Last Busworld in Kortrijk in October

The next edition of Busworld Europe will be held in Kortrijk from 20 to 25 October this year. There seems to be some confusion following the decision to relocate Busworld Europe to Brussels, but that will not happen until 2019.
It was a difficult decision for the Board of Busworld to decide to move from its traditional base in Kortrijk to Brussels, but there was really no alternative. Busworld is by far the largest exhibition to be held every second year in the Kortrijk Xpo Centre, occupying every square metre of the buildings and adding two large temporary pavilions. They were not a viable long term solution.

Mieke Glorieux, Director of Busworld Europe, said: “The family has become too large for the house! Busworld is a unique and incredibly popular event for the bus and coach industry, and the largest of its kind in the world. Each event has been larger than the previous one and we have had to turn down applications from potential exhibitors because we had run out of space.

“Much as we love Kortrijk, Busworld had also outgrown the city. Busworld not only filled all the available hotel rooms in Kortrijk but many visitors and exhibitors had to find accommodation elsewhere in the region. That in turn caused quite severe traffic congestion even though we did our best with shuttle services and temporary car parks. With a very high percentage of visitors coming from outside Belgium, the Board consulted with the major exhibitors at Busworld and conceded that Kortrijk was no longer an ideal location.

“For many years, we had seen increasing demand from exhibitors and visitors for attendance at Busworld so we had to find a larger exhibition facility. We wanted to stay in Belgium so that inevitably meant relocating to the Brussels Expo which is the only exhibition centre large enough to meet our predicted demand for space. It has a floor area nearly twice that of Kortrijk Xpo.

“We are confident that Brussels will fully meet the requirements of all who participate in Busworld Europe. It is an important European transport hub with a major airport and excellent rail links to neighbouring countries. There are many hotels in Brussels capable of meeting the demand generated by Busworld and there are excellent public transport facilities in the city enabling people to reach the exhibition centre quickly and easily. It is close to the main ring road and there are ample parking facilities.

“Our focus at the moment is on Busworld Europe in Kortrijk in October this year and I want to place on record the excellent collaboration that we have enjoyed with the management and staff of Kortrijk Xpo over the years. Of course, we will be sad to leave our traditional base, but Busworld has outgrown it.

“However, the Kortrijk Xpo team will continue to work with us in the future. They will provide the extra services for exhibitors who will be able to rely on all the experience accumulated by Kortrijk Xpo in previous years.

“We will be doing our best to ensure that Busworld in October will be the best ever in Kortrijk. We are over-subscribed for exhibition space. These are very interesting times in the global bus and coach industry. There is strong political demand for city buses with zero or very low emissions. Over recent years in Kortrijk we have seen the trend towards hybrid and all-electric buses and that is going to increase dramatically.

“Manufacturers often hold the launch of new products until Busworld because that is when they achieve the maximum impact. In 2015 we had almost 35,000 visitors from well over 100 countries around the world. We are already seeing evidence that suggests many new models will be launched at Kortrijk in October.

“There are other interesting trends. There are a number of trials with autonomous vehicles with the largest being the Mercedes-Benz project using a full size Citaro bus. Legislators have to get their minds around autonomy but it will come.

“The supply industry is also developing new products that are compatible with low and zero emission buses and we can expect many innovations from them. There are also important developments that make it easier for passengers to locate and use bus services and to pay for their travel. Devices like smart cards and mobile phone apps make it quicker and easier to use buses. They make a major contribution in reducing time spent at bus stops on fare collection. That in turn makes bus services faster and more attractive to passengers.

“We will be carrying much more news about Busworld Europe in Kortrijk in future issues of the “Busworld Times” and from next year will keep you fully up to date on the plans for Brussels. We look forward to welcoming you to Kortrijk in October and please do not go to Brussels by mistake this year!”
Busworld India

“excellent”

For the first time, the seventh edition of Busworld India moved to Bangalore and was held from 10 to 12 November last year. It was organised jointly by Busworld India and its partner, Inter Ads Exhibitions.

The highly respected trade magazine, “MOTORINDIA”, reported widely on Busworld India and concluded that it turned out to be an excellent event, attracting participation and visits from all the key stakeholders in the Indian bus and coach sector, including vehicle manufacturers, bus bodybuilders, government representatives, officials from State Transport Undertakings, and private fleet operators, among others.

Busworld India attracted 72 exhibitors from 9 countries, occupying more than 7,000 sq m exhibition space. More than 4,000 professional visitors came to the event. Many new models and components were launched.

