



Festival Balkan Trafik

17th edition • 27 > 30 April 2023

BRUSSELS

Place De Brouckère & Grand Place

NAMUR

Le Delta

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PRESS RELEASE – PERS BERICHT

Het Balkan Trafik! Festival keert terug naar Brussel en Namen

Voor de opening van de editie 2023 op 27 april strijkt het Balkan Trafik! Festival neer in de Delta in Namen. In Brussel verwelkomen het De Brouckèreplein en de Grote Markt de 17e editie van deze niet te missen viering van multiculturele kruispunten uit de Balkan. Het Festival vermengt opnieuw traditionele ritmes en fusies met de wens om stereotypen en heersende mainstream stijlvol te doorbreken. Naast het indrukwekkende muzikale programma gewijd aan muziekliefhebbers van overal, biedt het festival een uniek podium aan de knowhow van de Zuid-Europese landen met een focus op Balkanspecialiteiten en een wijnbar, maar ook workshops, masterclasses en cinema.

Van de traditionele koperblazers tot de wildste en hedendaagse rock, gipsy punk, psychedelica, funk en grooves: de 17e editie van het Balkan Trafik! Festival belooft een unieke muzikale beleving te worden, inclusief eigen creaties.

Op muzikaal vlak presenteert het festival na 7 jaar afwezigheid in België de formatie *BALKAN BEAT BOX*, de sterren van de fusie van traditionele muziek met een electro sound uit het Middellandse Zeegebied, de Balkan en Israël, en het fenomeen van muzikale kruisbestuiving, die dit jaar haar twintigste verjaardag viert, *Dubioza Kolektiv*, waar Alternative Rock, Reggae, Ska, Dub, Rap-Metal, Funk, Rock, Punk en Balkanmuziek elkaar opvolgen. Daarnaast presenteert het festival de legendes van de Servische brassband *Boban & Marko Markovic Orkestar*, de hallucinante zigeunerpunk van het Griekse ensemble *BAILDSA*, de mix van Roemeense hiphop, electro en traditionele muziek van de groep *Subcarpați* en het hypnotiserende en psychedelische geluid van *Elektro Hafiz* uit Turkije.

Zoals elk jaar biedt het festival 100% Balkan Trafik!-creaties, waarbij Belgische, Europese en westelijke Balkankunstenaars worden uitgenodigd om aan gezamenlijke composities te werken: het jazzproject *ROJAZE-Roma Jazzing Europe*, in samenwerking met het *Welcome In Tziganie* festival (Frankrijk) en het *Nissville Jazz Festival* (Servië); het rockproject *MUSIC CONNECTS*, in samenwerking met jonge muzikanten van de *Mitrovica Rock School* (Kosovo), de *Roma Rock School* (Noord-Macedonië) en de *Fontys Rockacademie* (Nederland); of de Belgisch-Albanese band *Gjovalin Quintet* onder leiding van de virtuoze accordeonist Gjovalin Nonaj met klarinetmeester Josif Shukallari als gast op sommige nummers.

Na het succes van de eerste openluchteditie verwelkomt het De Brouckèreplein opnieuw een dorp in balkankleuren en brengt het verenigen, food trucks, workshops en masterclasses samen om een volledige ervaring te bieden aan de avontuurlijke zielen.

Met dit unieke evenement wil Balkan Trafik! bruggen slaan tussen de hoofdstad van Europa en de creativiteit uit de Zuidoost-Europese landen, maar ook een unieke vitrine bieden voor de culturele rijkdom van de Brusselse diaspora en alle Balkanminderheden. Voor deze uitzonderlijke editie vormt Balkan Trafik! de culturele brug tussen Brussel en Istanbul en worden Turkse artiesten in de schijnwerpers gezet.

NOTE OF INTENT

"The festival dedicated to the cultures of the countries of South-Eastern Europe has become a reference thanks to the uniqueness of its program and its atmosphere. Music, dance, workshops, food trucks, associations... are waiting for you to start an exciting journey through the Balkans."

Balkan Trafik! is a festival that closely follows the cultural evolution of the South-Eastern European region and creates bridges with Brussels, as a multicultural capital.

Through the last 17 years since the first edition of the festival, things have changed significantly in the "Balkans". We used to talk about the beauty of traditions, ... We are now talking about the emergence of talents on all artistic levels.

After its success last year, Balkan Trafik! will be for the second year running in the open-air center of the European capital, Brussels: on the Place de Brouckère and Grand Place, but also at the Delta in Namur for the opening night.

Being able to produce the "open air" festival, allows us to reach a younger audience that is totally complementary to the one that has followed us for 17 years. Thanks to this new space, we could also set up a "Balkan Trafik village".

The Walloon French-speaking audience was in demand for a "Balkan Trafik!" in the region. Being in Namur allows us to open our festival, our artists, our own creations, to a whole new audience but also...it offers a new visibility to the festival.

