was among the most powerful forces in Europe.

“ THE CENTRAL ISLAND OF GAMLA STAN, CONTAINS THE WELL PRESERVED MEDIEVAL OLD TOWN ”

The district's narrow streets are filled with boutiques and art galleries as well as trendy cafes and bars, ensuring that a stroll through its streets is much more than a history lesson. Across the bridges to the north of this, the Normmalm area is the business and shopping centre of this bustling city. It

will not come as a surprise to visitors that this is one of the cities with the highest GDP per capita in Europe. Its many restaurants cater to all tastes, as would be expected of such a cosmopolitan city, although you

may nevertheless wish to sample the local speciality of meatballs at least once!

A Mecca of Museums

One of the great attractions of Stockholm for the visitor is the impressive number of quality museums in the city – nearly 90 in all! These are located throughout the city, including in Gamla Stan, but some of the most impressive are located on Djurgården Island at the edge of the city. Here you will find the Vasa Ship museum which was built to house the 17th century flagship of the Swedish navy which sank on its maiden voyage but was recovered from beneath the Baltic waves and reconstituted in this specially built museum, it is a unique experience. Nearby is the Viking Museum – surely a must for any trip to Scandinavia! There is also a surprising variety in the selection of museums available. They cover everything from art and architecture to fashion, royalty, the Nobel Prize and Technology. And yes, there is even an Abba Museum.

Getting Around

Stockholm has excellent public transport including a metro system as well a light rail

network and extensive bus connections. Taxis are also readily available. Although not highrise, the centre is relatively compact, making walking, cycling or scooters also viable options for the visitor. Boat or ferry trips may also come in handy, as well as potentially affording scenic tours to the Stockholm archipelago in the Baltic Sea or nearby Lake Marlarén to the west.

How to get there

Stockholm has two airports, Bromma and Arlanda, with the latter being further out and favoured by the budget carriers. Both, however, are well connected to the city centre by public transport options so are viable alternatives even for a weekend break. A more exotic and romantic way to arrive is by boat. Stockholm is a feature port for many cruise lines operating in the Baltic sea, including Norwegian and Royal Caribbean and there are also ferries operating from Helsinki in Finland and other ports with companies like the Viking Line - so you can devise your own mini cruise to make your arrival part of





“ ONE OF THE GREAT ATTRACTIONS IS THE IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF QUALITY MUSEUMS IN THE CITY – NEARLY 90 IN ALL! ”

the holiday experience and see the city from another perspective.

Where to Stay

As a major European capital with a strong touristic sector, Stockholm is naturally well equipped with venues to cater for all price points – even if they may start higher than many other parts of Europe. Our choice was the Elite Hotel Marina Tower. Located in an imposing old redbrick mill dating back to the 19th century, the interior has been stylishly reworked and finished to the highest modern standards of Scandinavian design that capitalise on its high ceilings and airy character. Located in a quieter suburb by Saltsjö Bay and outside the bustling city centre, the hotel has magnificent views of

the bay and Djurgården Island. The vibrant southern part of the city, or Södermalm, is only a short stroll away and the hotel is well connected to the city centre by public transport, including by ferry with the Saltsjökvärn Brygga ferry terminal right outside the hotel offering regular connections to Djurgården, as well as Nybrokajen Harbour right in the central Östermalm district, adjacent to Norrmalm.

Mark Browne was a guest of the Elite Hotel Marina Tower. ①

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Toronto and surrounds

Toronto is Canada's largest city and the fourth largest in North America. *Together's* **Mark Browne** explores this modern urban centre offering a lot to visitors

Toronto's central business district is now a sea of glass skyscrapers reminiscent of New York. Indeed, such are the similarities that many popular TV shows ostensibly based in New York, such as "Suits", are in fact filmed here. However, it does of course have its own uniquely identifiable landmarks among this sea of towers, including most notably the futuristic CN Tower, which is the tallest land structure outside Asia.

Furthermore, alongside this modern incarnation the city has retained many of its historical structures. This is most evident in the churches and cathedral which hark back to a bygone age. However, there are also commercial premises from the early 19th century including the St Lawrence Farmers Market, where visitors can sample Canadian specialty food items, and the nearby Distillery District. There the old buildings have been rejuvenated and renovated in recent years to house not only a local gin distillery, the "Spirit of York", but a sake dis-

tillery and beer brewery as well as numerous artisan shops, cafes and restaurants, making it a pleasant area to stroll and even better to enjoy one of the events which are staged there.