Probably the star of the show was MG Group’s new full low floor airport bus, the Columbus, with a Cummins-ZF driveline. The fully integral vehicle had been designed and developed for international markets. MG also showed its Mammoth luxury coach, available for the Indian market with either seats or sleeper bunks.

SML Isuzu launched the Executive LX 18-seat luxury midicoach with features like reclining seats, individual air conditioning, on-board entertainment and mobile charging points. Their other new vehicle was the Ecomax midi-bus.

For the first time, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles exhibited at Busworld India. They showed examples of the Bharat-Benz range of school, staff and tourist buses, built wholly in India and a super high deck coach. DICV said it would introduce a 16 tonne bus this year.

Volvo Buses had a strong presence, concentrating on its range of express and luxury coaches. The 9400 on two axles employed the new 8-litre engine that had been jointly developed in India with Volvo Eicher. The engine on the 13.8-metre tri-axle 9400 was upgraded from 9 to 11-litres while the longer 14.5-metre 9400 had an engine that met the Indian Bharat Stage 6 emission standards. They are equivalent to Euro 6 but will not become mandatory for several years yet.

“MOTORINDIA” concluded: “Overall, it was evident that Busworld India’s move from Mumbai to Bangalore was a very successful one: more exhibition space, more vehicle manufacturers and more visitors of a better quality. All this added up to more satisfied exhibitors, which in the end determines the success of a B2B exhibition. It will be interesting to see how Busworld India grows from here, given the potential of the Indian bus market, currently the second largest in the world.”

Busworld International and Inter Ads Exhibitions have agreed that the next edition of Busworld India will be held in Bangalore, or Bengaluru, in 2018. There will be further news in future editions of the “Busworld Times”.

A BharatBenz bus built for export markets.

India has a large supply industry.

Volvo 9400 coaches.

Volvo is promoting this bus in India under its UD brand.
Busworld Latin America
up and running

The first Busworld Latin America was held in Medellin, the second city of Colombia, from 5 to 7 December last year. A total of 61 exhibitors from 16 different countries occupied 6,600sq m and showed 32 vehicles and numerous components and accessories.

Busworld Latin America was so successful that arrangements are now in hand for a second edition to be held in the same location from 5 to 7 December this year.

Colombia is a fascinating country in the northwest of South America, bordered by both the Caribbean and the Pacific. It has mountainous terrain with many steep gradients and parts of the country are at high altitude, affecting engine power. Highly efficient Bus Rapid Transit systems have been introduced in the main cities, capable of moving large numbers of passengers in each direction per hour.

Medellin won the Sustainable Transport Award in 2012 for the high degree of intermodality of its transport system, consisting of BRT, buses, trams, taxis and metrocables.

The Colombian authorities are keen to reduce vehicle emissions and improve safety. The capital, Bogota, suffers so badly from emissions on some days that petrol and diesel cars are prohibited from circulating on alternate days. Although Euro 3 and Euro 4 engines are still legally acceptable, manufacturers like Mercedes-Benz, Scania and Volvo are importing heavy duty chassis with Euro 5 engines from their factories in Brazil and are finding that customers are willing to pay the higher price because it is offset by savings in fuel economy.

All new city buses registered from 1 January 2017 must be wheelchair accessible, with interurban and intercity coaches following from 1 July 2017. Many high capacity city buses have high floors compatible with loading platforms and stations. Passengers simply walk across a level bridge, making it quick and easy to get on and off buses. However, there are some low floor vehicles with much of the floor only one step above the ground.

Antilock braking systems also became mandatory on new vehicles from 1 January. This was not a problem for most of the manufacturers because the engineering work had been done several years previously. Some, like Scania, also fit electronic braking systems and electronic stability control as standard, even though they are not required legally.

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Colombia is similar to other countries in South America in buying buses and coaches that have a chassis made by one manufacturer and bodywork built by another. Most medium size vehicles have high truck-derived chassis with front mounted engines. For heavier applications, including articulated and bi-articulated, purpose-built chassis are used. The main suppliers are Mercedes-Benz, Scania and Volvo from their factories in Brazil.

One of the challenges of supplying buses and coaches to Colombia is altitude. Bogota lies at a height of 2,640 metres above sea level. The air is therefore thinner and that can have an impact on engine power. Scania launched a bi-articulated high floor city bus fuelled by a Euro 6 CNG engine, developing 360bhp (265kW), and adapted for high altitude.