Our program highlights the richness of traditions and folklore, but also to today's styles: urban like hip hop, rock, ska, punk, electro but always based on the musical roots of the region, Balkan Trafik! is a fusion of genres and this is heard, felt at all levels of the festival.

These various cultural aspects are wrapped up in an unusual atmosphere in the "village" of the festival; wine bars and food trucks with specialties of the region, a series of associative spaces that let the voice of the Balkan communities speak up; tourism, activities of the diaspora, musical happenings ...

On Sunday, the last day of the festival, somehow as a closing ceremony, we offer a free access event: The "Giant Horo". Among the nine years of existence, we brought together traditional ensembles from all over the Balkans but also from diasporas in a large circle dance, which still takes place as every year on the main square. It is a symbolic moment of the festival where all communities join hands to dance together.

During April, our urban route in Brussels will see the creation of two new murals. This will be our 6th mural produced by Balkan Trafik! after Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Croatia this one will be created by an artist from Kosovo, in the framework of the PARCOURS STREET ART with the support of the alderman of culture of the city of Brussels. And another fresco in Saint-Josse with the support of the City of Saint-Josse.

Finally, Balkan Trafik! is setting up communication crossroads, via live streaming, what I call "digital cross-border", between artists, representatives of the Balkan region, and entrepreneurs, activists, during the festival. The goal is to connect our cities and those who make them live, make them evolve.

In short, Balkan Trafik! keeps what has made its reputation but adds elements representative of a region in cultural and social activities.

Nicolas Wieërs
Producer and programmer of the "Balkan Trafik!... of Cultures" festival

Balkan Trafik! is ...

- **16 editions** gathering each year an average of **6000 festival goers**
- A unique festival in Europe, creating bonds between European South-Eastern countries and Brussels within two different capital cities: Brussels, European, Belgian, and Flemish capital city and Namur, Walloon capital city.
- **A communication plan** at a local, national, European, and international level
- A platform for exchange for **cultural diplomacy**

A multidisciplinary festival

On our program: concerts on our two big stages and acoustic music in our "Sevdah & Rembetiko Cafe", artistic creations *100% Balkan Trafik!*, gastronomy, associative meetings and networking in the Balkan Village, happenings, exhibitions, debates, dance, cinema...

An ever-evolving festival

Within 16 years of festival, Balkans have evolved, and we follow this evolution with passion and interest. Every year, the festival reconsiders itself to find the right balance between tradition and the emerging scene.

A committed festival

Building new cultural connections between Belgium and the countries of Southeast Europe, deconstructing prejudices thanks to emerging cultures remain among the festival's primary goals.



Aftermovie Balkan Trafik 2022

👉 <https://vimeo.com/716387926>

Balkan Trafik! furthermore...

- For the 11th time, **the Giant Horo** will bring together traditional bands from all over the region in a great dance that will take place at the **Grand Place** in Brussels.
- A press room receiving international **press** and artists' agents during the festival.
- **A street art parcours in Brussels** which will see the creation of 2 new murals:
 - o a Kosovar artist who will come to paint the 6th Balkan Trafik mural as part of the City of Brussels' PARCOURS STREET ART
 - o an artist from Istanbul will embellish a wall in Saint-Josse
- **Sending Belgian artists to the region:** residencies and creation, music, and urban art. Balkan Trafik! is sending street artists in Balkans countries to create street art murals.
- **Artistic residencies in Belgium** resulting in 3 100% Balkan Trafik! creations: jazz, rock, and trad. These creations bring together Walloon, Flemish, Brussels, international and Balkan artists.
- **A series of "Digital cross-border" debates** with the live intervention of personalities from different cities in the region with a moderator in Brussels. The use of new technologies to bring Brussels, as the capital of Europe, and several cities in South-Eastern Europe together in a live setting.




SPECIAL FOCUS

17TH EDITION

BALKAN TRAFIK!

FESTIVAL

27TH - 30TH
APRIL 2023

ROCK • ELECTRO

BALKAN BEAT BOX
DUBIOZA KOLEKTIV
SUBCARPAȚI
BOBAN I MARKO MARKOVIC
ORKESTAR
& MANY MORE

HIP HOP • JAZZ • FOLK • FUSION

MUSIC DANCE
WINE EXHIBITIONS
DEBATES STREET ART
FOOD & MORE

BRUSSELS
PLACE DE BROUCKÈRE
& GRAND PLACE

NAMUR
LE DELTA 

TICKETS & INFO:
BALKANTRAFIK.COM



Programme

Concerts

BALKAN BEAT BOX

Israel - USA

For over a decade now, ambassadors of groove Balkan Beat Box have kept the world party bumping with deft and exuberant stylistic cross-pollination, and a smoldering lyrical flow. With each entry in its oeuvre, BBB has crafted wildly imaginative grenades of enlightenment and garnered critical acclaim, an engaged fanbase, and earned the respect and admiration of other artists.



