



### Top Stories

#### School in Edinburgh, Scotland sealed off; put on radioactive alert



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#### Visa seeks to issue largest IPO in US history

Visa, Inc. announced that it would soon go ahead with a much-anticipated initial public offering (IPO) of about half its shares. This would make it the single biggest IPO in United States history, according to the regulatory filing the company made. Visa hopes to raise about US\$17-19 billion, emulating its main rival, MasterCard Inc., which successfully put out an IPO in 2006.



#### EU fines Microsoft \$1.35 billion for non-compliance with antitrust decision

EU has fined Microsoft \$1.35 billion (899 million euros) for failing to comply with the 2004 antitrust order. It is highest ever fine charged by EU and it is also the first time ever when EU has fined a company because of non-compliance with an antitrust decision.



### Featured story

#### Biological Encyclopedia website too popular on first day, crashes



While it has taken almost a year, the non-profit Encyclopedia of Life project launched yesterday. It gained so much attention, that the site quickly crashed. It went back online Tuesday afternoon (EST), but went down again the next morning. The site has limited information on 30,000 species, and full profiles of 25 species.

### Wikipedia Current Events

Colombian FARC rebels release four former members of Congress, held hostage since 2001 and 2002, in a deal brokered by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez.

- A roadside bomb in Afghanistan results in the death of two NATO soldiers.
- The biggest earthquake in nearly 25 years hits England (5.2 on Richter scale).
- A gunman kills four at a public housing complex in Bristol, Tennessee, before committing suicide.

#### Executives from global Internet industry meet at 2008 APRICOT

The twelfth-annual Asia Pacific Regional Internet Conference on Operational Technologies (a.k.a

APRICOT), returned to Taiwan this year; the first appearance since the 2003 conference held at the Taiwan Network Information Center (TWNIC).

"There's a transformation occurring in Taiwan's Internet industry due to the maturing of the Internet users' population. With the conference being held in Taiwan this year, I hope representatives from government, academia, and industries world-wide, including Taiwan, can gain valuable experience from this annual conference."

—Feipei Lai, Chairman of Board of TWNIC

"Even though this conference is held annually in Asia-Pacific countries, I think many executives world-wide including Europe & America can gain significant experiences from the Asia-Pacific host countries."

—Philip Smith, Chairman of APRICOT Management Committee

"Due to several transformations within the networking industry, the government (Executive Yuan) promoted several policies from M-Taiwan to u-Taiwan. With hot topics in the high-definition era, such as HDTV, the IPv6 will be a must-have trend after several consumer electronics will exploit network technology."

—Tony Tien-lai Teng, Director General of Department of Posts & Communications of Ministry of Transportation & Communications of the Republic of China, Taiwan

As Wikinews Journalist Rico Shen reported on the recent "Edison Chen photo scandal" incident, he commented:

"The (photo) scandal is really a hot topic in Asia-Pacific countries, especially in the Chinese-language world, but we (the officials) had provided several lectures related to information security earlier in our workshops for industrial solutions. Generally in fact, some Internet users' habits when connecting to Internet should be appropriately corrected."

Workshops with varied topics and different technology levels took place from February 20 to 24, while several main seminars and speeches for industry, governmental, and academic executives ran from February 25 to 29. Several industry experts such as Wilfred Kwan (Chief Technology Officer of AsiaNetCom), Chung-laung Liu (ISOC Taiwan Chapter Chair), and Maemura Akinori (EC Chair of APNIC) will give several speeches related to the Internet industry at the conference.

### **School in Edinburgh, Scotland sealed off; put on radioactive alert**

A school located in Edinburgh, Scotland was sealed off on Wednesday night after reports of several packages containing radioactive materials were found on the school grounds. Reports say that the packages, in one box, were marked as plutonium, radium and strontium. The packages were later discovered to be just low risk material used in regular school experiments and the alert was called off.

The areas surrounding the Regent Language Training School were sealed off as officials investigated the packages.

Emergency services were called after someone cleaning cabinets found the packages, which were marked as being radioactive. Fire officials believe that the boxes were likely inside cabinets for several years.

"We do know they had been there for a considerable time. Somebody discovered them as they were cleaning out a cupboard. The discovery was made earlier this evening," said Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service manager, Jim Fraser who also stated that "There's no intelligence to suggest anything bad. There are signs on the packages suggesting that they contain radioactive materials, but most schools have these sorts of materials for chemistry experiments and that sort of thing and it's really, really low risk."

