

busworld newsletter

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BEST BUSWORLD KORTRIJK

The 18th edition of Busworld was held in Kortrijk from 21 to 26 October and broke all records. A total of 25,236 visitors came from 107 countries, the first time that visitors to Busworld have passed the 25,000 threshold. They saw vehicles from 48 manufacturers, plus components, accessories and services from another 266 exhibitors.

The exhibition area was larger than ever before, thanks to the construction of a new hall 4, with 7,750sq m of floor space. Even so, some exhibitors had to be accommodated in temporary tented pavilions at the front of the Expo site.

Busworld Kortrijk is the most important of all the international exhibitions for the bus and coach industry. That was confirmed by the number of chief and other senior executives of exhibitors who stayed for several days in Busworld.

Every day was busy and it was noticeable that significant numbers of trade visitors had come to do business. They walked from stand



The new VDL Jonckheere coach attracted much favourable comment.

to stand, comparing the latest products, discussing prices, and doing deals. There was no rest for the exhibitors, having to rush home

from Kortrijk to confirm business, follow up enquiries and send out quotations. That is what a successful exhibition is all about.

Euro 4 emission limits came into force for new models put into service on or after 1 October 2005. Existing models must comply no later than 1 October 2006. All the manufacturers revealed their plans on how they intend to comply with the new limits. It is probably fair to say that the vast majority of coach operators will take Euro 3 models for the 2006 season and will not have to plan for Euro 4 until they place orders for deliveries in 2007. For bus companies, there may well be advantages in moving to Euro 4 as soon as suitable vehicles become available.



A novel cabriolet midicoach by Indcar of Spain



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Everyone was aware that there are different ways of making engines comply with Euro 4 limits. MAN and Scania have opted for Exhaust Gas Recirculation, where a limited percentage of exhaust gases are fed back into the engine to reduce levels of nitrous oxides. Ranged against them, Cummins, DAF, Iveco, Mercedes-Benz and Volvo have all decided to opt for Selective Catalytic Reduction. Small amounts of an ammonia-based substance, or urea, has to be injected into the exhaust gases by a dosing unit.

If the early initiative had gone to the EGR camp, the supporters of SCR caught up at Kortrijk. Some of them had displays that showed the simplicity of adding urea at the same time as refilling with diesel. Irisbus had conducted a series of trials with independent testers who have verified that there are savings of around 4-5% on Euro 4 engines compared with Euro 3.

The SCR manufacturers were supported by chemical companies who face the major challenge of establishing a network of refuelling points all across Europe, not just for buses and coaches, but also for the much larger truck industry.

Busworld Kortrijk took the mystery out of SCR. The urea tank on a bus can be no larger than a typical briefcase, and around twice that size will be sufficient for a coach. Furthermore, SCR technology can easily be taken forward to Euro 5 emission limits, simply by altering the dosage unit to inject a little more urea. Mercedes-Benz suggests

that city bus operators ought to go straight to Euro 5 now, because they will have not only lower and more environmentally-friendly emissions, but will also enhance the residual values of vehicles.

Mention should also be made of Caterpillar. They have developed an alternative system, ACERT, that needs no additive but meets Euro 4 limits.

Manufacturers love to launch new models at Busworld Kortrijk, because it attracts such an international audience. Mercedes-Benz showed its new Travego coach and also the Citaro LE, a low entry urban bus that was finished to a very high standard. Setra launched its MultiClass models – multi-purpose vehicles that are capable of running regular line services and doing more local excursion work. Volvo showed the 8700LEA, a low entry articulated bus powered by a large horizontal engine at the rear.

One of the stars of the show was the new VDL Jonckheere coach. As part of the continuing integration of the VDL family, Jonckheere will be used as the model name, with the body to be available on Scania, VDL Bus and Volvo chassis. The fashionable sharp styling was by Axel Enthoven, and the overall execution was highly commendable.

Van Hool is well known for its conservative styling. It is popular



This was the 1,000th vehicle supplied by Temsa to a French customer.

with customers, because it helps to keep up the residual values of their older Van Hool models. Subtle changes were made to the styling of the popular T9 range, but it took an experienced eye to pick them out.

Temsa had a large and impressive stand. One of their highlights was the hand-over of the 1,000th coach sold to a customer in France.

It is rare for trolleybuses to be exhibited in Busworld Kortrijk, but Solaris showed a new model with the latest electronics, developed in conjunction with Cegelec and the bus company in the Czech city of Ostrava.

Irisbus had a large and very spacious stand, with several new vehicles,



Castrosua showed this low floor interurban coach for a Spanish customer

including the interurban Arway. It will be built in the Czech Republic. Scania showed a low entry bus and a selection of coaches from its successful partnership with Irizar. The two companies have created a strong coach brand in just a decade.

MAN and Neoplan have renewed almost all their model ranges in the last two years, one of the latest editions being a 12.99m long version of the stunning Starliner. The designers had cleverly retained the long wheelbase, with its high luggage capacity, opting instead for a shorter rear overhang.

The Spanish bodybuilding industry was well represented with a wide range of products. Hispano made a tasteful facelift to its Divo coach and Noge had the first of its futuristic Titanium models for a French customer.

Conversations with manufacturers and suppliers regularly came round to weight. The authorities in some countries are clamping down on vehicles that exceed maximum permitted axle weight limits.

That led to a rise in demand for tri-axle coaches, but, looking at European registrations this year, demand for them has fallen back. The long term answer may well be the greater use of composites in construction, but that will require customers to accept a considerably higher initial price, with expected savings in running costs.

