

## France Takes Initiative at 20th NATO Summit

Heads of State and high-ranking officials from the North Atlantic Council convened in Bucharest, Romania, for the 20th NATO Summit held from April 2 to 4. The summit also brought together, for the first time, the leaders from the 40 countries participating in the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Secretary-General of NATO Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, as well as officials from the European Union and other international organizations.

France has responded to NATO's call for more troops by pledging to send an additional battalion to eastern Afghanistan, adding approximately 700 troops to France's current contingent of 1,600 in the country. The troop increase is part of France's commitment to Afghanistan. French President Nicolas Sarkozy also announced that France would take command of the central region of Afghanistan beginning this summer. President Sarkozy declared in November before the US Congress that France would "remain engaged [for] as long as it takes," explaining that "what's at stake in that country is the future of our values and of the Atlantic Alliance."

President Sarkozy has also indicated that France would continue the renovation of



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**Presidents Karzai (Afghanistan) and Sarkozy (France) met at the 20th NATO Summit.**

its relationship with NATO as European Defense moves forward. He proposed that the 60th Anniversary NATO Summit take place in 2009 in Strasbourg and Kehl, to reinforce NATO and ESDP, and to conclude the process engaged by France. This move would accompany the development of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESPD), which has won the approval of the United States.

President Bush strongly affirmed at the NATO Summit that the European Union needs to be a strong and effective actor on the international stage and encouraged European nations to develop the resources and steps needed to strengthen their defense capabilities, which must be robust and flexible enough to support both NATO and EU operations. President Bush recalled that America supports a strong Europe because it needs a strong partner in the hard work of advancing freedom in the world. "A stronger Europe contributes to European and global security and stability."

Strengthening the ESPD is one of President Sarkozy's goals for France's six-month EU presidency, which begins on July 1.

expressed France's sorrow over the loss and honored the contributions made by Ponticelli as well as all the soldiers of WWI: "Lazare Ponticelli thought he owed a lot to France. I affirm today that it is our country which owes a debt to him. [...] It is to him and his generation that we owe in large part the peaceful Europe. It is up to us to be worthy of it."

Ponticelli was given a state funeral at the Saint-Louis des Invalides cathedral in Paris on March 17. That day was also designated a national day of homage for all the combatants of World War I, including more than 50,000 American soldiers who gave their lives fighting alongside the French. "It is our duty," President Sarkozy declared, "to place on record our grateful thanks to all the combatants, of all ranks, of all origins, of all faiths, who gave France the victory." Ponticelli and the soldiers of World War I were honored throughout France and worldwide through France's diplomatic network. At the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C., flags stood at half-mast and a formal ceremony was held during which staff observed a moment of silence in memory of those who fought.

### France Bids Farewell to Its Last "Poilu"

France recently lamented the loss of its last surviving World War I veteran, who died on March 12 at age 110. Lazare Ponticelli was one of 8.4 million French WWI soldiers, called *poilus*. The nickname, meaning



©Photo service Elysée

**France's last surviving WWI veteran, Lazare Ponticelli, received a state funeral in Paris on March 17.**

"hairy one," refers both to the beards worn by the soldiers in the trenches and to their toughness and bravery.

Corporal Frank Woodruff Buckles, age 107, is the last surviving American veteran of the Great War to have served in a combat zone. Cpl. Buckles was awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest decoration, by then-President Jacques Chirac in 1999.

Lazare Ponticelli was born on December 7, 1897, in Bettola, Italy, but left his birthplace at a young age for Paris, where he found work as a chimney sweep and paper boy. When the war broke out in 1914, Ponticelli volunteered to fight for France as a way of thanking the country that had welcomed him. Only 16-years-old, he lied about his age to join the French Foreign Legion and served on the front lines at Argonne and Verdun. After the War, Ponticelli returned to France and started a piping company with his brothers. He became a French citizen in 1939.

In a statement issued on March 12, French President Nicolas Sarkozy

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### Embassy Gives Web Site a Facelift

The Embassy of France in the United States will soon launch a new version of its Web site ([www.ambafrance-us.org](http://www.ambafrance-us.org)) designed to streamline communication about France with the American public. The new Web site is based on a content management system (CMS), allowing it to be updated more rapidly. The new site integrates recent improvements in Web applications and the internet, notably, the extensive use of audiovisual multimedia—an addition now possible thanks to faster internet connections.

A central aspect of the new site is the video center, "Ambafrance-us TV." This section provides a broad range of clips about the embassy and its events, featuring coverage of French ministerial visits, Ambassador Pierre Vimont's activities, and cultural events organized by La Maison Française, as well as a virtual tour of the embassy. Videos of certain French officials' speeches—President Sarkozy's annual UN address or his Bastille Day speech, for example—will also be available.

The embassy's Web site is the most visited French embassy Web site in the world, with one million visitors per month.

### GET A TASTE OF FRANCE WITHOUT THE JET LAG

On Saturday, May 3, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the Embassy of France will open its doors to the general public for the second annual European Union Open House. Like last year, visitors will be able to travel across Europe in a single day and for free, thanks to a complimentary shuttle service to all participating embassies, departing from Dupont Circle and Farragut North. Twenty-seven EU embassies will give you the opportunity not only to get a behind-the-scenes look at their often sumptuous buildings but also to enjoy various programs featuring European cuisine, music and other activities to delight the whole family. In 2007, more than 35,000 visitors experienced the diversity of the E.U. first-hand. This year, the French Embassy invites the public to savor a gourmet lunch, sip a glass of champagne, enjoy French arts and crafts, attend a puppet show, marvel at a magician's tricks, and, of course, discover more about France, as representatives from various Embassy offices will be on hand to answer questions. For additional information, including directions and transportation, please visit [www.eurunion.org/EUinUS/eu-open-house](http://www.eurunion.org/EUinUS/eu-open-house).