There were no students inside the building and no evacuations have been made at this time, but it is not yet known exactly how many people were inside the school when officials responded.

The packages are being examined inside the building by experts. An investigation is ongoing.

### **Stan Lai: Volunteers will play the greatest key role at 2009 Summer Deaflympics**

Today in a press conference at Taipei City Hall, the Organizing Committee of 2009 Summer Deaflympics recently recruited a famous Taiwanese theater director Stan Sheng-chuan Lai as the Art Director of 2009 Summer Deaflympics. According to the officials, the opening, closing, and several on-site programs will be arranged by Stan Lai after his participation.

"The ability of sign language is required for everyone at any

Deaflympics or world-class games related to deaf athletes, that's everyone who knows. But on the other hand, it's a great opportunity for Taipei City Government to showcase creations and cultures and to promote deaf culture since the (Taipei City) Government won the bidding to hold the 2009 (Summer) Deaflympics. Besides of professional ability, I think that volunteers from every industry will play a great role to determine the image and result of this game (2009 Summer Deaflympics)," said Stan Lai.

With his participation, the sports and culture industries in Taiwan will do a great combination at 2009 Summer Deaflympics even before its beginning at September 2009.

### **Sudan boycotts Danish goods**

The country of Sudan has initiated an official boycott of Danish products, after the controversial Muhammad cartoons have been reprinted by a series of newspapers in Denmark and other European countries. Yesterday, President Omar al-Bashir expressed his concerns at a government-backed rally in the nation's capital, requesting that all Muslims in the world take a stand against Denmark by boycotting "businesses, institutions and individuals," adding that "no Danes shall ever again be able to set foot in Sudan," however, no Danish emergency workers in the country have yet been asked to leave.

The crisis, which appeared to have been averted two years ago after a near-omnipresent boycott of Danish goods in the Middle East and other Muslim countries, has re-surfaced after three men were apprehended earlier this month, charged with plotting to murder

the cartoonist of what is considered the most offensive caricature, portraying the prophet Muhammad with a turban in the shape of a bomb on his head. Two of the men, both Tunisian citizens, have since been expelled from the country.

Several Danish politicians have openly suggested dropping the development aid offered to Sudan. The Danish Minister of Development understands the concerns expressed by party associates and states that she cannot promise not to take action. The strongly-nationalist party, the Danish People's Party, has stated that any financial support to the country should cease immediately. Other politicians, especially members of the opposition social democratic party believe that removing the financial support to Sudan will only hurt the refugees in the Darfur and other poor regions of the country, rather than the government and people of the capital, Khartoum.

In addition, the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Per Stig Møller, has also stated, that Sudanese government might want to reconsider their methods, if they wish to become members of the World Trade Organization, which the nation has previously stated its interests in. The organisation does not permit consumer boycotts of other countries by its members.

Since the cartoons were published by 17 Danish newspapers earlier this month—along with a number of foreign ones—there have been demonstrations and attacks on Danish embassies and consulates in Pakistan, Jordan and Indonesia.

The Sudanese boycotts and demonstrations throughout the Muslim world have already claimed

the first jobs at Arla, the main Danish provider of dairy products, who has seen itself forced to fire 8–10 employees due to lowered demand.

### **Journalist William F. Buckley dies at age 82**

Conservative icon and social commentator William F. Buckley was found dead at his desk in the study of his Stamford, Connecticut home this morning.

He was 82 years old and had been suffering from diabetes and emphysema.

He was born on November 24, 1925 in New York City.

Buckley is survived by two brothers, four sisters, and his son, Christopher. His wife, Patricia Buckley died on April 15, 2007.

### **Sports-heavy broadcast day for BBC One receives complaints; BBC responds**

The BBC has responded to complaints that the BBC One schedule for February 23 contained too much sport by saying in a statement that they "are sorry that some viewers felt the BBC One schedule on 23 February contained too much sport."

The statement came after the BBC received 124 complaints about the level of sports coverage on last Saturday. The schedule, which the British newspaper The Guardian defines as "sports dominated," covered sport for eleven and a half hours of Saturday afternoon.

The statement added that "we [the BBC] realise that not everyone enjoys watching sport but there is undeniably a large section of our audience who do." The statement also said that the BBC should

provide content which will be enjoyed by the "large section" of society who enjoy watching sport.

