



busworld NEWSLETTER



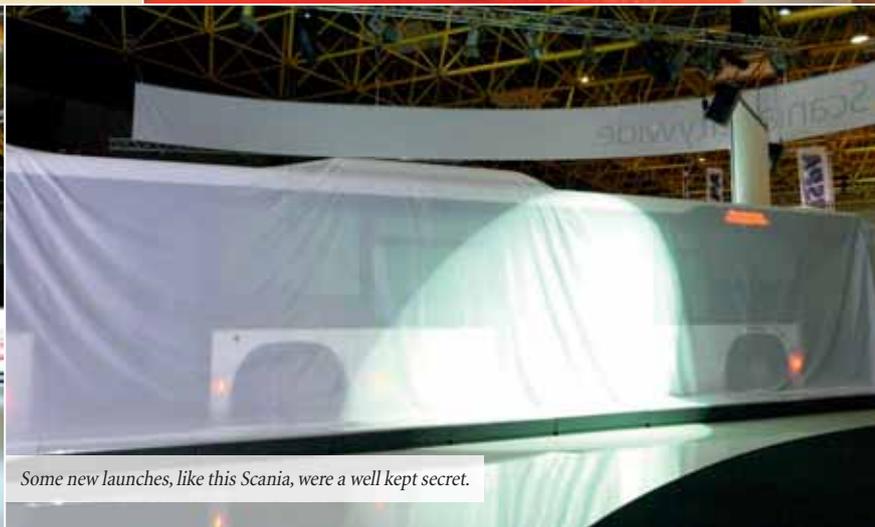
Irisbus showed this Citelis hybrid bus.



Busworld is famous for amusing local musicians.



The TX16 Alicron from the new Van Hool range.



Some new launches, like this Scania, were a well kept secret.

busworld kortrijk BEATS ALL RECORDS



Mieke Glorieux

Busworld Kortrijk was an outstanding success. Over six days, from 21 to 26 October, a total of 31,698 visitors came from 118 countries. This was yet another new record for the exhibition, with visitors coming from as far afield as China, Japan, India, North and South America. It certainly surprised the Busworld team, because they had been hoping for at least 28,000 visitors!

The nine halls and the Rambla covered a total of 61,000 square metres, holding 340 exhibitors from 32 countries. They included 70 bus

and coach builders, with some very important premières. Some were a well-kept secret, right up to the moment when the covers came off.

Further evidence of the importance of Busworld Kortrijk came from the attendance of 145 specialised journalists, from all over the

world. Each of them had plenty of news to report from a small Belgian city that became, for a week, the hub of the world's bus and coach industry.

One of the main themes of Busworld Kortrijk was sustainable mobility. Buses and coaches have long since shed their old image of being noisy and polluting. The latest Euro 5 emission limits are extremely strict, but will become even more tight with the introduction of Euro 6 for vehicles registered from 1 January 2014.

Anticipating that deadline, Mercedes-Benz showed a Travego coach with a Euro 6 engine, and MAN had one of its popular Lion's City buses with a Euro 6 power unit, demonstrating that it occupied the same space as the present unit, and did not intrude into the passenger compartment.

Euro 6 was certainly a topic among exhibitors and visitors. There seemed to be a general consensus that it would add around EUR12,000 to the price of a large vehicle, and around 300kg in weight. On luxury coaches, this could be critical, leading to the loss of up to 4 seats, or increasing demand for tri-axle models with their greater gross weight tolerance. It begs the question whether at least some customers will try to buy ahead in 2012 and 2013 while Euro 5 models are still available.

Although city buses only form a tiny proportion of the total number of vehicles in use, they are highly visible because they work all day and every day in urban centres. Since the previous edition of Busworld Kortrijk, two years ago, an estimated 600 hybrid buses have entered service throughout Europe, and many more are on order for delivery in the coming months.



MAN's Lion's City bus with a Euro 6 engine.

There were diesel powered hybrid buses on a number of stands, also an open top double deck sightseeing bus by Alexander Dennis and UNVI outside. This seemed a logical development, since sightseeing buses often pass through sensitive parts of historic cities. There were also gas powered hybrid buses, principally to meet the requirements of Madrid municipality.