Another trend, disconcerting to Western Europeans, is the steady drift of manufacturing jobs to Central and Eastern Europe, Turkey and even further afield. All the top five Western European manufacturers have factories in these regions, building to high standards of quality. Supply industries are also developing in these parts of the world, with exhibitors from places like Turkey and China.

Fortunately, the influence of Western European manufacturers, for vehicles and components, remains very strong in global terms, through overseas subsidiaries, joint ventures, licence agreements and assemblers. That alone will ensure the continuing success and importance of Busworld Kortrijk.



All the coaches lined up for the judges

EUROPEAN COACH WEEK

The weather was unseasonably mild and sunny for European Coach Week, held immediately before Busworld Kortrijk. Piet Vintevogel and Hendrik Demeyer led a team of judges who looked at various aspects of two classes of vehicles. There were eight new full-size touring coaches and six midicoaches which competed in a variety of tests.

The judges took the coaches over a variety of roads and to different locations around Kortrijk, simulating actual touring conditions. They carried out a variety of running and static tests, assessing the vehicles from the viewpoint of drivers, travel guides and passengers.

Safety tests looked at overall safety for drivers and passengers on

board the coaches. Technical safety tests included satellite navigation, manoeuvrability and the detection and elimination of blind spots. Functionality tests covered a wide range of equipment, including that for drivers and travel guides, also anti-theft devices, instrumentation, displays and speed limiters. The comfort test concentrated on seats, seat equipment, lighting, visibility for passengers, accessibility, on-board catering and cleaning facilities, and the arrangements for carrying luggage, both inside and beneath the passenger area. Aesthetics tests concentrated on style and visual appeal, including the most attractive interiors and exteriors and special features.

A beautifully appointed Van Hool T916 Astron won the Gold award.



The winners of the silver and gold awards on the left and right respectively

MIEKE GLORIEUX STEPS UP

It was around 1970 that Luc Glorieux had two inspirations, resulting in the arrival of his daughter, Mieke, and the first Busworld Kortrijk. So it is now wholly appropriate that Mieke has stepped up to become Director of Busworld Kortrijk, with Luc taking responsibility for International and Busworld TV.



Mieke has literally grown up with the bus and coach industry. After having jobs in various European countries to develop her linguistic skills, she joined Busworld full time in 1996. She has been closely involved in the organisation of recent Busworld fairs and already has many friends among the regular exhibitors. The new appointment will give Luc more time to concentrate on developing the Busworld brand internationally and to nurture his latest inspiration, Busworld TV.

NEOPLAN WINS COACH OF THE YEAR

The highly coveted "Bus of the Year" and "Coach of the Year" awards are made in alternate years, following judging by journalists representing leading trade magazines in 17 European countries.

The organisation of the Coach of the Year competition had been disrupted by the untimely death of Leo Nuyens, who had been secretary of the organising committee for many years. Last May, members of the jury met the leading manufacturers who confirmed their strong support for the competition, with some proposed changes in organisation.

Luc Glorieux offered the international jury facilities to judge contenders for the Coach of the Year in Kortrijk, a few days before the opening of Busworld. Five coaches were



entered, namely a Bova Magiq, a Neoplan Starliner, a Setra ComfortClass, a Temsa Diamond and a Van Hool Astron. The judges nominated the Starliner for the prestigious award.

Stuart Jones, Chairman of the International Jury, presented the award to Joachim Reinmuth, Chief Executive Officer and Brand Spokesman of Neoplan. Speaking afterwards to the Busworld Newsletter, Stuart said: "It has been a difficult year for the organisation of the competition, and we are grateful to Busworld for their help and to the manufacturers who took part. We have now put the Bus and Coach of the Year competitions on a sound footing and are looking forward to the Bus of the Year competition in 2006".

BUS BUILDER OF THE YEAR

The "Bus Builder of the Year" award is given at Busworld Kortrijk to an outstanding personality in the coach or bus building industry, in recognition of achievements that have furthered the art of bus and coach building. This year, it was awarded to Mrs Solange Olszewska,



Deputy President of Solaris Bus & Coach, based near Poznan in Poland.

Solange Olszewska has played a very important role in the development of Solaris, working with customers, the media and suppliers to promote the image of the company and its products. In accepting the award, she said it was even more special because it had been won in an industry dominated by men.

It is a remarkable achievement, because Solaris is not yet ten years old.

The company has developed a stylish range of city and suburban buses, and also luxury coaches. The range includes trolleybuses and vehicles have been exported to more than a dozen countries. A new factory is currently being built, to give increased capacity and enable Solaris to meet demand for its products.

SAFETY INITIATIVE

The International Road Transport Union launched a Bus and Coach Safety Programme at Busworld Kortrijk to further improve road safety.

While recognising that the industry already has an excellent road safety record, the objective of the Programme is to strengthen technical requirements for new vehicles in areas such as fire prevention in the passenger and engine compartment, and vehicle evacuation.

Delegates were shown a dramatic series of photographs, taken over a 15 minute period. A driver stopped his coach, carrying a party of students, on a motorway in Southern Germany when he detected overheating in the engine compartment. Unfortunately, opening the access doors fanned the fire.

Although the passengers were evacuated safely, the photographs showed the rapid spread of the fire, including the explosion of the fuel tank, and the passengers standing in groups far too near the blazing vehicle.

Not only that, but other traffic continued to speed past the scene until the arrival of fire-fighters!