The BBC's sports coverage included eight hours of coverage of the Six Nations rugby tournament, which the BBC has secured the Six Nations coverage up to 2013, in a deal which cost the BBC 160 million GBP.

### **Climate campaigners scale UK Parliament and hang protest banners from the building**

Campaigners opposed to the expansion of London Heathrow Airport have today scaled the roof of the U.K. Houses of Parliament and hung protest banners reading 'BAA HQ' and 'No 3rd Runway' from the building, before and during Prime Minister's Questions inside the building.

The three men and two women were from climate action group, Plane Stupid. The non-violent direct action comes on the day a government consultation into the Heathrow expansion of a third runway ends.

The protesters made paper aeroplanes out of confidential Whitehall documents that allegedly show collusion between the British Airports Authority (B.A.A.) and the Government department of transport to subvert the public consultation process on the proposed third runway. These documents were obtained from the Department for Transport by Greenpeace under the freedom of information act.

B.A.A. claims a third runway is essential for Britain's economy, and would reduce congestion at Heathrow, actually cutting emissions, and is necessary to keep up with the booming aviation industry. This would allow the

number of flights to increase from 480,000 a year to around 702,000.

In a statement given by one of the protestors from the roof to the Guardian newspaper:

"We've come to this symbolic home of democracy to make clear that the consultation process of the third runway at Heathrow has, from the beginning, been a sham.

We're taking direct action as a last resort because we don't believe that the consultation has been a democratic process. This is the beginning of a campaign of direct action that will not cease until we feel we're being listened to and until we're satisfied that it's Londoners' views, rather than B.A.A.'s, that the government paying attention to."

Matthew Knowles from the Society of British Aerospace Companies made a statement to the B.B.C. that: "These stunts are becoming tiresome and do nothing more than peddle inaccurate propaganda."

The rooftop occupation comes two days after Greenpeace protesters scaled an Airbus A320 which had just touched down at Heathrow from Manchester, and follows a succession of direct action protests in the U.K. in relation to climate change.

### **Biological Encyclopedia website too popular on first day, crashes**

While it has taken almost a year, the non-profit Encyclopedia of Life project launched yesterday. It gained so much attention, that the site quickly crashed. It went back online Tuesday afternoon (EST), but went down again the next morning.

During five-and-a-half hours, the site logged 11.5 million hits, including visitors who reached the "503 error".

EOL is estimated to have cost US \$110.5 million so far.

The site has limited information on 30,000 species, and full profiles of 25 species. These fleshed-out profiles include an article with scientific references, maps of where the species are found, and are illustrated with photos and video. One million placeholder pages have been set up so far, and the plan is to eventually catalog all 1.8 million species.

The Wikimedia Foundation launched a similar project in August 2004, Wikispecies. Perhaps the least known of Wikimedia projects, it "was created to provide an open source forum for taxonomic and biological information." It has logged 120,247 species, under a free license. The US government runs an Integrated Taxonomic Information System, with 464,081 scientific names. It is created in partnership with similar Canadian and Mexican databases.

There is also a Tree of Life Web Project, and a Catalogue of Life, the latter being the most successful; it is a compilation of 1,008,965 species, from 47 taxonomical databases. ARKive collects media of species, and the All Species Foundation was a failed early attempt at a web catalog.

### **Wladimir Klitschko unifies IBF, WBO heavyweight titles**

Ukrainian heavyweight boxer Wladimir Klitschko began his quest to unify the heavyweight boxing titles Saturday night. The IBF Heavyweight Champion defeated Russian WBO Heavyweight

Champion, Sultan Ibragimov, by unanimous decision in the main event of a boxing card at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Many of the spectators were disappointed by the conservative boxing mechanics used by both Klitschko and the Russian Ibragimov. But the decision was clearly in the Ukrainian's favor, as the scorecards read 119-110, 118-110 and 117-111 in his favor.

It was Ibragimov's first defeat, bringing his record to 22-1-1 with 17 KO's. Klitschko is now 50-3 with 44 KO's.

While Klitschko looks forward to vying for the WBA and WBC titles, held by Uzbekistani Ruslan Chagaev and Russian Oleg Maskaev, respectively, his next fight will be against Aleksandr Povetkin in an IBF-mandated title defense. Chagaev's next fight is against Luan Krasinqi. Maskaev next fights Samuel Peter, with the winner facing Wladimir's brother, Vitali Klitschko.