Unusually, the engine was mounted vertically in the front section of the vehicle, coupled to an Allison automatic gearbox. Gas tanks were located under the floor in the first and second units. Scania said that the engine used stoichiometric technology, suitable for running at much higher altitudes. The engine had sensors that constantly monitored the air-to-fuel ratio and combustion performance, adjusting the mix of air and fuel for optimum power. The system also measured fuel quality and could run on compressed natural gas, biogas or a mix of the two.

This vehicle had capacity for 250 passengers.
and was bodied by Busscar de Colombia. The owners of this bodybuilder had bought the last of the shares held by the now defunct Busworld Brazil in 2014 and had since introduced a number of new body designs.

Mercedes-Benz has an assembly facility in Bogota for lighter bus chassis but continues to import heavy duty chassis for coaches and BRT systems from its plant in Brazil. On the stand at Busworld Latin America, the company displayed a horizontally rotating Atego 813 chassis with a Euro 5 engine.

This enabled visitors to see all the features of the chassis easily, especially the systems necessary for compliance with Euro 5. Mercedes-Benz can also offer the Atego at 9.0 and 10.0 tonnes gross and was promoting the savings in fuel consumption being achieved with the Euro 5 power unit. Medium size chassis are popular in Colombia for feeder services to BRT systems and also for suburban and rural routes.

Euro 5 emission limits will probably become mandatory in Colombia in a year or two, but Mercedes-Benz is offering Euro 5 engines as standard on its full size heavy duty chassis. The greater fuel economy was attractive to customers and the lower emissions benefited air quality, especially in the congested cities.

Volvo has been a pioneer of BRT systems in South America and continues to offer articulated and bi-articulated chassis which employ a horizontal engine between the first and second axles. Most BRT systems employ vehicles with high floors so the horizontal engine is a very neat solution. It also works very well with high capacity articulated vehicles.

There are many long distance coach services in Colombia and other South American countries. Tri-axle and double deck coaches are frequently used to maximise capacity or provide higher levels of comfort. Carrocerias JGB, a bodybuilder based in Bogota, launched the Majestic double deck coach. The lower deck had a VIP lounge with very comfortable 2+1 seating, while the upper deck had a standard 2+2 seating layout.

Another imported vehicle was an Otokar Navigo midicoach. This model is well known in Turkey, the Middle East, North Africa and a growing number of European markets. Otokar had seen the high volumes of medium sized buses and coaches sold in Latin America and was keen to explore opportunities to come into the market.

Busworld Latin America was so popular with exhibitors and visitors that Busworld International and its local partners agreed that the second edition will be held in Medellin from 5 to 7 December this year. The city, the country and the exhibition are well worth attending.

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A vintage Dodge outside the main entrance to Busworld.

A Scania 9-litre CNG engine.

A heavy duty Mercedes-Benz city bus with a CNG engine.

Otokar came from Turkey to promote this midicoach.

A Hino midicoach bodied by Inconcar

A Scania with Majestic coachwork by Carrocerias JGB.

The bi-articulated Scania Busscar Colombia BRT bus.
Belgium invests in green buses

The two largest bus operators in Belgium, namely De Lijn in Flanders, and TEC in Wallonia, have said that their future purchases of buses for city and suburban services will be low emission.

TEC has placed two orders for hybrid buses in recent weeks. One is with Solaris of Poland for 208 Urbino 12 buses using BAE Systems hybrid drive and is one of the largest single orders placed in Europe for hybrid buses. This transaction includes contract maintenance and the first buses are due to enter service in the autumn of this year – just about the time that Busworld opens in Kortrijk.

TEC has also ordered 90 Volvo 7900 Electric Hybrid buses for service in Charleroi and Namur, following delivery of 11 similar vehicles at the end of last year. All will use fast charging systems with equipment supplied by ABB. At each end of a route, buses can take a fast charge of electricity in around five minutes.

The bus parks beneath a gantry built by ABB. A charging unit descends from the gantry, connecting with an OppCharge receiver on the roof of the bus. The Electric Hybrid bus is capable of operating in all-electric mode for up to 60% of its time on a route. Typically, it runs electrically in urban centres, with the small Euro 6 diesel engine supplying power in less sensitive suburbs.

De Lijn started operating small numbers of hybrid buses in 2009 and now has around 200 in service built by Van Hool and VDL Bus & Coach. Last December, De Lijn invited tenders for the supply of 170 hybrid buses of various sizes, in addition to a much smaller number of standard diesel vehicles. They are likely to be the last of their kind ordered by De Lijn as the company moves to lower emission buses for future orders.