BBB draw from their Eastern European heritage, the smash-your-idols traditions of **punk rock** and **free jazz**, the undeniably rugged beats and production of hip-hop, the intrepid textural approach of **electro**, along with international flairs of Mediterranean, **reggae**, **cumbia**, **Moroccan**, and **Balkan** music traditions. What comes out of this bold cross-cultural and pan-genre discourse is a soundtrack for riots in the streets and a rallying call for the dance floor.

DUBIOZA KOLEKTIV

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Once upon a time (2003) in a dubious corner of the world and a land called Bosnia and Herzegovina, a group of friends decided to form a band. But this was no ordinary band, and they did not form under ordinary circumstances. True, along with local Balkan flavors, musical influences came from all over the world: **ska**, **punk**, **reggae**, **electronic**, **hip-hop**. Yet, there was no music industry, few concerts, and no space for cultural or political expression among the new crop of plugged-in youth. In fact, the entire region was reeling from a deep moral and economic post-war stagnation. It was from this environment that Dubioza Kolektiv was born, and not quietly, but kicking and screaming, presenting no-go topics front and center, and demanding to be heard. By doing so, they created a phenomenon.



SUBCARPAȚI

Romania

Subcarpați is a very special mixture of Romanian **traditional music**, **hip-hop** and **electro**. The idea came to MC Bean, the vocalist of another Romanian band, Șuie Păparude, in 2010. He wanted to create a contemporary cultural manifesto by bringing Romanian folklore into the present, as the genre was dying because very few young people were interested in it, considering it obsolete and uncool.



Their main principle is that “music should not be confused with showbiz”. Therefore, they pay very close attention to the artists they collaborate with and always try to stick to their “underground folklore” aesthetic. Subcarpați are first a cultural manifesto, then a music project. This is the reason why all their albums are free to download.



BAiLDSA

Greece

Being alternative is much more than a music genre label. BAiLDSA's alternate view on music making and songwriting creates an explosive mixture of **post-punk** and **indie rock** tunes blended with roots elements from the **Eastern Mediterranean** and **dub, reggae** segments. This musical fusion together with their intense and deeply political point of view results in what BAiLDSA represent as a band.



ELEKTRO HAFIZ

Turkey

The sound of Elektro Hafiz reminds us of the **hypnotic** wedding music heard in border villages of southeastern Turkey. When mind-blowing energy of this state of mind and Hafiz's **overdrive-fuzz** tones come together, you will be the one who should decide whether this is **psychedelic or punk!**

He loves to play with contrasts and create new compositions from there.

This open and experimental approach is still his trademark, as well as his charming provocative style that is complemented by a healthy dose of humor. His diverse compositions are heavily influenced by his **Istanbul roots**, which are reflected in his instrument of choice, the **electric saz & electric guitar**, in most of his pieces.

BOBAN I MARKO MARKOVIC ORKESTAR

Serbia



Marko Marković learned music and evolved in the brass band of his father, the legendary Boban Marković. A renowned trumpeter, he played with great musicians such as Emir Kusturica, Goran Bregović, DJ Shantel, Ivo Papazov or Esmā Redžepova. Possessing an innate sense of energy, rhythm and performance, Marko is one of the greatest ambassadors of gypsy music. With his brass band, he succeeds as only few artists can, in restoring its identity with an atmosphere full of extraordinary vitality mixed with a touch of melancholy.

While the father-son duo, Boban and Marko Marković, accompanied by their orchestra, will rock the Delta on Thursday, Marko will continue to set the stage of Brussels on fire with his orchestra on Friday 28 April!



DŽAMBO AGUŠEVI ORCHESTRA

North Macedonia

Dzambo is a gypsy trumpet player from Macedonia, originally from Turkey. He is accompanied by his "Orchestra", between incandescent brass and irresistible rhythmic. With their breathtaking virtuosity and their communicative energy, they reinvent the **gypsy traditions** to the rhythm of their multiple cosmopolitan **influences (Latin, Turkish, funk, jazz, rock)**.



KERMESZ À L'EST

Belgium

Eight musicians with well-steeled personalities hammer out an original fusion of Balkan melodies, metal, math rock, electro and free jazz. With the inimitable look of metalheads without the guitars, intellectual punks and fairy anarchists all rolled into one, they also wield a typically Belgian sense of humor capable of ruffling the hair of even the slickest of rockers. Their unique repertoire is enhanced by their hilarious stage antics, drawing on freak shows and cabinets of curiosities to produce an explosive, dance-filled and festive show.

This will be the occasion to unveil their new album at the Delta!



DREN ABAZI & ZIG ZAG ORCHESTRA

Kosovo

Dren Abazi is a Kosovan singer-songwriter and a producer of Albanian origin. Widely regarded as one of the most important and original music acts in Albanian speaking countries.

He is the founder and leader of Zig Zag Orchestra, a very popular band in Kosovo, Albania, and other Balkan countries. **His music is a fusion of Balkan music, jazz, klezmer, ska and rock.** He is one of a few Albanian artists who has performed at major festivals all around Europe.