### **EU fines Microsoft \$1.35 billion for non-compliance with antitrust decision**

The European Union (EU) competitions commission has announced it's decision to fine the Microsoft Corporation €899 million (US\$1.35 billion) ,approximately 1/10th of the company's gross yearly earnings, for failing to comply with the 2004 antitrust order. It is the highest ever fine charged by the EU (also being the largest fine of its kind ever imposed upon a company), and the first time that the EU has fined a company because of non-compliance with an antitrust decision.

The first decision in this antitrust case was given in 2004 citing that

Microsoft withheld needed interoperability information from rival software companies which prevented them from making software compatible with Windows. The commission ordered Microsoft to provide this information. Microsoft agreed to this, providing the information for royalty fees of 6.5% of the licensee's revenues for the product on grounds of innovation (specifically, 3.87% for the patent license and of 2.98% for the information license). The EU found these royalty fees unreasonable and Microsoft was ordered to lower them. Microsoft complied with this, adjusting the royalty rates to 1.2% (changing the rates for the licenses to 0.7% and 0.5%, respectively) in the European Union, while keeping the rate the same for the rest of the world. The EU still saw this as an unreasonable rate, and Microsoft, two month after lowering the rates, reduced the rates yet again to a flat rate of €10000 or a royalty of 0.4% applicable worldwide. Microsoft's royalty rates, which were deemed unreasonable for the period of 15 months between June 21, 2006 and October 21, 2007 are the cause for the fine. So far, the EU has fined Microsoft €1.68 billion in 3 separate fines in this case. This fine will go towards the European Union annual budget.

The European Anti-trust commissioner Neelie Kroes stated that the fine was "reasonable and proportionate", as the figure could have gone up as high as €1.5 billion, the maximum that the EU commission can impose. She also said that it should act as "a signal to the outside world, and especially Microsoft, that they should stick to the rules" and that "Talk is cheap. Flouting the rules is expensive.". Although she also

expressed hope that "today's decision closes a dark chapter in Microsoft's record of non-compliance with the Commission."

There is no certainty whether Microsoft will appeal this decision, a Microsoft Spokesperson has stated that Microsoft will review this latest fine, citing that "The commission announced in October 2007 that Microsoft was in full compliance with the 2004 decision, so these fines are about the past issues that have been resolved." Microsoft's General Counsel Brad Smith commented "It's clearly very important to us as a company that we comply with our obligations under European law. We'll study this decision carefully, and if there are additional steps that we need to take in order to comply with it, we will take them." Microsoft had appealed to fines by the EU before, but all the charges were defeated. If Microsoft does not appeal the decision, the company will have 3 month (starting February 27th) to pay the fine in full. The fine must be paid in Euros.

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer stated that the company had news that the fine was pending. "We knew it was pending," Ballmer told interviewers. "We didn't know it was this week, but we knew it was coming at some point."

This may not be the end of Microsoft's troubles with the European Union yet, as the commission is currently investigating two other complaints about the company's anti-competition practices.

The decisions came after Microsoft announced they were disclosing 30,000 pages of previously secret software code last Thursday( February 21st) the EU

competition commissioner's commented that this move "does not necessarily equal a change in business practice."

Microsoft was set to launch three new products: Windows Server 2008, SQL Server 2008 and Visual Studio 2008 at it's "Heroes Happen Here" event today. Microsoft shares slipped 12 cents to \$28.26 on NASDAQ after news of the fine.

### **French president insults passer by at national agriculture convention**

The French president Nicolas Sarkozy insulted a passer by who refused to shake his hand at the national agricultural convention this weekend. After the visitor refused to shake Sarkozy's hand an exchange of insults followed which was captured on film and has become widely distributed on Internet and television. The incident, widely reported in French media, has not helped Sarkozy's already slumping popularity.

A transcript of the exchange in French:

Visitor : "Ah non, touche moi pas."

Sarkozy : "Casse toi alors!"

Visitor : "Tu me salis!"

Sarkozy : "Casse toi alors pauvre con!"

Which literally translates as:

Visitor : "Oh no, don't touch me."

Sarkozy : "Go away then!"

Visitor : "You soil me!"

Sarkozy : "Go away then poor cunt!"

In the English speaking media, "pauvre con" has been variously translated as "total jerk", "arsehole", "dumb ass", "poor bastard", "poor cretin"... "Con" literally translates to "cunt" which in English is often interpreted as a very strong insult, whereas the French version is much milder and

more often used.