As a vibrant living city, sports play an important part in the social life of the city. The city has teams in virtually every professional sport played in North America and impressive stadia for teams like the Toronto Maple Leafs, for ice hockey, the Toronto Blue Jays for baseball and Toronto FC for soccer. A visit to a home game can be a memorable part of any visit to the city. There is also the centrally located Hockey Hall of Fame for those wishing to delve deeper into the history of this aspect of authentic local sports culture.

Getting Around

A great way to see the city is the "Sightseeing Toronto" bus tour. This brings visitors not only around the business dis-

"AS A VIBRANT LIVING CITY, SPORTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CITY"

trict, lakeshore, distillery district and along the main shopping street of Young Street, but also up to the suburbs of Yorkville and Davenport and past the Harry Potter-esque neo-gothic university campus. While in the Yorkville area its worth taking the time to visit the nearby Casa Loma, a huge gothic style mansion built in the early 20th century as a private residence, but which today acts as a museum. Toronto is situated on Lake Ontario and boat tours are available to bring visitors out on the lake to enjoy its fresh air and the splendid views back to the city skyline. They also can facilitate visits to Centre Island, situated just in front of the city, which hosts an amusement park as well as a petting zoo and parks. It is a popular local spot for picnics.

Trips to Niagara

One of the primary attractions of Canada for visitors is its sensational scenery. Toronto will in many cases be the initial staging post for those heading into the interior from overseas to enjoy this natural beauty. However, Toronto also offers the potential to form a base for day trips to enjoy some of the nearby wonders and the prime example of this are the famous Niagara waterfalls. There are multiple tours offering visits to this world famous landmark from the city. Many of these offer combinations tours to also facilitate visits to other attractions such as




the botanic gardens or even local vineyards. It may come as a surprise to some, but the microclimate in the area renders it suitable for wine production and there are multiple professional vineyards offering tours and tastings not far from the metropolitan area of Toronto.



Where to Stay

A great choice of hotel in Toronto is the Omni King Edward Hotel. Centrally located in Toronto's historic old town neighbourhood, it is close to the key shopping attractions as well as the business district and waterfront. A local landmark, it originally opened in 1903 to mark a royal visit and was the height of luxury on its inauguration. In more modern times its most famous guests were probably the Beatles - their stay was marked with near riots outside by excited fans! Other notable celebrities and public figures included Elvis Presley, Margaret Thatcher, Ernest Hemingway and event Britney Spears. The hotel still exudes an old-world charm despite its updated modern furnishings and refurbishments. It also continues to reflect a royalist theme, with portraits of the former queen and other royal personalities. The afternoon tea at its Victoria Café is quite a local event, as one would expect of such a hotel. The hotel also boasts impressive wellness amenities including a spa and fitness centre and in fact the spa is Canada's first Mokara spa.

❶









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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

Magic All Around



Together takes a trip to a Winter Wonderland that is only a hop, skip and a jump from Brussels. With regular trains, the beautiful fortress city of Luxembourg is the perfect short getaway when you need a change of scene

The Winter Lights Festival cast its magical spell over the city of Luxembourg from 18 November to 8 January. Spreading seasonal cheer across the capital with its vast entertainment programme, it welcomes one and all to come soak up the yuletide spirit.

There will be no shortage of festivities, but the city is also taking a responsible approach to the energy situation. "This year, the lights will be on for shorter periods and the number of illuminated decorative elements in public space reduced," explains Alderman Patrick Goldschmidt, who has responsibility for the festivals and

"THE WINTER LIGHTS FESTIVAL CAST ITS MAGICAL SPELL OVER THE CITY OF LUXEMBOURG"

markets. "This restraint is necessary, but I am convinced that it will not prevent visitors from having a warm gastronomic experience in one of the many Christmas markets, or enjoying our concerts and activities."