ISKAZ

Serbia

Through socially and psychologically themed lyrics, Iskaz has been voicing their opinions and attitudes over 4 studio albums: "Natio" (2006), "Theory of Chaos" (2008), "Eros" (2011) and "Tanathos" (2014). All these albums form a theme based overall "Critical Mass" (Kritična Masa).

Their music forms a symbiotic union with the lyrics and comes across as energetic and direct, yet feelgood and bursting with emotion. It's a **fusion of core hip hop, funk, hard rock** and similar directions. As such the music best amplifies the lyrics laden with rebellion, wake up calls, attitudes of a single human being as well as existential questions.

They love creating a heated and raw atmosphere in concerts, which is the best demonstration of their work!



NTOUMOS

Belgium - Greece

Greece, London, Brazil, Belgium... are some of the places where Ntoumos has put down his suitcases, and passionate, curious, and electric notes, with the tones of a trumpet, a voice and a mixture of styles, between **jazz, hip-hop, funk, electro, Drum&Bass...** for a music with the colors of the world.

From prizes at the Brussels Conservatory to stages and recordings with international artists, or from sharing a prize at the BBC Awards to a prize of his own for the album of the year 2021 at the "Octaves de la Musique", he composes a modern musical life that appeals to the curious

public, as well as to the informed public. Here is Ntoumos, here is a vibrant musical world.

After an artistic residency at the Delta, Ntoumos will be presenting their new project!



JOSIF SHUKALLARI WITH SAZET E PERMETIT & GRUPI I PILURIT

Albania

The master of clarinet Josif Shukallari will be accompanied by SAZET e PERMETIT & grupi i PILURIT singing polyphonic acapella songs.

This type of iso-polyphonic music is performed in the cities of South Albania, they have a centuries-old history and are included in UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list.



DIASPORAS GROUPS

Traditional music and dance groups from the diasporas present in Belgium will also be present: Albania/Kosovo, Greece, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, ...

« 100% Balkan Trafik!» own creations and European projects

Each year, the festival brings together Belgian, European, and Western Balkan artists around a common works. In addition to these, this year, jazz, rock, and trad will be honored by young talented musicians and artists.

ROJAZE- ROMA JAZZING EUROPE



In addition to the festival, we are used to promoting the cultural exchange of young artists between Brussels, as the European capital, and the Western Balkans.

This year, we continue our exceptional project that will bring together 8 young Belgian artists, 8 young Serbian artists (Niss, Southern Serbia), and 8 young French artists (South of France, Border with Spain). They all come from the "Roma/Gipsy/Manouche" cultural roots and play "Djangho Reinharths style", Catalan Rumba and Roma jazz. They will exchange during 3 cultural residencies and will have the chance to perform on international stages of the 3 partner festivals, namely Balkan Trafik (Brussels), Welcome In Tziganie in France and Nissville Jazz Festival (Serbia).

Our aim is to help this new generation to create, meet, travel, learn and gain first-hand "international experience".

To make this project a success, we have partnered with two international festivals: Welcome in Tziganie (France) and Nissville Jazz Festival (Serbia). This project financed by the Creative Europe program will last 2 years.



With the support of:



MUSIC CONNECTS

Music Connects

Rock music has been the language of youth for generations. The raw audacity of rock gives them a voice: to express anger at political corruption and social immobility, to revolt against established meaninglessness, to connect with the past, and collaborate with people across distance and borders. Rock music stands for agency, freedom, and connection.

Mitrovica Rock School uses rock music to bring together young Serb and Albanian musicians from the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica in Kosovo. The school's music education program has band coaching at its center. Band coaching teaches communication, collaboration, compromise, and ownership during the process of creating original music: valuable skills that can be applied both inside and outside the rehearsal room.

This approach was adopted by **Roma Rock School** in North Macedonia in 2018, where youth from the marginalized Roma community merge alternative music with traditional Roma melodies to create Roma rock songs, coached by professional teachers in a multi-ethnic environment.

Music Connects is a four-project launched by Dutch NGO **Musicians Without Borders** that expands this approach to hundreds of talented young musicians. Besides daily music lessons at the rock schools, the project offers exchanges and residencies in Kosovo, North Macedonia, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany.

Balkan Trafik is an official partner of Music Connects and will host super groups formed by musicians from Mitrovica Rock School, Roma Rock School, and the Dutch Fontys Rockacademie. The bands mix alternative pop music with ex-Yu rock and traditional Roma melodies.

On April 29, two Music Connects super groups will take the stage at Balkan Trafik!



Gjovalin Quintet

Gjovalin Quintet, composed of 5 virtuosos, has the pleasure to interpret the music of Albania in a traditional way thanks to the compositions and arrangements of Gjovalin Nonaj, accordionist and singer of Albanian origin. Since his birth, traditional music is in his blood.