In an interview published Tuesday in *Le Parisien*, a major French newspaper, Sarkozy is reported as saying "it would have been better" if he had responded differently. According to the editor of *Le Parisien* however, Sarkozy had expressed no regret about the incident during the interview, the text concerning the altercation was inserted by the Elysée Palace, the official residence of the President of the French Republic, when they were allowed to review the article before publication.

A translation conveying the real meaning of the exchange would be:

Visitor : "Don't you touch me!"

Sarkozy : "Fuck off, then..."

Visitor : "You're soiling me."

Sarkozy : "Fuck off then, arsehole."

### **Visa seeks to issue largest IPO in US history**

Visa, Inc. announced on February 25, 2008 that it would soon go ahead with a much-anticipated initial public offering (IPO) of about half its shares. This would make it the single biggest IPO in United States history, according to the regulatory filing the company made. Visa hopes to raise about US\$17-19 billion, emulating its main rival, MasterCard Inc., which successfully put out an IPO in 2006.

Shares are expected to range from \$37 to \$42 each. Visa is banking on a changing global economy which relies less on liquid cash and more on credit. Revenue at both Visa and MasterCard has climbed as consumers pay for more purchases with credit and debit cards, instead of cash. Cards are expected to be used for 55 percent of all U.S. consumer transactions

by 2011, up from 40 percent in 2005.

Analysts have suggested that current economic conditions, the sub-prime mortgage crisis and the weakening dollar, may leave investors skeptical about Visa's potential earnings. However, as both Visa and MasterCard charge fees for transactions made with their cards and do not actually give credit, they avoid the current credit crunch and possible defaulted loans. Nonetheless, a slowdown in consumer spending would hurt the revenue stream of both Visa and MasterCard.

The two other main competitors, American Express and Discover, operate their own credit-lending networks and could therefore be vulnerable to credit risks.

### **Minor earthquake shakes England**

The United Kingdom was hit by a minor earthquake on February 27, 2008 at 00:56:45 UTC. Tremors were reported as wide spread as Edinburgh, Manchester, Sheffield, Middlesbrough, Cambridge, London, Birmingham and Southampton.

The epicentre appears to be in the East Midlands region, 15 miles north-east of Lincoln co-ordinates 53.321°N, 0.314°W, with a magnitude of 4.9 according to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre, 5.0 according to the GFZ Potsdam, 4.7 according to USGS, and 5.2 according to the British Geological Survey. As such it was similar or stronger than the 2002 earthquake centred on Dudley which was recorded as being 4.8, and caused damage to buildings.

There was also a aftershock at about 0400 GMT reaching 1.8 on

the Richter Scale.

It has been reported that a number of buildings have been damaged and a man in South Yorkshire suffered a broken pelvis caused by falling masonry.

Strong earthquakes are relatively infrequent occurrences in the UK, the last widely-reported quake having occurred in Kent on April 28, 2007. The British Geological Survey reported that ... "earthquakes of this size occur in the mainland UK roughly every 30 years, although are more common in offshore areas". They also reported that ... "this is the largest earthquake in the UK since the magnitude 5.4 ML Lleyn Peninsula earthquake in 1984, which was widely felt across England and Wales."

### **Iraq demands immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops**

The Iraqi government has demanded the immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops, saying the five-day incursion is threatening their otherwise friendly relations.

Iraq's council of ministers says the Turkish military is violating Iraqi sovereignty by conducting the incursion into Kurdish areas of northern Iraq.

Ali al-Dabbagh, the spokesman for the Iraqi government, says the government rejects the unilateral Turkish incursion because it is a threat to their good neighborly relations.

The Turkish military crossed into Iraq to chase out Kurdish rebels from the Kurdistan Workers Party. The rebels want autonomy for Kurds in Turkey and have used bases inside Iraq to launch attacks on Turkish forces.

Al-Dabbagh acknowledged the threat posed to Turkey by the rebels and said the government stands ready for dialogue.

About 20 percent of Turkish citizens are Kurds and in the southeast, bordering Iraq, they make up the majority. But Kurds in Turkey say their culture and language are oppressed.

Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, president of the Iraqi Parliament, says they have asked Turkey to resolve the situation peacefully. He says the Turks should hold a referendum in south Turkey to give the Kurds the rights they want.

Iraq's Shiite parliament ministers issued a statement rejecting the Turkish military operation and supporting calls for their immediate withdrawal.