The Francophonie flag flies above the State House of Rhode Island.

### FRANCOPHONIE APPRECIATION WAVES PROUDLY IN NEW ENGLAND

In honor of the Francophonie celebrations held this year, two states in New England served as temporary homes for a special guest, the official *drapeau* (flag) of the International Organization of the Francophonie. On March 13, the multicolored flag waved proudly in front of Boston's City Hall, before heading south on March 20 to Providence where it was hoisted above the Rhode Island State House.

Throughout March, various festivities took place around the globe in honor of the annual *Fête de la Francophonie*, a month-long celebration of the international linguistic and cultural community that shares the common thread of the French language (see NFF 08.2, p.4). This year's revelry brought together over 175 million people from 63 nations for a series of film screenings, concerts, food samplings, and other cultural events. In the six states that comprise New England, celebrations began in mid-March and spanned two weeks.

## E.U. Deploys Multidimensional Military Force to Chad and CAR



A patrol of French special forces participating in the EUFOR multidimensional military force in Chad commence their mission.

In accordance with the UN Security Council's unanimous vote of Resolution 1778, which was introduced at France's initiative with the support of European partners, the European Union has begun deploying multidimensional military forces in eastern Chad and northeastern Central African Republic in support of efforts to tackle the crisis in Darfur as part of a regional approach to that crisis.

Subsequently, in October 2007, the Council of European Union officially designated Lieutenant-General Patrick Nash (Ireland) as the Commanding General of operation EUFOR/Chad/Central African Republic (CAR), and French General Jean Philippe Ganascia as Commanding General of the force.

On March 15, 2008, General Patrick Nash declared the

Initial Operational Capability of operation EUFOR Chad/CAR, which marked the effective start of the operation with the deployment of all the command, control, expeditionary, logistics and medical assets to start its missions.

The whole operation will comprise 3,700 troops from 14 European nations, 55 percent of which will be French soldiers. France will provide one of the three maneuver battalions, communications, logistics and command assets, as well as the main core of the force's staff which will be headquartered in Chad. France will also provide 9 attack and maneuver helicopters including one medical evacuation helicopter. In total, 2,100 French forces will be deployed as part of EUFOR Chad/CAR.

France has also activated the European headquarters (HQ) from which General Nash will command the operation at the strategic level. The HQ is located at Mount Valerien, near Paris, and it has a 130-strong staff hailing from 21 different European countries.

EUFOR Chad/CAR will closely coordinate with the multidimensional United Nations presence in the east of Chad and in the northeast of the CAR to improve security in a region directly affected by the crisis in Darfur.

The European force's tasks will be: to contribute to the security and protection of endangered civilians, in particular, refugees and displaced persons; to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian aid by improving the security in the zone of operations; and to contribute to the protection of UN personnel and infrastructures.

## France Introduces Its Latest SSBN Submarine



President Sarkozy presides over the launching of France's SSBN submarine, "Le Terrible," the first of its class to be equipped with the new intercontinental missile M51, which has a range over 8,000 km.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy presided over the launching of the new SSBN submarine "Le Terrible" at the Cherbourg naval shipyards on March 21. This new vessel is the first of its class equipped with the new nuclear intercontinental missile M51, which has over an 8,000 km range. "Le Terrible" should be fully operational in 2010, when it will join its 'older brothers,' SSBN "Triomphant" (1997), "Téméraire" (1999) and "Vigilant" (2004), in France's strategic fleet, the main component of the nation's nuclear forces. Also, during the ceremony President Sarkozy announced that France's nuclear arsenal would be reduced to 300 warheads, bringing it down to half its size during the Cold War era. For more information, please visit: [www.defense.gouv.fr](http://www.defense.gouv.fr).

## American Jazz Singer Dee Dee Bridgewater Shines in the City of Light

American jazz icon Dee Dee Bridgewater was named "Commandeur" in France's prestigious Order of Arts and Literature (*Arts et Lettres*) in a ceremony led by Christine Albanel, Minister of Culture and Communication, on March 14. Along with director Clint Eastwood and choreographer William Forsythe, Bridgewater is one of three Americans to have received this distinguished title.

Born in Memphis, TN, in 1950, Bridgewater grew up a connoisseur of jazz, with a trumpet-playing father and a mother who exposed her to Ella Fitzgerald and Dinah Washington at an early age. At ten, Bridgewater performed her first concert in Michigan. To kick start her career, she headed to the Big Apple in the early 1970s, a move that sparked a string of performances with jazz legends like Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, and Max Roach. On



© Fátima Bréchemier/Ministère de la Culture

Dee Dee Bridgewater was named **Commandeur in the Order of Arts and Literature on March 14.**

a fast track to fame, Bridgewater released her first album, "Afro Blue," in 1974 and a year later received a Tony Award for her performance in the Broadway hit "The Wiz."

A true Francophile, Bridgewater moved to Paris in 1986 after touring France in the musical comedy "Sophisticated Ladies." Since then, the French public has fallen in love with the singer, who lights up any stage with a voice reminiscent of Joséphine Baker. In 2005 she released "J'ai deux amours" ("I Have Two Loves"), an album of French classics reinvented à la Dee Dee. After receiving her honorary medal from Albanel, Bridgewater enchanted the crowd with a performance of the album's title track.