The pieces of music presented have their origins in the North as in the South of Albania. This music is characterized by the richness of its melodic variations. Energy, nostalgia, melody, and a sense of rhythm contribute to form a complex sound. Many melodies are written in different and irregular rhythms: 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 12/8...

Let's not forget that the music is festive, often danced at weddings, concerts, festivals ... They participate in the life of the people and many family celebrations.

Gjovalin Quintet is a Belgian/Albanian group. Its objective is to share music - a universal language - and to create openness and friendship between people.

An instrumental melody on the çifteli will be performed by Gjovalin in honor of his uncle, Gjok Nonaj, a great rhapsode and master of the Lahuta, an instrument from Northern Albania. He opened at the age of 100 years, the concert "Tirana Brussels" during the festival Balkans Trafik in 2008.

A special tribute will be paid to Agim Krajka, a great composer and accordionist from Albania.

SPECIAL GUEST: Josif Shukallari

Schedule

BALKAN TRAFIK!

27/04

NAMUR-Le Delta

- 18:30** Ntoumos  
- 19:30** ROJAZE   
- 20:30** KermesZ à l'Est 
- 22:00** Boban I Marko 
Marković Orkestar

28/04

BXL-De Brouckère

- 16:30-18:00** **FREE** entrance
- 18:00** ROJAZE   
- 19:30** BAİLDSA 
- 20:30** Iskaz 
- 21:30** Marko Marković Orkestar 
- 23:00** Dubioza Kolektiv 

29/04

BXL-De Brouckère

13:00-18:00 **FREE** entrance

- 14:30** Josif Shukallari 
with SAZET e PERMETIT
& grupi i PILURIT
- 16:15** Gjovalin Quintet  
- 18:00** Music Connects   
- 19:00** Džambo Aguševi 
Orchestra
- 21:00** SUBCARPAŢI 
- 23:00** BALKAN BEAT BOX 
- 20:00** DREN ABAZI &
Zig Zag Orchestra 
- 22:00** Elektro Hafiz 

30/04

BXL-Grand-Place

14:00-18:00 Giant Horo

More than a music festival!

Street art

The Balkan Trafik! Festival invites graffiti artists from the Balkans to express themselves on the walls of the capital. The new urban generation in the Balkans is in full intellectual, social, cultural and aesthetic bloom and gives rise to a large number of collective identities and representations.

5 murals by artists from Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Albania already exist in the centre of Brussels. This year, a Kosovar artist will be honored.

With the support of the city of Brussels (Echevinat de la Culture) as part of its PARCOURS STREET ART



Rikardo Druskic
(Bosnia Herzegovina)
2019

@
Rue Marché aux Peaux
1000 Brussels



Jana Danilovic
(Serbia)
2020

@
132 rue Terre Neuve,
1000 Brussels

Aftermovie 📺
<https://vimeo.com/484511029>



ojoMAGico
(Croatia)
2021

@
Quai de la Houille 7
1000 Brussels

Aftermovie 📺
<https://vimeo.com/542524033>



Ledia Kostandini
(Albania)
2022

@
Quai au Bois à Brûler 29,
1000 Brussels

Aftermovie 📺
<https://vimeo.com/704352424>

In 2023, 3 murals will be produced: 2 in the center of Brussels and 1 in Pristina during our press trip.



Fitore Alisdottir Berisha is a Kosovar activist artist, feminist, who fights against the patriarchal society of Kosovo. She has a very recognizable style, colorful, and tinged with her activism.

Fitore also believes in the healing power of art and uses it as therapy. As she says: "The sweetest revolution comes from art, from that bitterness that accumulates inside you".

https://www.instagram.com/fitore_alisdottir

@ 1000 Bruxelles – address to be confirmed

With the support of the city of Brussels (Echevinat de la Culture) as part of its PARCOURS STREET ART

Having begun his artistic career by drawing cartoons, Turkish street artist **No More Lies** has produced street art since 2010. In his street works that include both stencils reflecting personal clashes and stamps and murals that began as travel journals but also contain social messages, he uses animal images as his main figures. In his self-portraits, he seeks to express the fragility and loneliness of humanity especially via images of animals facing extinction. No More Lies has increasingly focused on subjects such as the environment and the climate in recent years and conveys in his works the close relationship he has established with bees and animals in his personal life.

<https://www.instagram.com/nomoreliesart>

@ 1210 Saint-Josse-ten-Noode – address to be confirmed

With the support of the city of Saint-Josse



Two Belgian artists of the women's collective **WALLSTREETCOLORS** will paint a wall with "6 hands" in Pristina in collaboration with the Kosovar street artist Tak

<https://www.instagram.com/wallstreetcolors>

<https://www.instagram.com/colombenicolas>

<https://www.instagram.com/amandinelesay>

<https://www.instagram.com/takqrk/>

In collaboration with the Meeting of Styles Kosovo association

Digital Crossborder debates

Through our application, website, and social networks, Balkan Trafik! becomes a virtual place connecting Brussels to the Balkans and allows people to discuss without borders, to exchange opinions on important issues that connect Brussels, as the European capital, to the Balkans.

