

them formulate what they might already know deep inside. If you're thinking 'quack' then think again: she completed an official four year paranormal psychology study at university in Utrecht. Harry Potter, eat your heart out!

I ask her about today's experiences. It was good, she said, smiling. People in big cities are more outgoing than in rural areas and that makes her job a little easier. She also noticed that Turkish women speak better Dutch here than, for example, in Rotterdam. Maybe we're not doing so bad here as we thought...

It all ends with a bang. Juggler Marty le Gray is one of the few people in the world skilled, and mad, enough to juggle three completely functional chainsaws. Ovarations all round. Ah, you just gotta love the smell of sawdust in the morning.

## A mayor schmooze fest

### Dreaming of a new nachtburgermeester

By Sunny Bleckinger

On 20 February, a couple weeks before the official elections take place, Paradiso is hosting elections for the next *nachtburgemeester*. All the candidates will be there to present themselves, and the winner will be in a position to pump new life into our city nights. So, if you're one of those hot-blooded souls who venture out after dark, it's probably not a vote you should miss. But if this is all news to you, here's a quick recap:

In 2003, after growing complaints about the dwindling nightlife here (Rotterdam had grown to be the hottest spot for action after sundown) a team of eight party organisers and DJs were elected to act together as the city's first-ever Night Mayor—not an official municipal position, but with a bit of luck one that would refuel the fire that heats up the night.

Under the name 'Nachtwacht', they began holding weekly open meetings upstairs at Inez IPSC. They discussed every aspect of city life under the stars, and anyone was welcome to voice their concerns. The direct result of that was *Nachtnota*, a 15-page inspiring summary of what Amsterdam's nightlife was, is, and could be—which was then presented to the real *burgemeester* Job Cohen. (You can download a Dutch or English copy from [www.nachtwacht.nl](http://www.nachtwacht.nl)). But once the initial statements were made, what were the actual achievements afterwards?

'The physical accomplishments are perhaps a bit difficult for the public to see,' explains Maz Weston, programmer for Paradiso and one of the original eight *nachtburgemeesters*, 'but we created a positive atmosphere where people could work together to reach their many individual goals.' Though not tangible per se, this is more substantial than it sounds.



'The people who work in the government and those who work in nightlife speak very different languages,' explains Marco de Goede, member of Stadsdeel Centrum, 'and Nachtwacht was able to serve as translator. There's still a lot of red tape but the civil servants are now much more willing to work with you, rather than just thinking in rules.'

De Goede goes on to explain that Nachtwacht was instrumental in helping many people open new clubs. 'The Sugar Factory is a good example. A combination of theatre, club, and forum for political debates was something the city didn't know how to deal with.'

Sugar Factory founder Jacek Rajewski feels that he may not have opened without the help of Nachtwacht: 'When we first started we had obstacles with permits, and there was hesitation from the municipality. But [Nachtwacht] helped me to retain contact with *wethouder* Els Iping, and thanks to those guys, she warmed up to us quickly. We've since hosted her in one of our political debates, and her son is a frequent visitor.'

Rajewski hopes that Myra Driessen, his programmer at the Sugar Factory and director of the Miraculous Art Freaks, will be the next *nachtburgemeester* because she's running with a group similar to that of the current collective. 'With a group you can get more done, and it's not too exclusive or one-sided,' he explains.

As Driessen says in a phone conversation: 'We're building a coalition with a wide spectrum of people. And we want to set up a long-term structure so that [Nachtwacht] can have subsidy money.'

Can't Jules Deelder just move here?

She continues: 'We want to work with the original *Nachtnota*, improve it, and continue in its path. But, this is important: we haven't decided yet if we will run for the position, or act as a committee to assist the winner.' This is something she will announce on election night, before the voting takes place.

Chiel van Zelst is also running. He's concerned that too much of Nachtwacht is attached to *horeca*. And he stands for the individual over the group: 'It's called "Night Mayor", not "Night Collective". I feel that with a group, all you do is have meetings. I'm more of a doer than a talker.' About two years ago he squatted what is now the Chiellerie, turned it into a legal *broedplaats*, and since then, has held weekly exhibitions for an assorted array of artists—as he had done for years at other locations around town. He was also a founder of Vrieshuis Amerika, and he started the Accidental Monday series at the Sugar Factory.

'They thought I was crazy to programme that on a Monday night, Van Zelst explains, but it keeps selling out. You just have to be creative in your programming.' He also feels that many people are trying to make this too political. 'Why copy the day when you can create your own night? I plan to just keep doing what I've been doing, which is talking to lots of people and making room for the new initiatives.'

Like everyone I spoke to, Van Zelst believes our nightlife is already heading in the right direction. 'It's not going to turn into a grey *eenheidsworst*.'

## Portable City

BY JAN ROTHUIZEN

### Somebody else

At my fitness centre there are huge flat-screen televisions on the walls. Today, while I'm working out on a cycle machine I watch a documentary about a woman who goes to Los Angeles to earn money as an Anna Nicole Smith lookalike.

Who? Anna Nicole Smith, the blonde Marilyn Monroe-esque *Playboy* model with big breasts who married an 86-year-old billionaire when she was 26.

But the documentary is about a woman who acted as if she *were* the famous sex bomb. Even as a lookalike, the woman was called by people on the street who wanted a photo of themselves with her. Even when she was just being herself, just going shopping, she would be mistaken for Anna Nicole Smith.

'It's very tiring,' she said, in tears in front of the camera. 'I'd like to stop. I really miss me.' But a few minutes later, we see her enjoying the attention she gets giving out autographs and posing for photographs.

After 20 minutes on the cycling machine, I am sopping wet. I go to the jogging machines. I get up to speed and my heart settles at a steady rate. I think of a friend of mine from primary school.

He had a little black comb that stuck out of his back pocket. During breaks he would use it to comb his hair, looking at himself in the window as he did so. He was convinced that he was Elvis Presley. When he talked he always drew up the left part of his upper lip, and it eventually became a part of him.

If he had to go up to the board to write something, he would dip his knees a few times and draw a circle in the air with one hand. He did it with such conviction that the teacher never even said anything about it.

After 15 minutes, I'm finished running and I go over to work on some weights in front of the large mirror on the wall. While I swing the weights I look at my red face, my belly and my arms.

I am neither Anna Nicole Smith nor Elvis Presley, I understand that. But who I am trying to be in the mirror of the fitness centre isn't clear to me either.