

BELGIUM BOOMS @ WAVES VIENNA 2013

- Belgium: Qué?
- Focus on Pop & Rock from Belgium: A brief musical history
- Live Music in Belgium; country of clubs, venues and festivals
- Belgian Media
- Record Industry, Music Sales and other figures
- Politics and culture funding
- Contact details

Belgium: Qué?

Belgium is fairly small – 11 million people – federal state in the heart of Europe, comprising 3 regions (Flemish, Walloon, Brussels-capital), 3 communities (Dutch, federation Wallonia-Brussels, German), and 4 language areas (Dutch, French, German and Brussels as a bilingual area). As a neighbour of the Netherlands, Germany and France (and England just a short swim away), Belgium pretty much *is* the border between Germanic and Latin Europe, a crossroad of different cultures. Over the centuries, its territory has been conquered and ruled over by more European powers than there are composing members of the Strauss family. And being the European capital, Brussels is a genuine magnet for international immigrants, visitors and cultural influences. This is why Belgium is rich in creative talent and overflowing with cultural activities. Music thrives everywhere!

Focus on Pop & Rock from Belgium: A brief musical history

As a musical nation, it is - probably like Austria - difficult to market abroad. A small and complicated country with a rather dull image and stuck with a handful of tired clichés (chocolate, fries or waffles). A pity, as its musical heritage is nothing to be embarrassed about: Jacques Brel, Front 242, Adamo, Toots Thielemans, Django Reinhardt, Vaya Con Dios, Arno & TC Matic, Telex, New Beat, ... Even the saxophone itself is a Belgian invention. Belgium has also proved to be a fertile home ground to some of the most influential, historical record labels in the history of modern music: PIAS, R&S, Les Disques Du Crépuscule, Crammed or Antler-Subway, to name only a few.

Since a decade or two, more and more consecutive stories of Belgian pop & rock artists 'making it' across the borders have been appearing. In the minds of many, Antwerp rock band dEUS paved the way in 1994. The international success of their exhilarating, creative and unconventional debut album '*Worst Case Scenario*' inspired other groups to believe it became possible to a) be born in Belgium, b) sound unlike what typical radio formats dictate and c) still find your audience in European countries and beyond. Soulwax/2ManyDJ's, Girls in Hawaii, Venus, Axelle Red, Hooverphonic, Ghinzu, Zita Swoon, Zap Mama, Starflam, and K's Choice are some of the groups who have managed to conquer ground abroad with little artistic compromise.

Ever since, a new generation arises every few years and shows itself to be increasingly ambitious. While most of the aforementioned bands are still going strong, more recent Belgian success stories include Selah Sue, BRNS, Milow, Puggy, Triggerfinger, Stromae, Black Box Revelation, Goose, Montevideo, Great Mountain Fire, Girls in Hawaii, Absynthe Minded, Balthazar,... Not all of these are household names (yet) in British, Spanish, Norwegian or Austrian homes, but every single one of them is determined to work their socks off and conquer hearts and minds, day by day.

So, assuming this isn't all about silly chauvinism and Belgium really *is* home to such extraordinary musical talent, would there be a logical explanation to this phenomenon? Perhaps so - here are at least a few elements contributing to our musical climate.

Live Music in Belgium; Country of clubs, venues and festivals

Being a small country needn't mean playing second fiddle to your next-door neighbours. When it comes to organizing concerts: size doesn't matter! Clubs, concert venues and festivals... Belgium offers them in all shapes and sizes: from comfy clubs, via distinctive concert venues, to festivals that can be counted among the best in the world.

These are, however, three different types of concert organisations, each with their own characteristics; independent yet inextricably linked to each other. The common factor is quite possibly the unique and crucial position that each of these occupies in the development of a healthy musical landscape.

Over the past few years, a substantial professionalization has been implemented which led to "quality" being the coordinating and competitive parameter: quality of light and sound, staging, communication, price, environment, accessibility, catering and of course the artistic content: top quality! This results in a huge number of international acts effortlessly finding their way to the Belgian stages.

Belgium has a long-lasting tradition of world-class summer festivals. Rock Werchter, Pukkelpop, Dour, Couleur Café, Nuits Botanique, I Love Techno and Tomorrowland are some of our internationally best known and most awarded examples, but underneath are literally hundreds of fine music festivals, attracting millions of visitors each year. Claiming that Belgian music festivals have built a strong reputation abroad is pushing an open door.