Elsewhere, a suicide bomber detonated in a bus near the northern city of Mosul, killing at least nine and wounding several others.

Meanwhile, millions of Shiites in Iraq gathered in the southern Iraqi city of Karbala for Arbæen, a major Shiite commemoration.

Iraqi TV showed huge crowds of Shiites walking in procession, beating drums, and whipping and hitting themselves in ritual prostration.

More than 60 Shiite pilgrims were killed while making their way to Karbala this week, most of them from a Sunday suicide bombing.

### **Seeds placed in Norwegian vault as agricultural 'insurance policy'**

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a vault containing millions of seeds

from all over the world, saw its first deposits on Tuesday. Located 800 kilometers from the North Pole on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen, the vault has been referred to by European Commission president José Manuel Barroso as a "frozen Garden of Eden". It is intended to preserve crop supplies and secure biological diversity in the event of a worldwide disaster.

"The opening of the seed vault marks a historic turning point in safeguarding the world's crop diversity," said Cary Fowler, executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust which is in charge of collecting the seed samples. The Norwegian government, who owns the bank, built it at a cost of \$9.1 million.

At the opening ceremony, 100 million seeds from 268,000 samples were placed inside the vault, where there is room for over 2 billion seeds. Each of the samples originated from a different farm or field, in order to best ensure biological diversity. These crop seeds included such staples as rice, potatoes, barley, lettuce, maize, sorghum, and wheat. No genetically modified crops were included.

"It is very important for Africa to store seeds here because anything can happen to our national seed banks." —Wangari Maathai

Constructed deep inside a mountain and protected by concrete walls, the "doomsday vault" is designed to withstand earthquakes, nuclear warfare, and floods resulting from global warming. Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg called it an "insurance policy" against such threats.

With air-conditioned temperatures of -18 degrees Celsius, experts say the seeds could last for an entire millenium. Some crops will be able to last longer, like sorghum, which the Global Crop Diversity Trust says can last almost 20 milleniums. Even if the refrigeration system fails, the vaults are expected to stay frozen for 200 years.

The Prime Minister said, "With climate change and other forces threatening the diversity of life that sustains our planet, Norway is proud to be playing a central role in creating a facility capable of protecting what are not just seeds, but the fundamental building blocks of human civilization." Stoltenberg, along with Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai, made the first deposit of rice to the vault.

"It is very important for Africa to store seeds here because anything can happen to our national seed banks," Maathai said. The vault will operate as a bank, allowing countries to use their deposited seeds free of charge. It will also serve as a backup to the thousands of other seed banks around the world.

"Crop diversity will soon prove to be our most potent and indispensable resource for addressing climate change, water and energy supply constraints and for meeting the food needs of a growing population," Cary Fowler said.

### **Van Canto's Stefan Schmidt on a capella metal, Wacken, Nightwish, piracy & more**

"Five singers, one drummer. No guitars, no bass, no keyboards but nevertheless an unbelievable melodic metal experience."

That's how the official website of van Canto describes the band. Hailing from Germany, van Canto are what is called an a capella metal band, the pioneers of this new genre.

The band released their debut, *A Storm to Come*, in December 2006. Exactly a year later, van Canto announced a global signing to Gun Records/Sony BMG, and their debut was released worldwide on December 14.

Van Canto are now experiencing considerable success. They recently provided support for Finnish symphonic power metal band Nightwish, as well as receiving a slot at the internationally famous Wacken Open Air festival in Germany. The prestigious event sees them sharing the bill with acts such as Hatebreed, Sonata Arctica, As I Lay Dying, Soilwork, Children of Bodom, Nightwish, Lordi and headline act Iron Maiden.

Van Canto's second album will be recorded across this month and next, with famed producer Charlie Bauerfeind, although no release date has yet been confirmed.

In light of recent events, van Canto member and founder Stefan Schmidt has given the band's first interview in English, all previous interviews being in German or Italian.

### *Interview*

#### On the early days

How did you decide on the concept for the band?

After the split of my former band Jester's Funeral I wanted to do something vocal oriented with a heroic attitude. It wasn't planned to leave out all instruments in the beginning, it was an idea developed in the studio turning out

to work great.

Are there any similar bands you could say inspired you, or was it an original idea?