There are many activities, but we would heartily recommend the City Promenade by Night. A two-hour walking tour around this enchanting city at dusk. You will be accompanied by one of the city's official guides to discover the former fortress city's top attractions and hidden gems. The sites along the way include, the prestigious Grand Ducal Palace, the Corniche - Europe's most

"JOIN A WALKING TOUR AROUND THIS ENCHANTING CITY AT DUSK"

beautiful balcony - as well as the Bock Promontory.

Don't miss the Lëtzebuerger Adventscircus on Place du Glacis, which will have an original line-up of acrobatics, comedy and various performances from 9 December to 8 January, to keep young and old entertained.

The «Niklosmaart» is back this year in the Place de Paris. In addition to the usual gastronomic stands offering Gluhwein and other seasonal alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, Gromperekichelcher, soups,



Grillwurst, waffles and churros, you will find a large selection of seasonal wreaths, decorative items, clothes, textiles and games.

In addition, on selected dates, Saint Nicolas will welcome children to the «Dem Kleesche säin Haus» in his living room at the foot of an old fireplace with real smoke. For the slightly older children musical programming is provided every day.

Warm up your winter with a trip to Luxembourg! 📍



Festive tipples to tickle your fancy

Together recommends some exceptional wines to mark the end of year festivities



From festive fizz to fine wines to complement and enhance your dining experience, *Together* suggests some tipples to tickle your fancy.

Bubbles: Champagne and crémants

There is nothing more quintessential to Christmas or New Year festivities than a flute of fizz. One of the names associated with the more exceptional Champagnes is, of course, Taittinger. Taittinger was established over a century ago and was built on the existing properties of the region with an even longer history.

The Comtes de Champagne 2012, is a sublime cuvée, synonymous with the traditions that have been developed using the accumulated know-how of this most renowned producer. It is 100% chardonnay, and is perfect as an aperitif or as an accompaniment to fish and shellfish. In the unlikely event that you can resist imbibing it over the festivities, it can also be kept for 4-7 years.

Other suggestions from the same stable include, the Brut Réserve (40% chardonnay and 60% pinot noir and meunier) or the Pré-lude «Grands Crus» (50% chardonnay and 50% pinot noir).



A very good friend used to drink a flute of Champagne every day at 11:00, he lived to the ripe old age of 95, so maybe you shouldn't just confine yourself to festivities. The other wise advice he offered was that Champagne could - and should - be served at all meals.

www.taittinger.com

www.e-wines.be

Another sparkling proposal for the Christmas meal is the Bernard-Massard crémants. Produced in Luxembourg, according to the Champagne method, Bernard-Massard bubbles are the standard bearer of Luxembourg winemaking. For the holidays, we opt for the Cuvée 1921 (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris) the brand's anniversary cuvée. The Cuvée Écusson (30% chardonnay, 25% pinot blanc, 25% riesling, 20% pinot noir), created in 1971, is the ideal choice for an aperitif or dessert. Two suggestions to toast the beginning and the end of the evening.

www.bernard-massard.lu

www.e-wines.be



Wine to dine

To accompany the many different dishes of the Christmas meal, it is the wine that takes pride of place. Gérard Bertrand, a French wine maker committed to the highest standards in viticulture, offers everything you need to ensure you enjoy a unique pairing of food and wine, with everything from red to rosé via white. The Château l'Hospitalet lies between Narbonne and the Mediterranean Sea, in the Coteaux du Languedoc region. The Château l'Hospitalet Grand Vin Rouge 2017 (65 % syrah, 16% grenache, 19% mourvèdre) would be a particularly fine companion for game or turkey dishes, the Clos d'Ora 2016 (34% syrah, 25% grenache, 20% mourvèdre and 26% carignan) and the Cigalus Rouge 2014 (8% cabernet sauvignon, 9% cabernet franc, 23% merlot, 25% syrah, 9% grenache, 21% caladoc and mourvèdre 5%) are also good alternatives. All of these wines are biodynamic.

www.gerard-bertrand.be

www.e-wines.be ⓘ

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Shanghai Kitchen

Catherine Feore visits one of the latest additions to Brussels' dining scene and celebrates that there is – finally – great Chinese food in the city centre



Shanghai Kitchen, in the Radisson Collection Hotel, just off Grand Place (47 Rue du Fossé aux Loups), is inspired by the flavours found in the streets of Shanghai - a diverse port city that is a melting pot of tastes from all over China.