The Dutch builder, BUSiness, launched a minibus powered by a fuel cell, and therefore totally emission free. At the other end of the scale, Van Hool showed a trolleybus version of its articulated ExquiCity BRT vehicle. BYD of China had a full size city bus, powered by batteries, with a range of 250km. That is quite a rapid advance in technology in a short space of time,

suggesting that further battery development will offer even greater range.

In this age of instant communication, the busworld.org website had nearly 28,000 visitors, which was 30% more than in 2009. There was also much more Busworld communication over Facebook and Twitter. For the first time, all information about Busworld was available on a mobile app. The full exhibitor list, floor plans, news and everything that visitors needed to know about the fair were combined in a handy tool. Around 1,200 people used this service.

At the end of the exhibition, Mieke Glorieux, Director, said that she was delighted. "When you consider the serious financial negotiations that were going on at the same time in Brussels and other European capitals, Busworld was busy and lively. Several major orders were announced and many more sales will be pursued in the coming weeks. We were delighted to host Government ministers, ambassadors and senior legislators. It all helped to raise the profile of the bus and coach industry.

"The population of the world has just passed seven billion. All those people will want to travel and many will never own a car. The future for the bus and coach industry looks very good.

"I would also like to offer our apologies to visitors who were caught up in traffic jams trying to reach Kortrijk Xpo, especially on the busiest days. We could not believe that the city of Kortrijk decided to close and repair roads on two sides of the Xpo, during the entire exhibition. I shall be writing to remind them that the next edition of Busworld Kortrijk will take place from 18 to 23 October 2013!"



The all-electric Solaris bus on their busy stand.

top entries

FOR EUROPEAN COACH WEEK



Immediately before each edition of Busworld Kortrijk, the European Coach and Bus Week is held. This year, it was in unseasonably warm and sunny weather and a record number of innovative vehicles participated, from minibuses to full size city buses and coaches. The jurors were highly impressed with the quality of the entrants and put them through a series of static and road tests.

The Grand Award Bus was won by the new **Mercedes-Benz Citaro** [1]. The jury liked the more stylish exterior design, but also said that the interior combined cosiness with many innovations, such as a better lighting system and improvements for the comfort and safety of passengers. The driver's workplace also won favourable comments.

A keenly fought contest for the Grand Award Coach was won by Van Hool with the impressive **Astronef TX16** [2]. The new concept still respected traditional Van Hool values but

complimented them with important innovations, such as LED lighting in the interior and at the rear. The new design had not changed the style all that much, offering the advantage that family ties between the previous and the new generation were not harshly changed.

The **VDL Midcity** won the Grand Award Minibus. The judges praised its ease of access for all passengers and the clear lighting on the floor. The vehicle was very manoeuvrable and a pleasure to drive.

Temsa won the Grand Award Mini Midi Coach with its **MD C9**, a midicoach which appealed to

the jury because of its versatility. They appreciated the design, the modern and separate climate control for passengers and the driver, and the excellent ride and handling.

Van Hool also won the Environment Award because of the high recyclability of materials in the new **Astronef TX16**, the energy saving LED lighting and the aerodynamic styling. The Innovation Award went to **BUSINESS** with a low floor Sprinter powered by a fuel cell. Although there was still a lot that needed to be done, the jury believed in the feasibility of the project and wanted to support it with this prize.

The Styling and Design Award went to the **Irisbus Magelys Pro** [3], which the jury described as "playing hide and seek in a way. After all, the exterior is traditional without any spectacular details, but once the members of the jury stepped inside, the only thing that they could say was "wow". The unique glass roof construction offered passengers a magnificent view. It was because of this roof, together with the beautiful luggage racks and the exquisite workmanship that the Magelys definitely deserved the award."

Finally, the Special Prize of the jury was given to the **Otokar Kent LF bus** [4] for many reasons. One was that the design of the interior and exterior were very nicely co-ordinated and many new features had been introduced since the model's original introduction. They felt that the Kent could compete with other buses in Western European markets, as confirmed by it taking second place for the Grand Award Bus.



van hool

SIGNS MAJOR ORDERS

Van Hool had several examples of its new TX coach range, in various lengths and heights, inside Hall 6, and also outside. Although it was the first time many had seen the new family, orders had been taken for more than 140 before Busworld opened.