## Richmond Hosts U.S.'s Largest French Film Festival

*Cinéphiles* flocked to Richmond, Virginia, from March 28 to 30 for the 16th annual VCU French Film Festival. The event, hosted by the Virginia Commonwealth University, is the largest French film festival in the United States. Many of the films' actors and directors were on site to present their films — always recent releases and usually American premieres — and to answer questions from the audience directly following the screening of their films.

The festival, founded in 1993 by Drs. Peter and Françoise Kirkpatrick, professors of French culture and literature, has grown considerably since that time: more than 20,000 tickets were sold for the 2007 edition. French Ambassador Pierre Vimont attended this year's festival, which also featured a master class

about adapting novels for the screen presented by French director Sam Karmann, American novelist Stephen McCauley and French actress and lyricist Catherine Olson.

This year's feature film selection included "Dialogue avec mon jardinier" ("Conversations with My Gardener"), presented by director Jean Becker; Laurent Bouhnik's "L'Invité," starring Daniel Auteuil, Thierry Lhermitte, Valérie Lemercier, and Hippolyte Girardot; and Claude Berri's "Ensemble, c'est tout" ("Hunting and Gathering"), based on a novel by Anna Galvalda and starring Audrey Tautou. Among the short films were Dyana Gaye's "Deweneti," Matthieu-David Cournot's "Pour quelques minutes de plus," and Grégoire Sivan's "Premier Voyage."

For more information, please visit: [www.frenchfilm.vcu.edu](http://www.frenchfilm.vcu.edu).

## Family Fun in the Forest of Fontainebleau



Courtesy: National Gallery of Art

"Le Rageur, Forest of Fontainebleau," by Jean-Baptiste-Camille is one of the works that will highlight the exhibition on Fontainebleau.

Located approximately 35 miles southeast of Paris, the Forest of Fontainebleau once served as a royal hunting ground for kings before becoming a magnet for artists and tourists in the 19th century. Transplanting the spirit of this exceptional landmark to the nation's capital, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., has organized "In the Forest of

Fontainebleau: Painters and Photographers from Corot to Monet," an exhibition running from March 2 through June 8. Another program slated for April 19-20, "Family Weekend in the Forest of Fontainebleau," will delve deeper into the spirit of the forest and its inspirational effects on French artists.

With over 100 paintings, pastels, and photographs, the exhibition explores the quiet but significant revolution launched by artists working outdoors in 19th-century France. Works by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, Claude Monet, and photographer Eugène Cuvelier demonstrate the French phenomenon of *peinture en plein-air* (open-air painting) in the region of Fontainebleau—a mix of traditional rural French villages and natural landscape featuring magnificent old-growth trees, stark plateaus, dramatic rocks, and stone quarries.

The weekend of family fun will offer a variety of free activities for children and adults to enjoy, including films screenings (such as Walt Disney's "Beauty and the Beast"), music performances, and arts and crafts. To capture the memory of the experience, visitors can take a family portrait that will be printed in sepia tone on their own hand-crafted postcards. For more information, please visit: [www.nga.gov/exhibitions/fontainebleauinfo.htm](http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/fontainebleauinfo.htm).

### FREE FILMS FOR D.C. FRANCOPHILES

For those Washingtonians who can't make it to this year's film festival in Cannes, France, D.C.'s Napoleon Bistro and Lounge offers an alternative solution. The quaint restaurant located in Adams Morgan



© Why Not Productions  
"The Beat that My Heart Skipped" screened on April 8.

offers free screenings of award-winning French feature films and shorts on the second Tuesday of every month. The "French Flicks" program operates in conjunction with the Washington, D.C. Alliance Française which offers a wide selection of films from its library. Each month the film or shorts embody a different theme, from l'amour to springtime, and usually attract a full house. On April 8, customers were treated to two award-winning films: "Les Princesses de la piste" ("Painting the Town Red") and "De battre mon cœur s'est arrêté" ("The Beat that My Heart Skipped"). For more information, please visit: [www.napoleondc.com](http://www.napoleondc.com).

### MUSIC FESTIVAL HEATS UP MIAMI BEACH

Beginning on March 25, the cities of Miami and Miami Beach hosted the five-day Winter Music Conference (WMC). Launched in 1985, the event provides guests with the opportunity to discover new talent and to appreciate renowned artists from around the world. At the top of the electronic music category, French DJs were featured in Miami Beach night clubs and at the Ultra Music Festival in Bicentennial Park, where international superstars like Bob Sinclar and David Guetta showcased their mixing prowess. A leading international networking event, the WMC is one of the three most established, well-attended, and acclaimed music industry gatherings in the United States and continues to attract innovative talent from over 62 countries. The event welcomes nearly 45,000 attendees each year to the warm shores of Miami Beach where over 2,000 artists and DJs take the stage at outdoor performances, receptions, and parties. For more information, please visit: [www.wintermusicconference.com](http://www.wintermusicconference.com).

## Le Baccalauréat Celebrates Its 200th Anniversary

Last month, France celebrated the 200th anniversary of *le baccalauréat*, the scholastic qualification that students take at the end of their high school career. This national exam, a source of great trepidation for French students, serves the dual purpose of marking the end of high school (*le lycée*) and granting automatic access to higher education.

Commonly referred to as "*le bac*," the exam functions on a simple pass/fail basis. Last year, a record proportion — 83.3 percent — of the 626,000 *candidats* became *bacheliers* (holders of *le bac*, or students who passed the test). The youngest *candidats* was 12 years old, and 21 others were under 16. Another 21 were over 50.

*Le bac* is administered every June. Significantly more comprehensive than the SAT or ACT, it includes 9 to 10 required tests — both written and oral — as well as several more specialized, optional assessments similar to the Advanced Placement exams in the U.S. The exact number of tests and their subjects depend on which of the three versions of the exam the student chooses to take: general, technological, or professional. There are no bubble sheets to be found on *le bac* because the written tests are essay questions (four million essays are corrected each summer). Due to the extensive nature of the exam, students take it over two years: half at the end of *première* (junior year) and half at the end of *terminale* (senior year).