The main cooking tradition in Shanghai is called Hu. It is influenced by the nearby Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and is known for its adventurous seasonings and excellent ingredients. As a port city there are also diverse international influences, it even has its own name 'Haipai cuisine' and

is unique in China. The flavours in Shanghai Kitchen are bold and also very authentic, as well as visually sensational.

We started our dinner with two cocktails. Mine, 'Love and Life' was almost like a visit to a beautiful garden. It was based on a botanical vodka, lychee liqueur, topped with Champagne and hibiscus tonic. There was also a great selection of alcohol free options. My guest - and designated driver - enjoyed an elderflower soda with a dash of lime juice.

Dining

It's worth sitting near the open kitchen counter where you can watch the chefs who are masters of fire and steam, the dishes feel and taste very elemental.

The starters were tangy delights. I was convinced to try the 'Mie de blé grillée "Four joy" à la façon de Shanghai' (pictured), which I confess didn't sound promising at first, when it was described in English as a 'gluten' dish. Happily, it was juicy and delicious.

Heart touching

'Dim Sum' literally means 'touch the heart' and I have to say these are the first dim sum that have really touched my heart. Speaking to the waitress after the meal she explained that the restaurant's dim sum are made in house, sadly most Chinese restaurants take the easier option of buying them in a supermarket. I particularly liked the Siu Mai, dim sum au porc ibérique et shiitake.



The main courses were also sumptuous. I ordered Boeuf Black Angus braisé with a réduction of soja sucré, which is one of Shanghai Kitchen's signature dishes. There is an excellent selection of European wines, but I had a glass of the Zolo, Gaucho Select Reserve Malbec Mendoza, Argentina (described as powerful, deep and dark, with an oaky finish), which was an excellent complement to the beef. My companion had Crevettes Black Tiger au wasabi.

It was really difficult to eat any more - but somehow I managed! For dessert I had the Mango sago Pomelo with chocolat blanc and meringue. Again, another feast for the eyes, while not being too heavy.

If you're in the centre at lunchtime you can try their two-course lunch for a very modest €17.50. And if you know someone of a culinary bent you could offer them a Shanghai Kitchen gift voucher.

At long last, Brussels has a Chinese restaurant worthy of China's great culinary tradition, go!

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Corica has a coffee tasting counter as well as a retail sale counter, where you can discover 28 kinds of Arabica roasted in the traditional way in Belgium.

A real institution in Brussels, the brand has a long history tinged with tradition and passion which began in 1850 rue Haute. In 1902, it was bought by the Wulleman family and it was in 2011 that Harold Anciaux and his mother bought Corica.

Harold Anciaux: "I learned the secrets of the coffee roasting trade with the Wulleman family. By taking over the brand, we have upgraded the technicality of the machines and invested in research and development in order to sublimate the coffee in what it can be so special and surprising about it. It is a local product whose taste depends on many factors including the origin of the plant, its sunshine, the picking, the drying, the roasting and finally the extraction by the barista. Also, for a good espresso we can count on a staff well trained in the techniques of using high-end machines in order to best develop the aromas of the coffee. »



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The successful objective of Corica is to offer exclusive products that cannot be found anywhere else while remaining affordable with a coffee starting at 2.50 euros. Here, there is something for everyone: ristretto, espresso, americano, latte, shakerato, etc. and homemade iced tea. Corica offers a nice selection of teas and all the accessories and machinery to make a good coffee.

When you pass the door of Corica, you are surprised by the family and warm atmosphere of the place reminiscent of Italian counter cafes. The decor is neat with a dominance of white and black and touches of wood. But the main focus is on the customer. The staff carefully seeks what will please you according to your preferences and your origins. "A person from southern Europe often drinks a very roasted, bitter and full-bodied coffee, while in the north we generally prefer a more acidic coffee. With our range we can offer the customer what he likes and over time make him discover more special things. »

In wine we detect between 200 and 300 aromas, in coffee we approach 3000 possible flavours. We will therefore be happy to taste a coffee with floral, vegetal, fruity, hazelnut, chocolate, praline, nuts, saline or biscuit notes. With a rotation of coffees offered à la carte, each visit promises us a moment of discovery and conviviality as there are few.