The aim of the debates, based on European values, is to bring the Balkans and Brussels, the European capital, closer together. This goal has existed since the 1st edition of the festival. These meetings between international actors are an essential part of the message, and of the work of Balkan Trafik!... The Balkans are Europe, we must learn from each other.



Travel through the Balkans

— The production of a documentary series

« *Balkan What!* »

As mentioned above, Balkan Trafik! has been a platform for the exchange of experience since its inception. A space where, through the arts, from here and there, our communities meet, learn from each other and we try to achieve the goal of "living together".

This documentary project, the first episode of which was shot in January 2021, is a logical continuation in the pursuit of this goal of "living together" and thus... getting to know each other.

This project of 10 episodes of 27 minutes was born from the passion of the creator and producer of the Balkan Trafik! festival, Nicolas Wieërs, for the culture, the adventure and the people, and their mentality so close and yet so different, of the Balkan region. Balkan What! will travel through the Western Balkan region, the Balkans that are not yet integrated into Europe but are on its borders, discovering lesser-known places and exploring their cultures and specificities.

The Balkan Trafik! festival, unique in Europe for its programming and expertise, has existed for 15 years in Brussels and two editions in Paris. The festival is itself conceived, and has been since its beginning, as "a documentary that each year, with each edition, expands with a new sequence". After two decades of peregrination in the region, and the changes that are taking place at the moment, it is the right time to put into images these encounters, and knowledge of the field, that have made the international reputation of the festival.

In order to build his multi-artistic line-up, and to keep his balance on the often destabilizing geopolitical thread, Nicolas Wieërs has been travelling the region for almost twenty years. This is how he has built up his expertise; hundreds of meetings on the spot, an exceptional address book, a network of diversified contacts and finally... a history of trust and respect.


During the documentary series, Nicolas will share his experiences and anecdotes and take us into the unimaginable, little-known background of these countries. It is with the same passion that made him give up his boxing career, twice Belgian champion, or that took him away from his work as a director, that the rhythm of these programmes will be determined. With some exceptions, all the protagonists who will be met in the 10 episodes are friends of Nicolas or good acquaintances for a long time.

This series of documentaries will interest the public for different reasons, and according to the interests of everyone, the discovery of remote villages and unsuspected tourism, traditions still very much alive but forgotten, music of course ... of a certain adventure as well! But in the end « Balkan What!» is about what we all have in common, the search for the extraordinary in our lives, the search for new emotions and a change of environment. Yet, despite everything, a geographical and human proximity which allows the viewers to immerse themselves in the subject



Teaser of the first episode of the documentary series

👉 <https://vimeo.com/547446171>

The 10 teasers as well as the full-length documentary are available on the app for free 

— **Comic book**

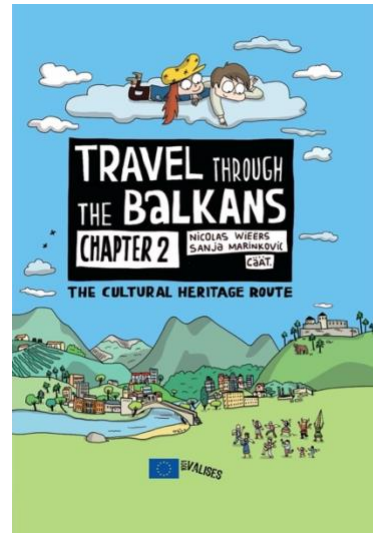
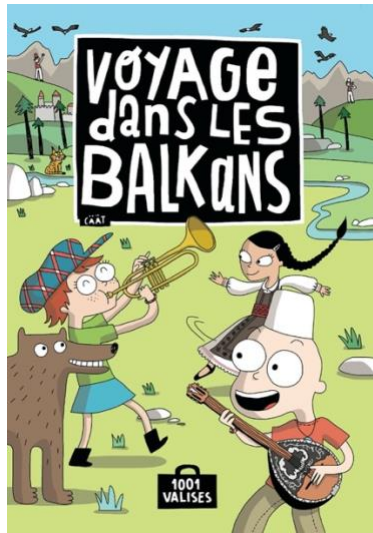
« *Travel through the Balkans* »

1001 valises has produced a two-volume comic book entitled "Journey to the Balkans" on the theme of the cultural heritage route.

This comic book has been published thanks to the support of the Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini.

While Volume 1 is only available in French, Volume 2 has been translated into English, French, Serbian (Cyrillic version), Bosnian, Albanian and Montenegrin.

The comic book was printed and distributed free of charge in Belgium (schools, libraries, hospitals) and in the Balkan countries thanks to the European delegations on the spot.



— Photo exhibitions

In addition to our concerts and films, you will find a continuous series of animations and activities within the festival. They immerse you in the heart of an invaluable cultural diversity and provide a global experience that is the soul of the Festival.