We are playing melodic metal, so my inspiration as a composer can be found in Blind Guardian and Nightwish. Metallica has always been a great influence for me, too. I don't listen to many a capella bands, though. There's a German a capella band called the Wise Guys which I like, but it's pop and doesn't have to do much with our style of singing or performing. Combining the metal style with the performing style a capella is the original part of the idea.

In the music world, as with all aspects of life, new or rare ideas often meet with difficulties. How hard was it to get people to take you seriously at first?

It wasn't that hard because we did not do much for it. We just presented our idea and many people liked it, some others didn't. We don't put much time in convincing people starting their argumentation with "you don't use guitars, this is no metal". I think everyone who takes the time to listen to our songs or to visit us performing live can see that we really love metal music and love to sing.

Before you got your world signing, you changed drummers. Is the previous drummer still involved in any way with the band?

Yes, Strilli is still a friend of the band. Van Canto first was planned as a studio project among friends. We didn't expect it to turn out that successful. So Strilli joined the band for recordings and the video shoot although he had I think 4 or 5 bands at that time. When van Canto seemed to demand more time, he decided to focus on other projects. It was not a problem for

us, because he told us early and still managed to play all shows with us until we had our new drummer

How did you select his replacement?

Bastian is my long time band mate since 12 years now. We played together in all our bands, only interrupted by the first van Canto year, when he lived in China for one year. After he returned he was the first and only choice to follow up Strilli.

When *A Storm to Come* was first released, did you expect the rapid success you subsequently received?

To be honest, from time to time we hoped it, but didn't expect it. If you put that much time in a personal hobby and you notice that the result, the first songs, sound really great, of course you hope that other people like it as well. But the fact that we receive that much positive feedback in shortest time, without any support from a company or management makes us very happy. It shows that metal still works, there are thousands of people out there waiting for new music, fanzine authors working hours and hours on reviews and interviews without getting any money for it. It's unbelievably great.

How did you come to be selected for the Nightwish tour at such an early stage in the band's career? How did they discover you?

We got in touch with our current record company in April 2007. They managed to get in contact with the booking company of the "on a dark winter's night"-performances. So we weren't actually chosen by Nightwish themselves, and it was only for two shows, but nevertheless this was great.



Do you feel being associated with them has given or will give your popularity a boost?

Of course! We played in front of 15.000 People within 24 hours and every magazine was there to see the first show of the new Nightwish singer in Germany. This was a great experience for us and the audience welcomed us very kindly.

How easy or hard was it to get your world record deal? Did you see a lot of rejection beforehand, or was it fairly straightforward having by then shown the industry you were serious?

Unlike the approach we chose with our former bands, we didn't contact any record company with our self-produced debut, but managed everything on our own. So this time the record companies contacted us after van Canto was recognized in the internet. What about your first video, for The Mission. How has that gone down with the industry?

We did this on our own as well. A friend of ours did all the writing, cutting and effects. We only had to pay a cameraman, a lighting technician and a make-up artist for 13 hours. It was great to see how many professional people have fun doing their work and not demand thousands of euros of a new formed band.

#### On the new album

Are things on track for the recording of the new album?

Yes, everything works fine. We recorded drums in November and January and will record all voices in March.

When do you expect it to be released?

That's up to the record company, I

think it will be released in summer, so that the Wacken crowd can sing out the new songs.

Can you give us an idea of what to expect from the new material?

If you do something new, you don't have any references on how to sound. We noticed many things in the year after the recording of "a storm to come". We now better know which words and syllables sound good in which context of the song. So I think our bass voice will be "more bass" our guitar voices will be "more guitar" and so on.

From the songwriting point of view we are still in the melodic metal genre, what we call hero metal.

We will also do some covers.

What's it like working with Charlie Bauerfeind?

Great. He's a great guy with a very high musical understanding.

Having worked with Blind Guardian he definitely knows how to push voices, and many of them, in the right direction.

Do you expect to release any singles this time round? Will there be another music video?

It's too early to tell, we will first finish the recordings and then see what we can do around the songs. Do you anticipate comparable success with this album?

We wait for nothing but are thankful for everything happened so far and everything that is about to happen. Let's see.

#### On Wacken Open Air

There are a lot of very big names announced for Wacken, as usual. Do you feel daunted by this?

Not daunted, but really excited. If we can really manage to shake hand with Iron Maiden I'm sure not being able to speak one comprehensible word, haha. But I

guess every band playing on this year's Wacken will try to shake hands with them so I better not too disappointed if it doesn't work out.

What about in terms of style?