This positive image is confirmed each year during the European Festival Awards, where Belgian festivals as a rule crowd the shortlists in all categories and often end up winning the awards. In 2012, Tomorrowland was awarded as 'Best Major Festival', thus following in the footsteps of Sziget Festival. Tomorrowland, the electronic dance music festival set in fairy-tale surroundings, lured 180,000 visitors from 75 different countries in 2012. In September 2013, the festival will be organizing its first American edition: Tomorrowworld, in the American village Chattahoochee Hills near Atlanta.

The European Festival Awards 2012 also awarded Pukkelpop (Promoter of the Year). Herman Schueremans, organizer of Rock Werchter and driving force behind concert organisation Live Nation in Belgium, received a Lifetime Achievement Award. Rock Werchter, the biggest Belgian pop- and rock festival, won the international 2013-ILMC Arthur Award for 'Best Festival of the world' for the fifth (!)

time. Also festivals such as Dour, Cactusfestival and I Love Techno already won European Festival Awards in the past.

And fun doesn't stop when summer's over. A number of renovated and excellent concert clubs are to be found in the largest cities (Ancienne Belgique and Botanique in Brussels, Vooruit in Ghent, Trix in Antwerp, Club Les Ardentes in Liège, to name but a few) plus a number of smaller clubs across the country run professionally by people with a heart for good music. The biggest arena in Belgium is the Lotto Arena in Antwerp, followed by Forrest National Arena in Brussels. Each year all of them welcome many international acts.

In Flanders, clubs partly organized themselves in the umbrella organisation **Clubcircuit**, while in Wallonia the clubs were joined under the name **Club Plasma**. Club Circuit has 11 members, including Cactus Muziekcentrum (Bruges), De Kreun (Kortrijk), De Zwerver (Ostend), Democrazy (Ghent), Petrol Club (Antwerp) and 4AD (Diksmuide). Club Plasma represents 10 venues, including Les Ardentes Club (Liege), Atelier Rock (Huy), Coliseum (Charleroi), Le Belvedere (Namur), Magasin 4 and Recyclart (both in Brussels). Flemish festivals are united in **FMIV** (Federatie van Muziekfestivals in Vlaanderen), and '**Le Circuit des Festivals**' represents festivals in the French-speaking part of the country.

Clubs as well as concert venues and festivals are equally important for the growth and promotion of Belgian music. They play a key role in helping young groups to blossom, by allowing them to play and present themselves. Every other year, hundreds of new bands line up to enter Humo's **Rock Rally** - a prestigious bi-annual talent hunt which few of our most successful artists didn't participate at some point. Besides that, Belgium has many other music contests and supporting organisations like **Poppunt** and **Court Circuit**, giving young talent advice regarding the music industry and/or a helping hand in finding opportunities to play gigs.

In addition to international promoter **Live Nation**, other important players on the concert circuit are Greenhouse Talent, Peter Verstraelen Concerts, Nada Booking, UBU – Production de Concerts, Toutpartout Agency and Busker.

Below you can find a small selection of the many clubs, venues and festivals Belgium is proud to call its own.

Belgian Media

The Belgian media landscape is also divided in two parts by language. Flanders as well as Wallonia has its own radio and TV channels, newspapers and weeklies, specialised websites ...

Radio

Belgium is blessed with a couple of influential national radio stations who dare to look beyond what Western mainstream pop culture has to offer. They open their FM airwaves to a wide variety of musical styles, origins and attitudes.

The Flemish public service broadcasting VRT dominates the Flemish radio landscape, with 5 radio channels: Radio 1, Radio 2, Klara, Studio Brussel and MNM. The different channels are profiled in such a way they offer a wide range of music genres. Studio Brussel is the main youth channel with a lot of

attention for pop, rock and dance music. The biggest commercial channels in Flanders are Q Music and Joe FM.

In Wallonia and Brussels, the radio landscape is quite diverse. The public broadcaster (RTBF) has no less than 5 general and specialist channels: La Première (generalist), VivaCité (generalist), Musique 3 (classical), Classic 21 (classic rock) and Pure FM (pop-rock). The latter are targeted at young people, through pop-rock-electro programming that is either niche or commercial. Amongst the private radios, Bel RTL (generalist), Contact (pop) and NRJ (pop-rock-dance hits) have the largest audiences. Programmes specialised in a specific genre flourish on the web and as podcasts (Radio Rectangle, Laid Back Radio).