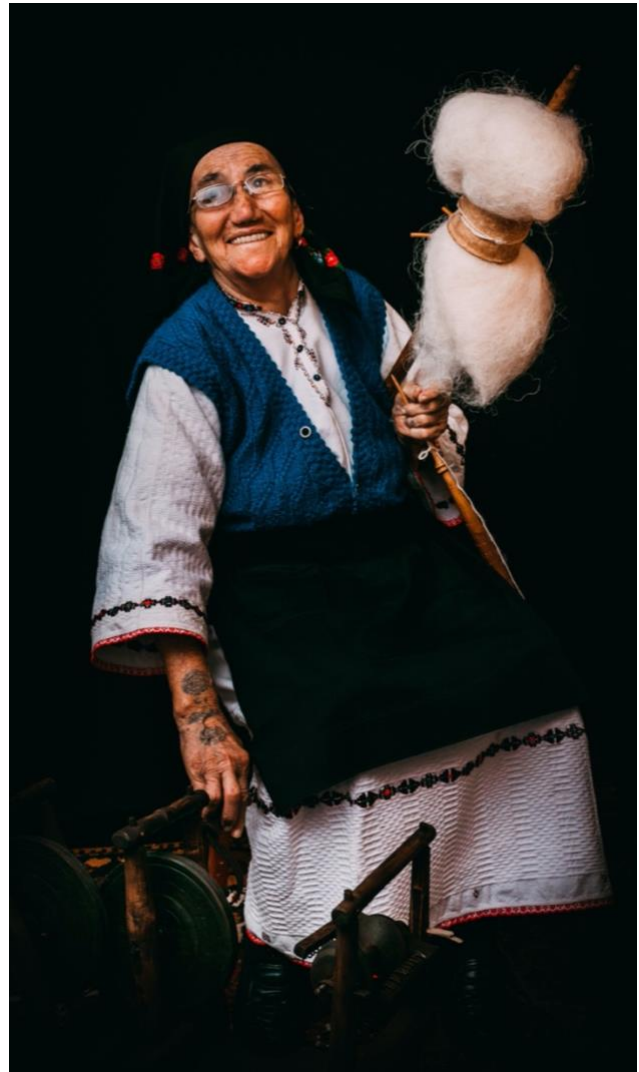
“Sicanje” Traditional Bosnian Tattoos

Upon Balkan Trafik!'s request, three passionate artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Boris Lalić, Mladen Topić and Zoran Stojanović, who love photography and writing unveil an old tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina through a series of pictures.

“Sicanje”, “bocanje” or “križičanje” are local words used to describe traditional Bosnian tattooing.

Supposedly, this was old Slavic tradition which, later, in the time of the Ottomans empire in Bosnia it acquired catholic symbolic features as a way of protecting the Catholic heritage.

The pictures were taken in the municipality of Prozor-Rama, where many traditionally tattooed old women still live. They were all photographed in traditional costumes and with traditional tools from their region.



— Free mobile application

All the Balkans in one mobile app for smartphones and tablets!

Download our very new app, it is here;



Why the app?

Our desire to show you the richness of the Balkans combined with the fast-growing digitalization inspired us to go further than just feeding a website. We want to offer a unique mobile app with international reach to immerse yourself in the European South-East region, also named “the Balkans”.

The goal of the Balkan Trafik! app is to become the crossroad of communication between Western Balkans and Europe allowing maximum interconnectivity and international broadcast of our artists during the festival as well as throughout the year. There will be daily content all over the year but also live report from the region.

What does it have to offer?

Get access to exclusive content such as:

- **concerts** in livestreaming of 2021
- **backstage moments**: greeting message, interviews with the artists
- live **digital debates** around society-related topics such as social, inclusion, activism, environment, etc
- the first episode of the Balkan What! **documentary** series and its trailers produced by Balkan Trafik!
- **exhibitions with** artists presenting their work in videos and pictures
- newsfeed of **specialized media** and Balkan Trafik partners such as Euronews Balkans, Osservatorio balcanico, le Courier des Balkans and more
- fun facts and videos to **discover the Balkans**
- **daily content** all over the year
- **live encounters** with cultural stakeholders and people who want to promote their cities in the Region,
- and much more!

How to get the app?

The app is free, suitable for mobile phones and tablets and available on the AppStore and PlayStore.



Balkan Village

In addition to our traditional Giant Horo on the Grand Place in Brussels on Sunday, other free activities will take place during the festival.

Festival in free access:

- Friday 28.04.2023 from 16.30 to 18.00
- Saturday 29.04.2023 from 13.00 to 18.00



Community space

Created in 2011, the Balkan Bazaar gathered about ten associations in the same room with a very particular decoration imitating the stalls of the old bazaars.

Since then, the Balkan Bazaar has been transformed and has become the Balkan Village, a free space accessible to all. The decor has changed but the Balkan Bazaar remains a friendly place of exchange!