Each version of the exam corresponds to a different path of study. Each *lycéen* (high school student) chooses from one of three tracks, or *filières*, designed to prepare the student for that particular *bac*: *le baccalauréat général*, *le baccalauréat technologique*, or *le baccalauréat professionnel*. In order to adapt the curriculum to the individual's interests, each *baccalauréat* is divided into "*séries*" and then further into "*spécialisations*."

*Le baccalauréat général* offers three *séries*: ES (*économique et social*), L (*littéraire*), and S (*scientifique*). Success on *le baccalauréat général* allows a student to continue his studies in a university, *grande école*, or university institute of technology.

*Le baccalauréat technologique*, created in 1968, pairs general and technological education. Like *le baccalauréat général*, it implies the continuation of studies, but

through supplementary diplomas (such as the BTS — *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*) and specialized schools as well as university institutes of technology. This *bac* offers eight *séries*.

The youngest *filière*, the *baccalauréat professionnel* (popularly called "*le bac pro*"), dates back to 1985, and prepares individuals to work in the private sector. While most students who pass this version of *le bac* enter the work force directly after high school, some pursue additional studies.

The variety of *bac pro* options allows students to select highly specified studies at the high school level. For example, one *spécialisation* offered through the *filière technologique* is *le bac TRS* (*traitement de surfaces*), which focuses on metal and plastic surfaces and their properties, such as susceptibility to corrosion. *Le bac TRS*, which attracts just a few dozen *candidats* per year, is one of the 48 specialties (out of 58 *bac pro* exams) that draw fewer than 3,000 *candidats* per year.

*Le baccalauréat général* remains by far the most popular form of the exam. Out of every 100 *bacheliers*, 54 have a *baccalauréat général*, 27 have a *baccalauréat technologique*, and only 19 have a *baccalauréat professionnel*.

The *baccalauréat* exam has also served as inspiration for similar programs abroad. One such program, the International Baccalaureate (IB), was founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1968. This educational foundation seeks to provide a universally recognized curriculum and diploma for students who wish to continue their studies outside their home country. The global IB community has undergone tremendous growth since its inception, and currently consists of 600,000 students from 126 countries around the world.

### History of *Le Bac*

The *baccalauréat* was created on March 17, 1808, by a decree of Napoleon I. The term *baccalauréat* itself is older yet: it first appeared in 1625 and is believed to come from *bacca lauri*, or "laurel berries," for laurels were once awarded for academic success.

The first *baccalauréat* exam, held in 1809, produced only 31 *bacheliers*. At that time, *le bac* consisted of professor-administered oral exams in Latin, Greek, French, and philosophy. History and geography were added in 1820, and math and physics followed the next year. The first written test — French composition or translation of a classical author — was introduced in 1830 and modern languages became part of the exam in 1853. Two decades later, in 1874, the exam expanded to a two-year process.

As of 1880, students could choose between *le bac classique* and the new *bac moderne*. *Le bac classique* still included Latin and Greek but was divided into two *séries*: philosophy and elementary mathematics. No Latin was required for *le bac moderne*, which became so popular that the number of *bacheliers* quadrupled between 1893 and 1904.

For more than a century, *le bac* was dominated by males. Julie-Victoire Daubié broke the trend in 1861 when she became the first woman to take the exam. Female participation picked up as of 1924 when the middle school and high school curriculum for female students was aligned with that of their male peers.

The grading system also changed as *le bac* continued to develop. Initially, the exam was graded on an overall basis; candidates were evaluated as "very good," "good," "fair," or "poor." As of 1854, scores were determined using a system of colored balls, each of which corresponded to the candidate's performance. The jury—a body of exam graders—had one white ball (positive), one red ball (average), and one black ball (negative) for each of the eight tests. The jury would thus evaluate each section by dropping the appropriate ball into an urn. Candidates who received eight white balls were noted as "very good," whereas those receiving eight black balls did not pass the test.

The current notation system — based on a scale from 0 to 20 — was adopted in 1890-1891. Today, a student must average at least 10 to pass. The same grading system is used in classes throughout French primary and secondary schools.

As *le bac* has evolved, the number of *candidats* and success rates have grown. In 1985, the French government set a goal to reach an 80 percent passing rate. Today, that goal has been attained, with 83.3 percent of *candidats* becoming *bacheliers*.



521,000 *candidats* successfully passed *le bac* in 2007.

#### Introduction of a Franco-American Baccalaureate

The establishment of a Baccalauréat Franco-Américain (BFA) is currently on its way to completion. By the summer of 2008, the system should be integrated within the framework of the general baccalaureate rules. At first, the program will exist in schools in the United States that offer a French program, and eventually, hopes are that international schools around the world will be able to participate.

In each series of the general *bac*, the BFA will replace three French tests with three Advanced Placement (AP) tests, corresponding to the dominant disciplinary field of the series. For example, in the scientific series, the French exam for "Sciences de la Vie et de la Terre" (Earth and Life Sciences) will be replaced by the AP Biology test. Likewise, the English exam under the French system will correspond to the AP English Literature exam. The computation of grades will resemble the same system as the general *bac*—grades for the AP exams (between 1 and 5) will be converted on a scale of 1 to 20.

Successful achievement of one's BFA will reflect the student's mastery of knowledge within both the French and American education systems. This double proficiency will allow students to easily matriculate into North American university programs, due to their familiarity with the various techniques and skills associated with pedagogy in the U.S. In addition, this advanced knowledge will naturally benefit those pursuing higher education in France.