What's on Belgium ?

Together takes a look ahead to what's on and what's coming up in Belgium



Swedish Ecstasy

'Swedish Ecstasy' will open to the public on 17 February, curated by Daniel Birnbaum, Swedish art critic, theoretician, and former director of the Museum of Modern Art (Moderna Museet) in Stockholm, the exhibition brings together figureheads from the Swedish art world. Hilma af Klint, August Strindberg, Emanuel Swedenborg, C.F. Hill, Ernst Josephson and other visionary artists.

Mysticism and esoteric speculation runs like a red thread through their work. Hilma

af Klint, befriended Anna Cassel, one of the four women with whom she established The Five (De Fem), a group exploring spiritual realms through meditation and séances. The Five, active between 1896 and 1908, were strong believers in spirits and mediums. An additional element in the exhibition will be a version of Hilma af Klint's temple realized in virtual reality, a project currently in production in collaboration between the Hilma af Klint Foundation and digital laboratory Acute Art in London.
www.bozar.be

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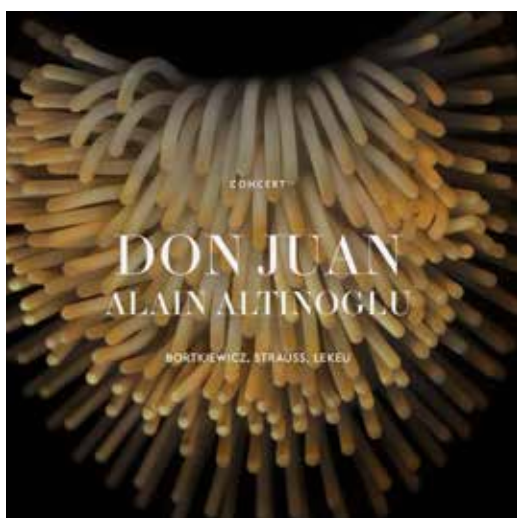
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What's on

**Izia**

Izia Higelin is becoming as well-known for her acting as her music. However, on Saturday 11 February she will be back on stage in the Ancienne Belgique under her more commonly known name Izia. Her most recent album, *La Vitesse*, was released in 2022. With *Vitesse*, Izia has moved away from her pure rock sound to embrace disco and electronic influences.

www.abconcerts.be

**Tribute to Ukraine**

On 19 February, almost one year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the La Monnaie orchestra will stage a concert that will be in part an expression of its solidarity with the Ukrainian people. First and foremost, we will hear the Piano Concerto No.2 for Left Hand (1924) by the Ukrainian composer Sergei Bortkiewicz, performed here by his compatriot Illa Ovcharenko, but also the melancholic Adagio pour Quatuor d'orchestre (1891), a lament by the Belgian composer Guillaume Lekeu. In the second part of the concert, there will be two symphonic works by Richard Strauss. The concert will take place in the Salle Henri le Boeuf in the Bozar.

www.lamonnaiedemunt.be

**ANIMA 2023**

Anima, the Brussels International Animation Film Festival, will take place from 17 to 26 February and will celebrate its 42nd edition. The festival takes place over ten days during the Carnival holidays to celebrate animation with over 100 screenings, events, virtual VR films, exhibitions, workshops for children and professional meetings. This year, animation films from Spain will be put in the spotlight!

The entire Anima 2023 programme will be online from Tuesday 24 January.

www.animafestival.be

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18.05
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KISS

13.06.2023
PALAIS 12, BRUSSELS EXPO

JETHRO TULL

07.09.2023
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08.09.2023
DE ROMA, ANTWERP

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC

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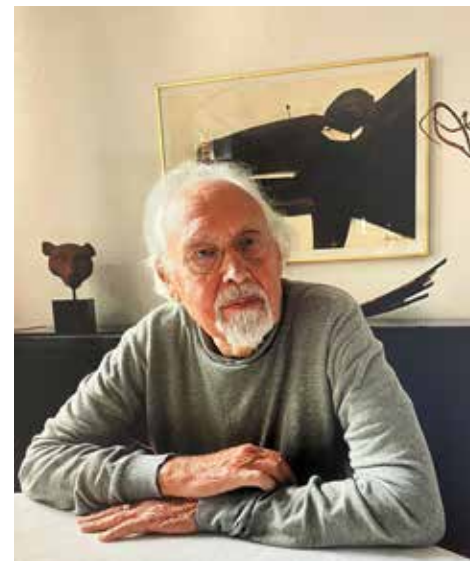