Filip Van Hool also announced three major orders. Megabus.com, the North American subsidiary of the Stagecoach Group of Perth, Scotland, ordered a further 80 double deck coaches for its expanding intercity operation. They will follow on from 160 which are in service and 60 in the course of delivery. Stagecoach also ordered 11 similar coaches for services between Cardiff and London.



One of 18 Altano coaches already running with Polski.Bus.



The rear view of the ExquiCity trolleybus for Parma.

Sir Brian Souter, CEO of Stagecoach, owns PolskiBus.com through his Souter Holdings. They set up a network of low cost services in Poland with 18 Altano coaches earlier this year. They have been so successful that an order was placed for a further 50 vehicles, consisting of 20 Astromega double deckers and 30 Altanos. They will enter service progressively until the spring of next year.

Van Hool also signed a partnership with Scania to collaborate on double deck coaches, using Scania chassis. Already, 60 vehicles have been supplied to customers in Swe-



A hybrid A330 bus for Monaco.

den. The Van Hool models will be included in Scania's coach range and will be supported by the Scania dealer network.

FUEL CELLS FALLING IN PRICE

During a workshop in Busworld Kortrijk, it was predicted that registrations of diesel electric hybrids would keep growing until 2020. After that period, the time might be right for a breakthrough in fuel cells.

Although a number of fuel cell buses have been operated in Europe, they have until now been heavily supported by European funds and have been very expensive.

Mercedes-Benz is now delivering some of its third generation models to selected cities. Van Hool has also accumulated fuel cell experience with American and European customers.

At the workshop, a representative of Ballard, the Canadian company which makes fuel cells for Mercedes-Benz, explained that the cost price had dropped by 50% in the past two or three years, because of increasing production, and that it would fall by a further 50% in the near future. In other words, a fuel cell would soon cost one quarter of the price of three years ago.

He also said that durability was increasing. The present generation should be able to attain around 15,000 service hours without any problems at all.

One of the challenges was the availability and cost of hydrogen. In some places, it was available at a nominal price because it was a by-product of other chemical processes. How-

ever, it had to be completely clean to run in a fuel cell. In other places, hydrogen was uneconomically high in price. If this problem can be sorted out by suppliers, that will greatly help.



Are hybrid buses like the new Volvo 7900 a step towards hydrogen power?

INDIA FORECASTS STRONG GROWTH

During Busworld Kortrijk, the Indian Association of Bus Manufacturers held a fascinating conference about their industry and the prospects for growth. The Association is relatively young, but now has 107 members.

India expects economic growth of 7-9% in the coming years. In the automotive sector there are predictions of a growth of 16%.

With a population of 1.2 billion, just behind China, India is the second most populous country

in the world. Even so, IABM reckons that there is just one bus or car for every 2,000 people. There is a trend for more and more of the population to move to cities for employment, therefore demand for public transport is forecast to grow strongly.

Although India has the largest rail network in the world, it carries 6 billion passengers per year, compared with 51 billion by buses. Traditionally, India was served by buses with maximum power of 10bhp per gross tonne. The trend is now towards higher power. In Delhi, all buses are fuelled by compressed natural gas. Outside the capital, the demand is still for diesel power, but there are other trends, such as a move towards rear engines, lower floors, superior suspension and higher standards of comfort. There is a growing middle class in India which is willing to pay higher fares for premium services.

IABM reckoned that there were as many 300-400 bus manufacturers throughout the sub-continent, all but a very small number being only bodybuilders. They reckon that only half

a dozen manufacturers were represented throughout India.

Import duties on fully built up vehicles are prohibitive, therefore, as India moves forward, it will increasingly seek to bring in more modern technology from partners in Europe, Japan and the United States. The panel reckoned that India needed another 1.7 million buses to meet demand for travel, and that the country could well become the largest bus market in the world in 4-5 years time. During Busworld Kortrijk, Volvo announced plans to raise its production in India to 5,000 units per annum by 2015.