## French Company Unveils Environmentally-Friendly Minicar

Many visitors to France are familiar with the ubiquitous Smart car, a compact maneuverable vehicle manufactured by Daimler AG, that can zip throughout the narrow streets of Paris and the tree-lined boulevards of Provence, capable of parking either parallel or perpendicular to the sidewalk. Just when you thought a car couldn't get any smaller, the French company Lumeneo has introduced its own microcar, the Smera, which



The Smera is smaller than a Harley-Davidson XL 1200N Nightster motorcycle and is electrically powered.

debuted at the Geneva Motor Show in early March. The car is only 31.5 inches wide, five inches slimmer than a Harley-Davidson XL 1200N Nightster motorcycle.

Father and son team Daniel and Thierry Moulène co-founded Lumeneo in 2003 based on Thierry's microcar concept. The Smera is not only micro, but also electric with a built-in charger and cable that allows the owner to recharge the car's battery in his or her own garage. The bat-

tery is environmentally-friendly and is designed to last at least ten years. The Smera offers a tilted seat, like a motorcycle, with a space behind the driver for luggage, but has two doors like a small car. It is also boasts safety features such as seatbelts and shock-absorbing panels.

Lumeneo anticipates that the car will be available through a Paris dealership by October 2008, with two versions for sale to the public: a 5 kilowatt per hour vehicle with a daily range of 50 miles, and a 10 kilowatt per hour vehicle with an approximate 100-mile range. Lumeneo estimates the average savings on fuel to be between \$7,500 and \$12,000 per 63,000 miles, and anticipates announcing more details surrounding Smera's pricing during the Paris Motor Show in October.

For more information on the Smera, please visit: [www.lumeneo.fr/welcome.html](http://www.lumeneo.fr/welcome.html).

## France's Champagne Pops New Records



© Perrier-Jouët

France's Perrier-Jouët is breaking industry sales records, with a case of limited-edition Champagne going for \$77,500.

Champagne has always been a French symbol of elegance and luxury. The nectar popped new records, however, when the world's most expensive champagne went on sale in March. The limited-edition beverage comes in a 12-bottle case costing 50,000 euros, or about \$79,500. The product, Perrier-Jouët By and For, targets the rich elite of the world, from France and the United States to Russia and Japan. Each buyer will be invited to Perrier-Jouët's wine house in Epernay, northern France, for a meeting with the cellar master who will help them to create their own customized champagne. There, customers personalize their bubbly with an individually selected "liqueur" made from a mix of various wines and sugar. The liqueur helps to determine the champagne's character, making it dry, smooth, sweet, or

delicate. Only 100 cases are available, and each will be personalized to mark this unique experience.

Champagne has been setting several records recently, with an unprecedented volume of sales in 2007. According to the Interprofessional Champagne Wine Committee (CIVC), 150 million bottles of champagne were exported last year. This represents a 7.3 percent increase since 2006, and does not include the 188 million bottles consumed within France itself. Although champagne's core market is the European Union, exports have augmented from growing demand in Asia and Russia.

Champagne is a geographic indicator linked to a specific area in France, meaning that only products originating from this region of the world can be called "champagne." Geographic parameters are regulated by the Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité ([www.inao.gouv.fr](http://www.inao.gouv.fr)). Origin is essential in the wine industry and this is the reason why France, the E.U., and other countries in the world have protected their local names. To safeguard consumers from fake or counterfeit products, France rightfully claims that no other producers in the world should continue to use these names. Champagne must also meet a strict set of standards based on 35 *règles de qualité* (quality regulations) such as vine height and size, vineyard density, and minimum ripening period.

## MICHELIN RECEIVES AWARD FOR ECO-FRIENDLY TIRES



© Michelin

This February, French tire manufacturer Michelin received the Tire Technology of the Year Award at the Tire Technology Expo in Cologne, Germany, for the development of its environmentally friendly Energy Saver tires. Through a new mixing process, Michelin has created a tire that reduces rolling resistance and friction by up to 20 percent while expanding environmental and safety standards. Although tire manufacturers cannot normally decrease resistance without consequently reducing grip, Michelin's new development has actually improved tire durability and braking distance. The company's technological innovations have also led to decreased costs and mitigated environmental effects. The tires lead to moderate fuel savings (approximately 3 dollars per tank, at current rates), and cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by about 4 grams per kilometer. As corporations and manufacturers continue to go green, spokesman Paul Cordle confirms that Michelin is "seeing strong demand" for their Energy Saver tires.

## FRANCE AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO DEVELOP A EUROPEAN SEARCH ENGINE

The European Commission has approved a \$152 million grant to develop a European internet search engine. Thanks to the new grant and substantial funds from the French government, the venture is once again underway after having lost momentum since it was first announced in 2005. The QUAERO project (Latin for "I search") draws expertise from 23 companies, including France Télécom and a subsidiary of French technology firm Thomson. The QUAERO project will develop an advanced multimedia search engine that will operate in several languages and be able to catalog text, images, video, and sound. The endeavor aims to improve European technologies for automatic processing, and to provide more cultural material on the internet. Initially, the search engine will service clients such as network operators and film production studios. When fully developed, it will be available on cell phones, personal computers, and televisions.



A couple enjoys fantastic light and music during a Bastille Day bal.