Photo © Valerie Darteville

Jean-Pierre Ghysels

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts is celebrating Belgian sculptor Jean-Pierre Ghysels. Ghysels studied with Zadkine at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. Over the years, he has established himself as an essential figure in Belgian contemporary sculpture. His sculptures are recognisable for their fluid and abstract style. The sixteen sculptures that make up the exhibition have their own singularity and have in common the particularity of having been conceived and created to be examined from all angles. Jean-Pierre Ghysels' creations are the result of a dialogue with the material, an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

Several of Ghysels' works decorate Brussels, for example they can be found in the Botanique metro station or the sculpture adorning the lake, at the foot of the Tour du Midi. Closes: 12 February
www.fine-arts-museum.be





Photo © Christian Carez



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What's on



Planetarium - Julien Meert

Sorry We're Closed presents a new series of paintings by Julien Meert. The «Planetarium» series of paintings is about the absurdity of our condition as human beings, living on a planet floating in an infinite immensity. The paintings treat these metaphysical, even existential questions, with a certain theatricality. 19 January to 18 March.

www.sorrywewereclosed.com ⓘ



What's on

Monet meets Mitchell

The Louis Vuitton Foundation offers an inspired pairing of two artists known for their exuberant and joyous celebration of the natural environment



The MONET-MITCHELL and Joan Mitchell Retrospective at the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, in the Frank Gehry-designed Louis Vuitton Foundation, is not to be missed. The exhibition has two parts, a 'dialogue' between two exceptional artists, Claude Monet and Joan Mitchell and a more indepth retrospective of the work of Mitchell.

Partnering with the Musée Marmottan Monet, the dialogue shows the rapport with

nature of both Monet's abstract impressionism and Mitchell's abstract expressionism. There appears to be a meeting of minds. The rapprochement between the two artists was reinforced by Joan Mitchell's move in 1968 to Vétheuil, close to where Monet lived between 1878-1881.

"A 'DIALOGUE' BETWEEN TWO EXCEPTIONAL ARTISTS"

Faced with the same landscape - namely the banks of the Seine - Monet and Mitchell developed a pictorial approach that they defined in similar terms, with Monet referring to "sensation" and Mitchell to "feelings".



Inspired by the natural surroundings of the Paris Region, both artists shared an acute sensitivity to light and colour.

Through some seventy emblematic works by both artists, the exhibition offers the public an enchanting and immersive journey with striking visual and thematic parallels. There are thirty-five works by Claude Monet, including twenty-five artworks belonging to the Musée Marmottan. These paintings are in a 'dialogue' with thirty-five works - twenty-five paintings and ten pastels - by Joan Mitchell.

Alongside the "Monet-Mitchell" exhibition, the Fondation Louis Vuitton presents the most significant Joan Mitchell retrospective to be shown in Europe in almost 30 years. This exhibition, which is co-organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) and presented in Paris by Fonda-

"A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW TWO BODIES OF WORK THAT ARE OTHERWISE SCATTERED"

tion Louis Vuitton, aims to raise public awareness of Joan Mitchell's work.

"I carry my landscapes around with me," Mitchell often declared. Inspired by her memories, the feelings they evoked and by the work of great modern masters (Van Gogh, Cézanne, Matisse, and Monet, among others), Mitchell also found inspiration and equivalences in music and poetry, as emphasized by the numerous documents presented in the exhibition.

The exhibition is also a unique opportunity to view two bodies of work that are otherwise scattered hither and yon: Claude Monet's Agapanthus triptych, which he considered to be "one of his four best series"; and Joan Mitchell's La Grande Vallée: a selection of ten paintings from the Grand Vallée series (1983-84), brought together almost four decades after its fragmentary exhibition at the Galerie Jean Fournier in 1984.

The exhibition will close on 27 February 2023.

www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr



Cinema: The best of the big screen

James Drew looks at four movies showing in cinemas in the weeks to come. From Irish black comedy to the underbelly of the 'Golden Age' of Hollywood.