Private and associative radios are obliged to broadcast a minimum of 4.5% music works from artists or producers from the French-speaking part of the country per year, as well as 30% of songs in French. On the public side, the quotas are even higher: minimum 10% of music artists or producers from the French-speaking part of the country.

In Flanders only the public service radio has to broadcast a minimum of 25 % of music productions from artists or producers residing in Flanders. The public service radio also supports Dutch language music. At least 30 % of the music played on Radio 2 is Dutch. Radio 1 aims for a minimum of 15 % Dutch language productions.

TV

The most watched TV channels in Flanders are Eén (public service) and VTM (commercial channel). 8, Canvas (VRT) and OP12 (VRT) are the 3 channels that pay more attention to culture and include music in their broadcast programming (documentaries, festival reports,...). JIM, TMF and MTV are commercial youth channels with extra attention for music, with a small range of viewers though.

On the French-speaking side, the influence of the French channels can be clearly felt, as TF1 (Europe's biggest channel) and the French public broadcasters (France 2 and France3) are the most watched, after the foremost public (RTBF) and private (RTL-TVI) Francophone Belgian channels. Cultural programmes are essentially covered by the second public channel (La Deux) and ARTE Belgique, the Belgian imprint of the Franco-German channel, through daily cultural programmes (live music session, artist interviews,...). The younger audience can be found on Club RTL and Plug RTL, mostly focused on broadcasting music clips. The audience reach is more limited.

Print and web

Le Soir and *La Libre Belgique* are the dailies that cover culture the most, through weekly supplements as well as concert and album reviews. The weekly *Le Vif/Focus* covers cultural news from a broader perspective, while the monthly *Rif-Raf*, distributed free at music venues, specialises in news from the Belgian alternative scene. Lastly, the magazine *Larsen*, published by the *Conseil de la Musique* covers all the music styles active in Wallonia and Brussels. Influential music blogs include *Goute Mes Disques*, *Frontstage* and *Let it Sound*.

De Morgen and *De Standaard* are the 2 Flemish papers that pay most attention to culture. The main weeklies with a heart for pop and rock music are *Humo* and *Focus Knack*. Next to these there are also a number of specialised, alternative music magazines such as *Rif Raf* and *Gonzo Circus*.

On the internet music lovers can also find exactly what they are looking for on a number of Flemish sites

that focus on pop and rock (cutting edge, enola.be, damusic.be, indiestyle.be, ...). The hippest Belgian music blog is disco naïveté.

Record Industry, Music Sales and other figures

Of the 4 major record labels in Belgium (UMG, SME, WMG and EMI), UMG is the biggest company. Belgium counts a lot of independent labels such as PIAS, NEWS, 62TV Records, CNR, Crammed, ZealRecords or Waste My Records.

In 2012, more than 18.5 million music albums were sold in Belgium (singles, DVD/blu-ray, vinyl), which results in a total turnover of more than 126 million euros. Like pretty much elsewhere, sales are still going down year after year: -12% in 2012, according to BEA (Belgian Entertainment Association). Last year, Belgians bought 13.3% fewer albums than the year before, while sales of singles and individual songs went up 12.6%. 95% of all albums are still purchased as a traditional Compact Disc, though vinyl (+38.3%) and album downloads (+6.2%) are gaining market share. Music streaming services are slowly gaining importance and now account for 3% of the total music market.

That growth is mainly due to the success of new streaming services on the Belgian market, such as Deezer and Spotify, which are available in Belgium since the end of 2011. These services offer access to more than 20 million songs and video clips that consumers can listen or watch on their PC, tablet or smartphone either for free or for a monthly fee.

The Belgian music market can also be divided into two parts: The Flemish and the French-speaking market. In Flanders, Belgian music productions take up 41% of total sales, compared to 12% in the French-speaking part.

In 2012, revenues of **Sabam** - the Belgian Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers - increased to 146.2 million Euro (+3.6%). This first growth in 5 years' time can largely be accounted to two key elements: a) a further increase in the number of live concerts in Belgium and b) a 14% rise in income from music copyrights by Belgian artists abroad. Belgian music's blossoming indeed! In 2012, Sabam managed the copyright for more than 38,000 authors and composers. In Belgium Sabam represents 43.7 million works by Belgian and foreign authors.