Planning a trip to Paris this year? You'll want to go armed with a copy of France Magazine's **2008 Paris Guide**, the cover story of its spring issue. Spread out over 26 lavishly illustrated pages, you'll find no fewer than 150 great ideas: Where to Stay, What to Do, How to Shop, Where to Eat. Given the strength of the euro, this year's theme is good value, with veteran guidebook writers Heather Stimmler-Hall, Amy Serafin and Gilles Pudlowski steering readers to the best values throughout the city. If you are not already a France Magazine subscriber, you can order this special issue by contacting Rachel Beamer ([rachelbeamer@gmail.com](mailto:rachelbeamer@gmail.com); Tel. 202/944-6069). For more information on France Magazine, please visit: [www.francemagazine.org](http://www.francemagazine.org).

#### SPRING'S THE SEASON FOR FILM FANS

This spring, France has been enjoying blooming flowers as well as great movie deals. On March 16-18, movie theaters offered discounted tickets for only 3.50 euros. Established in 2000 by the National Federation of French Cinema, *Le Printemps du cinéma* (The Spring of Cinema) takes place every spring with the purpose of attracting film fans to the theaters for a special price. Attendance this year soared to more than 3.5 million tickets sold throughout France, showing a 35 percent increase over last year's 2.6 million participants. An additional supporter of the event, the French bank BNP Paribas, gave away 100,000 passes to the public on their Web site. Taking the prize for most tickets sold is Dany Boon's comedy, *"Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis,"* selling over 3.5 million tickets in its first week. Home to the most movie theaters in all of Europe, France offered plenty of locations for viewers to partake in this cinematic occasion, with 5,300 participating *salles* (theaters) in both small and large towns. Over the past 20 years, more than 1.7 million euros have been invested in the modernization of movie theaters through screen enlargements, sound technology improvements, and services such as advance reservations. For more information, please visit [www.printempsducinema.com](http://www.printempsducinema.com).

## A Slice of Lyon in the Middle East

Buti Saeed al-Ghandi, chairman of Emirates Investment and Development, plans to recreate the French city of Lyon in Dubai, one of the seven principalities in the United Arab Emirates. The entrepreneur was first struck with the idea upon visiting Lyon last October, where he was impressed by the city's charm, history, and traditional cuisine.

Tentatively named "Lyon-Dubai City," the project hopes to build a miniature version of France's third largest city in the heart of the Middle East. In early January, Ghandi signed a mutual accord with Lyon's *mairie* (city hall) to begin architectural plans for one of three possible locations in Dubai. The 750- to



A scene of Lyon's old quarter captures the magic that Dubai hopes to re-create.

## Musée Picasso in Antibes Reopens

After an 18-month hiatus due to extensive renovations, the Musée Picasso in Antibes, in southern France, is reopening its doors. Pablo Picasso spent a significant amount of time at the small Côte d'Azur town after World War II, and many associate his sojourns there with a reawakening of his artistic force.

During one of his trips in 1946, Picasso met Jules-César Romuald Dor de la Souchère, the curator of the Antibes Museum of Art. The museum was housed in the 12th-century Grimaldi Castle, and Souchère offered Picasso space to live and work there, which he happily accepted. During the four months that followed, Picasso produced 22 murals

on wood, 11 oil paintings on paper, 44 drawings, 32 lithographs, two sculptures, five tapestries, and 80 ceramics. Many of these works were completed with materials that were readily available, such as plywood and shipyard paint.

Picasso donated all of these works to the city of Antibes, which officially renamed its museum of art the Musée Picasso, the first museum dedicated solely to his work. Included in its collection are two murals inspired by Greek mythology: *"Joie de vivre (Pastorale)"* and *"Odysseus and the Sirens."* The influence of the Mediterranean is visible in both the subject matter and color palette of these works, demonstrating that Antibes left as indelible a mark on Picasso as he did on Antibes.

#### WEB SITE DISHES OUT GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF CHEFS

It's not a cookbook, but rather a Web site, that is dishing up a new taste of French gastronomy from all corners of the world. The Web site "Villages de chefs" ([www.villagedechefs.com](http://www.villagedechefs.com)) is an online community and forum through which French and French-speaking expatriate chefs share their love and appreciation for their profession, affinity for the culinary specialties and delights from the regions in which they reside, and seek to educate one another about rare products.

The online community of twenty-some chefs was, for the most part, classically trained in France, and is eager to share a certain French (and francophone) spirit as well as insight into culinary standards in a congenial way. Through Village de chefs, the chefs also endeavor to explain their host area's culinary culture, and help others discover — or rediscover — local products. For example, founding member José Martinez, who resides and owns a restaurant in



Village de chefs is an online forum for French expatriate chefs.

Sarasota, Florida, "Maison Blanche," addresses concerns surrounding *foie gras* in one of his postings, and explains the intricacies of how to prepare a *filet mignon* of alligator tail in another.

The francophone chefs also discuss their observations on trends in lifestyle abroad as well as local preferences. Their opinions can be found in the "Dossier" section, which features thematic compilations of articles by the chefs expressing their personal perspectives, as well as in entries in the "Cuisines & Cultures" section and virtual postcards. Martinez, for example, presents his perception on the American palate, while others, such as

1,000-acre-space will include a university, museums, hotels, restaurants and cafés, malls, courtyards, housing and office space — all contained within an area the size of New York's Central Park.

From training chefs in *la gastronomie lyonnaise* to borrowing silk products on display in Lyon's museums, the success of the project will rely heavily on cross-cultural cooperation as well as appreciation. Eager to participate in the venture, Lyon's mayor, Gérard Collomb, proclaimed, "We will give Dubai the soul of Lyon." Current research has gone as far as exploring ways to cool the outdoor areas surrounding Lyon-Dubai City, making street strolling in a desert climate agreeable.