The Stranger

The Stranger is an Australian psychological crime thriller film written and directed by Thomas M. Wright, starring Joel Edgerton and Sean Harris. Based on the non-fiction book *The Sting: The Undercover Operation That Caught Daniel Morcombe's Killer* by Kate Kyriacou, and inspired by the murder investigation of Daniel Morcombe, the film follows an investigation of a child abduction case, with an undercover police officer (Edgerton) in a sting operation tasked with getting close to and forming a friendship with the prime suspect (Harris). This is Wright's second film, he is better known as an actor. The great Australian director Jane Campion cast him in her series *Top of the Lake* and she has been a mentor in his directorial work.

Running time: 116 minutes.

Avatar: The Way of Water

Set more than a decade after the events of the first film, *Avatar: The Way of Water* begins to tell the story of the Sully family, the trouble that follows them, the lengths they go to keep each other safe, the battles they fight to stay alive, and the tragedies they endure. It is the second film in James Cameron's *Avatar* franchise, following *Avatar* (2009). Cast members Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Stephen Lang, Joel David Moore, CCH Pounder, Giovanni Ribisi, Dileep Rao, and Matt Gerald reprise their roles from the original film, with Sigourney Weaver returning in a different role.

Running time: 190 minutes.

The Banshees of Inisherin

The Banshees of Inisherin is a black tragicomedy film written and directed by Martin McDonagh. The film follows lifelong friends (Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson) who find themselves at an impasse when one abruptly ends their relationship; Kerry Condon and Barry Keoghan also star. It reunites Farrell and Gleeson, who previously worked together on McDonagh's directorial debut *In Bruges* (2008).

Running time: 114 minutes.

Babylon

Babylon is an upcoming American epic period comedy-drama film written and directed by Damien Chazelle. It features an ensemble cast that includes Brad Pitt, Margot Robbie, Diego Calva, Jovan Adepo, Li Jun Li, Jean Smart and Tobey Maguire. The film follows the rise and fall of multiple characters during Hollywood's transition from silent films to sound films in the late 1920s - a tale of outsized ambition and outrageous excess, it traces the rise and fall of multiple characters during an era of unbridled decadence and depravity in early Hollywood.

Running time: 188 minutes.

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JAGUAR LAND ROVER BRUSSELS



Take a former racing driver, a passion for beautiful car brands and a head for business, mix this all together with a real customer focus and a flair for innovation, and there you have the identikit of Jean-Michel Martin, CEO of the Jaguar Land Rover Brussels automotive group.

After 20 years of stability, the motor industry has had to contend with huge changes over the last three or four years. "Several factors are involved", explains Arnaud Geurts, Operations Manager at the Waterloo dealership. "On the one hand, there's the aspirations of new generations which are growing all the time, and then there's the environment that's changed. For example, changes in terms of taxation and the electrification of the market - these are all challenges for the public, for brands and for distributors, but they're very exciting ones."

► A WINNING TRIO

The three dealerships all guarantee exactly the same level of sales and after-sales service thanks to the twenty or so staff employed in each. However, they each have their own special emphasis. With its geographical location, Zaventem is more corporate and business-oriented, while the managers at Drogenbos describe their dealership as a 'one-stop-shop', with a 'special vehicles' department. At Waterloo, it's the local and family-friendly aspect which is paramount.

"Personalised contact with our customers is hugely important to us: we're not just here to sell cars", explains Jean-Michel Martin's daughter, Lauren Martin, who has joined the group's marketing and communications department. "We've set up customer panels so we can ask our customers to evaluate our dealerships and the after-sales service they provide."

Customised service and the human aspect are not empty words in this company where the boss, and all his employees, have always been keen to embrace renewal.

► AT THE CUTTING EDGE

The BMW and MINI businesses have now been transferred, but in addition to these JLR dealerships in Zaventem, Drogenbos and Waterloo, the chain also has two bodywork centres and a used car outlet which sells only its brands. "I chose these brands because I wanted to invest in premium brands that are not only known for their aesthetic qualities and exceptional performance, but which are also at the cutting edge of technological progress", explains the manager, who also points out the mythical status of Land Rover and the innovation capabilities of Jaguar.

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