Cultural policy

Wallonie-Bruxelles Musiques (WBM) was created in 1984 to help artists, producers and publishers from the French-speaking community of Wallonia and Brussels to make their mark in the musical cultural industry. In 1999 the Flemish government established Flanders Music Centre, with the main objective to support the professional music sector and promote Flemish music. When it comes to promoting music abroad, both organisations regularly join forces. They take the lead in presenting artists and companies at music markets, they support the presence of artists at international showcase events, they invite foreign professionals at major music events in Belgium and participate in international networks.

Flanders Music Centre is the driving force behind MuziekOverleg, a deliberation platform of 19 professional music organisations. In 2010 the "MuziekOverleg" published 'Music is Life! An integrated

vision for the music industry' presenting a clear survey of the challenges the Flemish music sector is facing. MuziekOverleg created a structural dialogue with the government and was recently recognized as an official discussion partner by Flemish culture minister Schauvliege. December 2011, the plenary meeting of Flemish parliament approved the resolution 'Action plan for music in Flanders', based on the text of MuziekOverleg. This resolution proposes 15 concrete recommendations and offers useful and effective guidelines for a sustainable and stimulating government music policy.

The Flemish minister for Culture is currently working on a new Arts Decree that stipulates the subsidy criteria for supporting artists and culture organisations from several disciplines (music, theatre, visual arts,...). They can apply for structural long term support, for project subsidy or for financial contribution towards travel and accommodation expenses. Within the Amateur Arts Decree, the Flemish Government supports organisations such as Poppunt. Poppunt stimulates the creation of opportunities for beginning and semi-professional pop & rock musicians and DJs.

On the French-speaking side, the government supports contemporary music through subsidies for producing sound recordings, creating shows, appearances at festivals and music venues and the production of music clips. Modest structural aid is also granted to labels and booking agencies. Lastly, funds are made available for artists appearing abroad. All music genres are supported.

For more information on various aspects of the Belgian music scene, please visit:

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T +32 (0)2 775 81 40

<http://www.universalmusic.be>

V2 RECORDS BENELUX

CONTACT

An Lesneuck

info@v2benelux.be

ADDRESS

Hooikaai 33-35 - 1000 Brussels – Belgium

+32 (0) 27429280

<http://www.v2benelux.com/index.php>

WASTE MY RECORDS

CONTACT

Yves Vaes

wastemyrecordsking@gmail.com

<http://wastemyrecords.com>

WARNER MUSIC BELGIUM

CONTACT

Bert Bieseman

bert.bieseman@warnermusic.com

ADDRESS

Romeinsesteenweg 468 b - 1853 Grimbergen

T +32 (0)2 263 03 00

<http://www.warnermusic.be>

ZEAL

CONTACT

Geert Mets

Geert.mets@skynet.be

<http://www.zealrecords.com/>

ANORAK SUPERSPORT

CONTACT

calo@anoraksupersport.com

ADDRESS

Chausée de Liège 176 - 4500 Huy, Belgium

www.anoraksupersport.be

Selection of booking agencies

LIVE NATION

CONTACT

Teddy Hillaert

teddy.hillaert@livenation.be

ADDRESS

Stephenson Plaza, Blarenberglaan 3A - 2800 Mechelen -Belgium

T +32 15 29.59.00

<http://www.livenation.be/>

GREENHOUSE TALENT

CONTACT

Pascal Van de Velde

pascal@greenhousetalent.be

ADDRESS

Sint-Jacobsnieuwstraat 50 - 9000 Gent - Belgium

T + 32 9 220 99 45

<http://www.greenhousetalent.com/>

PETER VERSTRAELEN BOOKINGS

CONTACT

Peter Verstraelen

peter@peterverstraelen.com

ADDRESS

Jaak Blockxstraat 58 - 2640 Mortsel - Belgium

T +32/(0)3/4482501

<http://www.peterverstraelen.com/nl/index.php>

TOUT PARTOUT

CONTACT

Steven Thomassen

steven@toutpartout.be

ADDRESS

Nieuwpoort 18 - 9000 Gent (Belgium)