Dominique Corby, analyzes the Japanese's penchant for strawberries, and Didier Corlou examines the history and use of spices in Vietnam. Christian Echterbille, who worked at a Belgian restaurant in Austin, Texas, elaborates on the difficulty he had adapting to the different standards in the U.S., such as weight and temperature, and how rewarding it was to expose his clientele, which included President George W. Bush while he was governor of Texas, to new delicacies such as *foie gras*.

Although published in French, the Village de chefs's convivial and educational ambiance combined with a recipe for appreciation of other cultures and cuisines has not gone unnoticed in the U.S. "Americans constitute the most important volume of our readers," explains founding member Marie Anne Page. "Their interest really touches us and pleases us immensely."

*News From France* does not endorse the content, views and opinions of authors expressed in the aforementioned Web sites.

## Mont Saint-Michel Turns 1,300

This year, France's majestic Mont Saint-Michel celebrates 13 centuries of existence. The most visited monument in France outside of Paris, the site was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979 and attracts more than three million visitors a year. The abbey was first founded by Bishop Aubert in the year 708 in honor of the Archangel Saint Michael.



2008 marks France's Mont Saint-Michel's 1,300 anniversary.

Since its early days, it has been a pilgrimage destination for thousands of people from around the world.

The abbey is located on an islet off the coast of Normandy and is most renowned for its 550-foot spire and imposing Gothic architecture. Its unique location at the edge of the mainland makes Mont Saint-Michel particularly stunning, and current restorations plan to intensify the visitor's experience. First, work was begun in 2007 to remove the silt that has built up over the

years, in hopes of returning Mont Saint-Michel to its original island state. Additionally, the causeway and road which currently connect Mont Saint-Michel to the mainland will be replaced with a footbridge, allowing tourists to approach the monument as pilgrims did in the past. For those who are slightly less adventurous, a ferry system will transport visitors to and from the shore.

Completion of the renovation is projected for 2012. In the meantime, Mont Saint-Michel celebrates its 1,300th *anniversaire* with several events and exhibits that will take place from May 2008 to October 2009. Activities include hikes, religious gatherings, and informational presentations about the abbey. One such exhibit will depict Mont Saint-Michel alongside other sacred mountains from around the globe, including Mount Sinai in Egypt, Uluru in Australia, and Skellig Michael in Ireland.

## 28th International Book Fair: A New Chapter in Literary Appreciation

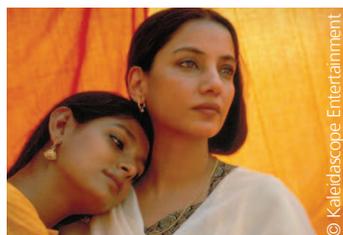
A celebration of the written word, the 28th annual *Salon du Livre* took place in Paris from March 14-19. With the opening ceremony inaugurated by the French Minister of Culture and Communication Christine Albanel, the international event drew over 1,200 editors and 3,000 authors to Paris's Porte de Versailles. Through over 40 featured presentations, the fair allowed visitors to converse with writers, meet emerging talent, and witness behind-the-scenes action of the publishing industry. To keep readers up to speed in the digital era, this year's *Salon* featured various discussions on current events and new trends, with a heavy emphasis on electronic books, or e-Books.

In line with the fair's international perspective, the

*Salon* welcomed Israel as the guest of honor. *Le Centre National du Livre*, along with the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and Israeli authorities invited 39 Hebrew writers, including Amos Oz, David Grossman, and A.B. Yehoshua, to present their work and partake in various discussions on cross-cultural literary appreciation.

With the celebration of Israel's 60th anniversary approaching, the reception of Hebrew authors, along with Israeli President Shimon Peres, provided the opportunity for France to honor Israel's cultural vibrancy. In 2009, *Le Salon du Livre* will recognize Mexico's literature from March 13 to 18. For more information, please visit: [www.salondulivreparis.com](http://www.salondulivreparis.com).

## Film Festivals Celebrate Thirty Years of Cinema



"Fire," directed by Deepa Mehta, was featured at this year's festival.

Cinema was in the air in France this March, with the *Printemps du cinéma* (see p. 6) early in the month and the Cannes Film Festival on the horizon. This year, two of the city's largest film festivals celebrated their 30th anniversaries: *le Festival international de films de femmes* (International Women's Film Festival) and *le Cinéma du réel international* (documentary film festival). Both events held special retrospectives in addition to their usual programs.

*Le Festival international de films de femmes* is a forum of presentation for female directors and screenwriters from all over the world. Held at three venues in Créteil, near Paris, including the Maison des Arts de Créteil, from March 14-23, this year's festival included 150 international films, a young directors film competition with 50 entries, and a retrospective titled "*30 ans/30 films*" (30 years/30 films), showcasing 30 of the best films featured in the past. The festival also included a gala for guest of honor Josiane Balasko, who presented her 1985 film "*Sac de noeuds*" (Bag of Knots).

The *Cinéma du réel* festival ran from March 7-18 at several locations in Paris, including the Centre Pompidou and the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles. The festival is an international competition for documentary filmmakers, with this year's contest including 28 entries from 20 countries. The 30th anniversary retrospective featured four sections: films from Southeast Asia, documentaries exploring Americana, prison films made by French inmates, and films focusing on the historical role of tourism.

For more information on these events, please visit: [www.filmdefemmes.com](http://www.filmdefemmes.com) and [www.cinereel.org](http://www.cinereel.org).

### INTERACTIVE LITERATURE EXPO



A visual demonstration of *Les 3 Espaces* intrigued visitors.