It is not all one way traffic into India. There are a number of high-quality suppliers in the component sector, building to European standards. They benefit from very competitive labour rates, and therefore could become a source for European manufacturers seeking to keep down production costs.

A report on the conference will be published on the Busworld website shortly.

COACHES TREATED UNFAIRLY

During Busworld, Redgy Deschacht, the President of Busworld, said that the joint campaign with IRU, founded eight years ago, and called "A coach is not a truck", had failed to get its message across.

"The lack of flexibility towards the touring coach sector is ruining our operation. We will keep on stressing the difference with trucks and the specific problems that we are facing until the issue is solved."

A special stand was situated in Hall 8, with operators invited to provide evidence in a "black book" of their own experiences.

Jean Wyns, the President of the Federation of Belgian Bus and Coach Companies (FBAA), spoke in a similar vein. "There are a lot of cities that are not open to coaches. Cities love



tourists, but they do not like the coaches that come with them. Cities and towns are often very creative in implementing all kinds of prohibitive measures and they do so in their own specific way.

"It even seems that some cities are trying to become inaccessible to coaches by placing all sorts of obstacles on the road and in that way obliging coaches to park outside the city centre. Why are the cities making such a big mistake? What is even more preposterous is that they have no problem whatsoever with granting access to a massive amount of cars in their centres."

Jean Wyns further criticized the mish-mash of payment and toll systems in Europe and condemned the physical discrimination on duties



on fuel for different types of transport. "I cannot think of a single reason why trains and planes are supported, and buses are not. The fact that low-cost airlines are exempted from paying excises and Value Added Tax is beyond me and simply unacceptable. In this way, Governments are promoting the most polluting means of transport while all they can talk about is environmentally sound transport. They must make sure that the different means of transport are put on the same footing with regards to taxation."



VDL WINS COACH OF THE YEAR

One of the highlights of Busworld Kortrijk is the award of the "International Coach of the Year 2012", given after intensive testing by a jury of top journalists, one from each of 17 European countries. This year, their choice was the VDL Futura FHD2.

Stuart Jones, Chairman of the Jury, handed over the prize to Wim van der Leegte, Remi Henkemans and Henri Koolen of VDL.

He said: "For VDL this award is particularly impressive because it comes only twelve months after you won the International Bus of the Year 2011 title with the Citea. Obviously awards are like buses, you wait a long time for one and then two come along together.

"The fact that you have achieved this double success is not a coincidence but evidence of the determination to compete with the best in the business that Remi Henkemans outlined at the launch of the new Futura. He said that you had high ambitions and made no secret of it."



The handover of the trophy to VDL Bus & Coach.

The candidates for the award were tested by the jury in the Norwegian city of Arendal. The jury took into account many different factors from the viewpoint of the driver, the passengers, the owner, the mechanical team and other stakeholders. They considered the levels of comfort, innovation, ease of driving, safety, style, performance and many other factors that contribute to the ability of a coach to deliver and keep delivering in the long term. Stuart Jones said: "it is never one thing that wins a coach this coveted title but a combination of attributes. Members of the jury liked how easy a coach is was to drive. They liked the flat floor which went all the way to the rear of the coach and the various seating options.

They were impressed by the quality of the materials, with some of the judges commenting that this was an area which VDL had not always got right in the past."

"For a coach to succeed, you have to be able to earn money with it and there was much about the Futura 2, including a good price for product relationship, ease of repair, a long life stainless steel structure and a low weight that enabled the flexibility of a 12.9m two-axle design to be fully exploited, that would appeal to an operator.

"We note that the Futura 2 is only the start of a new family of coach products that will replace everything currently produced. On behalf of the jury we congratulate you and your team on what you have achieved already. You have set the bar extremely high for your future developments."

On behalf of his company, Wim van der Leegte was delighted to accept the trophy, remarking that it was the first time that any manufacturer had ever won the Bus and Coach trophies in consecutive years.



VDL won «Coach of the Year» with the new Futura 2.



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