T +32(0)9.233.06.02

<http://www.toutpartout.be/>

BUSKER

CONTACT

Werner Dewachter

werner@busker.be

ADDRESS

Ninoofsesteenweg 1 - 1500 Halle - Belgium

T +32 2 300 80 90

<http://www.busker.be/>

L & S

CONTACT

Mark Strauven

info@LSagency.be

ADDRESS

Postbus 5 - 3800 Sint-Truiden - Belgium

T +32 (0)11/67 17 01

<http://www.lsagency.net/>

NADA BOOKING

CONTACT

Pierre Van Braekel:

pierre@nadabooking.be

ADDRESS

Rue de Veeweyde, 100 – 1070 Brussels – Belgium

T: +32 2 223.21.89

www.nadabooking.be

STAGE MANIA

CONTACT

Franky Roels

franky@stage-mania.com

ADDRESS

J.B.Courtmansstraat 19 - 9290 Berlare - Belgium

T +32 474 90 63 64

<http://www.stage-mania.com/index/home.html>

SKINFAMA (Urban Music)

CONTACT

Lino Grumio (CEO) / Grégory Jacquain (Artistic Director)

info@skinfama.com

ADDRESS

25 rue Ransfort – 1080 Brussels – Belgium

T: +32 2 248 20 85

www.skinfama.com

INTERSECTION

CONTACT

Marc Smeesters :- marc@intersection.be

Fabrice Havenne - fabrice@intersection.be

ADDRESS

Rue Emile Feron, 70 – 1070 Brussels – Belgium

+ 32 2 533 22 21

www.intersection.be

PROGRESS BOOKING

CONTACT

Arnaud De Koninck

arnaud@progressbooking.be

ADDRESS

Rue Emile Féron, 70 – 1060 Brussels – Belgium

T :+32 2 535 55 32

www.progressbooking.be

UBU

CONTACT

Patrick Dubucq

ubu@skynet.be

ADDRESS

Rue P. Van Obberghem, 92 – 1140 Brussels – Belgium

T: + 32 2 245.28.10

<https://www.facebook.com/ubuproduction>

BOOGIE-TOWN AGENCY

CONTACT

Fred Maréchal

boogietown@swing.be

ADDRESS

Chemin de bragues, 5 – 7823 Gibecq – Belgium

T: +32 474 625201

<http://boogietown.skynetblogs.be/>

BOOBOOKING

CONTACT

Jean-François Lacroix

jean@boobooking.be

ADDRESS

T: +32 486 69.05.13

www.boobooking.be

Selection of professional organisations (also mentioned in the text)

Wallonie-Bruxelles Musiques

CONTACT

wbm@cfwb.be

18 Place E. Flagey (Bte 10), B - 1050 Brussels

Tel : + 32 2 218 62 09

<http://www.wbm.be/>

Flanders Music Centre

CONTACT

Wouter Degraeve

wouter@muziekcentrum.be

Steenstraat 25 -1000 Brussels

Tel: + 32 2 504 90 90

www.muziekcentrum.be

POPPUNT (supporting beginning and semi-professional musicians and DJ's)

CONTACT

Luc Nowé

luc@poppunt.be

www.poppunt.be

COURT CIRCUIT

CONTACT

Amandine Vandermeir

amandine@courtcircuit.be

www.courtcircuit.be

CLUBCIRCUIT (*Federation of Music Clubs in Flanders*)

CONTACT

Marc Steens

marc@clubcircuit.be

www.clubcircuit.be

CLUB PLASMA (*Federation of Music Clubs in Wallonia*)

CONTACT

David Dehard
david@courtcircuit.be.
www.clubplasma.be

FMIV (federation of Music Festivals in Flanders)

CONTACT

Serge Platel
serge@festival.be
www.fmiv.be

LE CIRCUIT DES FESTIVALS

CONTACT

David Dehard
david@courtcircuit.be
<http://www.circuitdesfestivals.be>

MUZIEKOVERLEG (deliberation platform of 19 professional music organisations)

CONTACT

Wouter Degraeve
wouter@muziekcentrum.be

MMAF (Music Managers Federation)

CONTACT

Maarten Quaghebeur
maarten@rockoco.be
<http://www.mmafbelgium.be>

SABAM (Belgian Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers)

CONTACT

contact@sabm.be
www.sabam.be

BEA (Belgian Entertainment Association)

CONTACT

Olivier Maeterlinck

olivier.maeterlinck@belgianentertainment.be

www.belgianentertainment.be

BIMA (Belgian Independent Music Association)

CONTACT

Geert De Blaere

Geert.DeBlaere@newsnv.be

www.bima.be