From March 12-18, an exhibit at Le Forum des Halles in Paris broke new ground in the field of interactive literature. Created by author and researcher Carole Lipsyc, *Le récit des 3 espaces* (The Tale of the Three Spaces) engaged spectators through visual interaction with the plot, characters, and conflict of the story at hand. Upon arrival, visitors entered into the virtual universe of *3 Espaces*, where they assumed the roles of voyagers in the fictional worlds of reality, dreams, and ideas. Using mobile phones, internet stations, projector screens, and virtual simulation rooms, visitors could change the plot, choose their next scene and even alter the ending themselves. A combination of literature, innovative technology and interaction, the exhibition exposed visitors both young and old to a different perspective of reading. For more information, please visit: [www.3espaces.com](http://www.3espaces.com).

### PARISIANS FIND THEIR LAUGH

Offering an escape to the monotonous grind of everyday life, the second annual *Festival Paris fait sa comédie* ("Paris Performs Comedy Festival" March 27-April 4) released a resonating chorus of chuckling throughout the city. Under the slogan, *Sauvons le rire!* (Let's Save the Laugh!), the city-wide comedy fest helped visitors to de-stress and recharge by providing plenty of "laughing-stock." Last year's festival drew a crowd of almost 80,000, who came to watch over 200 *spectacles* performed by 300 artists. To recruit the rawest and freshest new talent for the festival, a jury of seasoned comics held open auditions. In addition to up-and-comers like Charlotte Gabris and Stéphane Bourin, who received special awards for new talent, famous comedy veterans like Guy Bedos, Michel Boujenah, and Gerald Dahan, entertained the public like pros. Theaters throughout Paris opened their doors to participate in the humorous event. The heart of the city also hosted outdoor venues all along the imaginary *Boulevard du rire*, situated between the Place de la Madeleine and Place de la République. For more information, please visit: [www.parisfaitsacomédie.com](http://www.parisfaitsacomédie.com).

**"Chocolat" Author Comes to D.C.**

British author Joanne Harris, author of "Chocolat," is coming to D.C. May 4 to present her new book "The Girl with No Shadow."

Three years after her novel "Chocolat," in which chocolatier Vianne Rocher turned a French village upside down became a bestseller, the screen adaptation co-starring French actress Juliette Binoche and movie star Johnny Depp, was nominated for several Oscars.

Now, "Chocolat" fans can indulge in "The Girl with No Shadow," which catches up with Vianne and her daughters five years later, as they try to start a new life in the Montmartre neighborhood of Paris. For more information, please visit:

[www.la-maison-francaise.org](http://www.la-maison-francaise.org).

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**Modernist Iconic "It" Couple on Display in New Haven**

Currently on display at the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, CT, "Making It New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy" is a special exhibition that explores the modernist influence of these American expatriates. Running until May 4, the exhibit is the first to explore the couple's relationships with some iconic figures of the avant-garde circles of Paris during the 1920s.

When Sara and Gerald Murphy moved to France in 1921, they settled in Cap d'Antibes, a fishing village on the French Riviera. In their new house, Villa America, they hoped to escape the conservatism from back home. Their legendary lifestyle and "joie de vivre" invigorated many other artists, writers, and musicians of the time including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, and



"Wasp and Pear," by Gerald Murphy, is on display at Yale University Art Gallery.

Ernest Hemingway. From sunbathing on the sands of the Riviera to inspiring Picasso paintings, the Murphys kindled the sparks that set off new and fashionable trends.

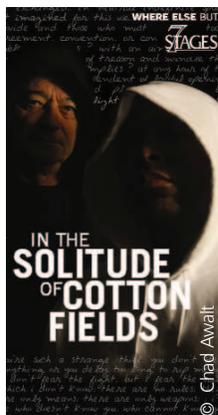
An artist himself, Gerald Murphy's work has received much praise from contemporary French critics and is often said to anticipate the Pop Art movement. The Yale exhibit displays seven of his surviving canvases, revealing his unique style that blends realism and abstraction. Paintings, watercolors, drawings, and photographs by artists within his circle—Picasso, Léger, Juan Gris, and Amedée Ozenfant—accompany Murphy's work for the first time.

Sara's creative flair for making life into

art also translated into creations of her own, such as her delicate costume designs that were an important contribution to the ballet "Within the Quota."

For more information, please visit: [www.artgallery.yale.edu](http://www.artgallery.yale.edu).

**Koltès Classics Come to Life in Atlanta, Georgia**



"In the Solitude of Cotton Fields" debuts April 24.

Atlanta theater group 7 Stages is hosting the world premiere production adapted to an American audience of "Dans la solitude des champs de coton" ("In the Solitude of Cotton Fields") by the highly acclaimed French playwright Bernard-Marie Koltès. Atlanta actor and translator Ismaïl ibn Conner has undertaken the translation of the play, and has teamed up with Artistic Director of 7 Stages Del Hamilton to interpret it. Co-produced by CDDB—Théâtre de Lorient, the play explores two aspects of one entity and the

powerful interaction of two men who are more familiar than they appear. Directed by Eric Vigner, a leading French theater director and artistic director of CDDB—Théâtre de Lorient, "In the Solitude of Cottonfields" opens April 24 and runs through May 18, 2008.

This production marks the beginning of the U.S. Koltès Project, a ten-year program established to translate and produce six of Koltès' plays: "In the Solitude of Cottonfields," "The Day of Murders in the History of Hamlet" ("Le Jour des meurtres dans l'histoire d'Hamlet"), "Sallinger," "The Night Just Before the Forests" ("La Nuit juste avant les forêts"), "Tabataba and Quay West" ("Quai Ouest"). Beginning with the 2008 production of "In the Solitude of Cottonfields," 7 Stages will present a world premiere translation of each work every other year through 2018 filling each off year with residencies at national and international universities.

For more information, please visit: [www.7stages.org](http://www.7stages.org).

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