The objectives of the Balkan Bazaar are:

- To offer concrete feedback to the public on what is happening in the Balkan countries
- To have a place where the public can meet Balkan experts
- To give visibility to certain issues, projects, or cultural and tourist aspects of the Balkans
- To involve communities in the Balkan Trafik! project
- To give visibility to some of our current or future partners

Vino Zirkus

The wine bar will become one of the focal points of the festival, a place of animation and musical improvisation of our artists. Every year, it is a tradition: musicians from various scene groups gather, engage in improvised musical encounters, and play all night long.

Gastronomy

The gastronomic heritage of the Balkans is exceptionally rich: authentic products, culinary practices marked by all the cultural contributions that have crossed the region.

The Balkans is a real "food highway". Here, products and gastronomic traditions have travelled more than anywhere else, mixing along the way to reach the Maghreb or India.

Communities are omnipresent in the Balkan Trafik! gastronomic offer. This year, Serbo-Croatian, Roma, Turkish, Greek, etc gastronomy will be in the spotlight!



Diasporas on podium

A podium in the heart of the Village dedicated to the cultural wealth of the Balkan diasporas in Belgium. Several communities will be represented through these groups who will perform acoustically: Albania/Kosovo, Greece, Romania, Serbia, Turkey.

Our motto "Brussels, thanks to its community richness can be an extra line on our CV", is more than ever topical and to put forward our diasporas thanks to culture is a very strong basis of encounters.

In addition to the 30 or so best groups from the Balkans, cinema, music from traditional to rock through jazz, dub, we will thus give the floor to our local groups.

Balkan Trafik! is an international festival based on the richness of the encounter between local and foreign communities. To do this, we work hand in hand with all the communities represented in the festival, and we try to integrate them in a concrete and active way in the festival

— Educational and fun projects

The week before the festival, 1001 valises organizes free concerts in schools and hospitals in Brussels with bands from the festival stages.

For example, at the Queen Fabiola Children's University Hospital (pediatric oncology department).

We also invite about 100 children from the centers run by the Service of the General Delegate for the Rights of the Child and the "Arc-En-Ciel" association.

Access to culture for all

Pricing policy

Our pricing policy is based on the idea of "keeping the doors of Balkan Trafik! and in general of all our activities, open to all wallets, all communities, all social backgrounds.

The pricing policy is part of our strategy to integrate a very diverse audience into the festival.

The prices of the tickets are quite democratic, and we put in place several discounts to give the possibility to any public to access the festival.

- 1-day ticket: between 25€ and 32,50€
- 2-day ticket : between 40€ and 45€
- article 27 special fare
- Work with institutions and services for children and youth to provide free entrance to children and families without access to culture

Free activities

- Afternoon concerts, dance workshops and exhibition on the Place De Brouckère in free access
- Giant Horo on the Grand-Place on Sunday 30.04.2023
- The Balkan Trafik! application for mobile and tablet
- The 1st documentary episode in Kosovo on the application



A festival sustainable and respectful of the environment.

The climate crisis is the greatest challenge of our time.

In most cases, the production and distribution of art and culture has an impact on the climate.

There are no miracle solutions... moving thousands of people has an impact, there are no "ready-made" solutions.

Each festival must find its own solutions to its own environmental and sustainability issues.



Each year we strive to go further in our actions for the climate and the environment:

- **Mutualization of events/groups**

If we bring a group from the Balkan region, we propose to cultural actors in Belgium and neighboring countries to book them as well to maximize the group's travel.

Example: 4 confirmed bands this year are integrated in other festivals the same weekend.

- **Favoring local contacts to distant groups**

We have decided not to invite any more bands from the Balkans to give only one 45' concert on our small stages. We invest in our networks from 17 years of connection with the diasporas and invite the best bands of the style present in Belgium and the neighboring countries.

- **Location of the festival in the center of Brussels**

The festival is fortunate to be located at the intersection of various means of public transport: metro, train, tramway, and bus. We communicate intensively about these means of transport and encourage our audience to use them.

Furthermore, the artists are accommodated in hotels within walking distance of the Place De Brouckère to limit our shuttle journeys.

- **Supporting tree planting projects in Belgium via [PlantC](#)**

Tree planting is one of the main mechanisms to compensate for our national and international transportation of the festival.

- **A small step towards ecology at the festival**

Reusable cups, waste sorting, recyclable or biodegradable dishes for the food trucks, collaboration with local breweries (beers and soft drinks), alternatives to electric generators, etc.

- **Festival posters**

We limit printed advertising: no more distribution of flyers, fewer billboards.

Our printing is made on FSC recycled paper and vegetable ink.

**BALKAN
TRAFIK!**

Festival Balkan Trafik • 1001 valises asbl

info@balkantrafik.com



© photos: David Vannucci Photography

© videos : NEOTEN – Red Waffle