Wacken is known for the variety, but your music is the most unusual and amongst the lightest at the festival. Is that a worry for you? What sort of reaction do you expect?

On every festival we played so far, people were first irritated, then a little bit amused and not later than the third song we played most of the people were enthusiastic about our songs. I hope this will be the way it turns out to be in Wacken. What are your opinions on the other acts there? Are there any you want to see yourselves?

Iron Maiden of course, Nightwish are there and I'm also looking forward to the Avantasia show. Have any of you ever been to Wacken before as a fan or fans?

Of course. I have been there 1998, 1999, 2002 and 2005.

Do you expect Wacken to open up new opportunities for you? Can we expect van Canto at, say, festivals in the US, UK or Japan?

Hmm – we hope so. We also have a great fan base in Brazil and try to get over there in the summer to do some shows.

How long is your slot at Wacken?

We don't know yet.

Will we see more new material than anything, or will you perform a mix?

This depends on how long our slot is, but I think the focus will be on the second album then.

#### On the future of metal

Do you expect a capella metal to

become a more common genre?

I don't know. I think it would be great if other bands tried out so we can share our experience and do not have to find out everything on our own, haha.

Do you expect other bands to be influenced and encouraged by your success?

I hope so. When we get mails from musicians or metalbands influenced by our style of songwriting our by the courage for doing something new we feel really great. I only started playing music because I was inspired by other bands as a teenager, it would be great if we could inspire other musicians, too.

Do you think the industry should be more accepting of fresh or unusual ideas?

I think the term "the industry" is too general for that kind of question. I think that today the chances to get heard are better than 10 years ago. Everybody can produce an "ok-sounding" album and put up a video in youtube. And if it's done well and the idea sticks out, the industry will contact the band, which is their job, actually.

One subject that's been in the news a lot recently is bands complaining they feel exploited and/or by their record labels. Have you found this yourself?

We all had bad experiences with former bands and former record labels, but most of these labels have been one- or two-man-companies that didn't have much money to invest. That's why we decided to do everything on our own until we get a partner that is able to do all the things we do, only better.

Another common complaint is about illegal downloading "killing"

the industry. What's your opinion on that?

Illegal downloading is not only killing the industry but also the bands behind. You can't earn much money with music today, so of course I'm not happy when I read a comment under our youtube video saying "who can rip me the record? Where can I download it?". I think we offer many possibilities for people who just want to check out one song: We have the youtube video, we have a stream player on our website and you can find lots of live bootlegs in the web. So if you really like the music you should buy a CD to give us the possibility to continue. But I think in metal most people act this way, they really buy CDs because they like to own the cover, the booklet and everything. It's ok for us.

What trends do you think we will see in metal over the next decade?

I don't know and that's the interesting part of it. Metal has been declared being dead about 1000 times and every year there are new bands with new ideas, great musicians and lots of people listening. I think there is much more to come.

What advice do you have for artists of any genre struggling to find acceptance from the industry?

I don't feel I am in the position of giving advice. We had a good idea, worked hard on it and were a little bit lucky finally. Perhaps it's the most important thing to make music because you like it, not because you are expecting something. All van canto members have been playing in metal bands for about 10 or 12 years and now it seems as if people start to recognize us. Even if they hadn't, I'm sure that I would have continued playing metal, because I

like it. It's a very important part of myself, so I don't waste a thought on leaving that part away.

### **National Hockey League news: February 27, 2008**

There were 8 games played in the National Hockey League on February 26, 2008, but most of the news of the day comes from many trades happening before the trade deadline.

#### Trades

New Jersey traded Cam Janssen to St. Louis for defenseman Bryce Salvador.

The Buffalo Sabres traded defenseman Brian Campbell to San Jose for right winger Steve Bernier and a first-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Toronto Maple Leafs traded Wade Belak to the Florida Panthers for a fifth-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

Tampa Bay traded forward Brad Richards and goalie Johan Holmqvist to the Dallas Stars for Mike Smith, Jussi Jokinen, Jeff Halpern, and a fourth-round pick in the 2009 entry draft.

The Lightning also traded Jan Hlavac to the Nashville Predators for a seventh-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

Montreal traded goaltender Cristobal Huet to the Capitals on Tuesday for a second-round pick in the 2009 entry draft.

The Chicago Blackhawks traded Tuomo Ruutu to Carolina for left wing Andrew Ladd.

The Blackhawks also traded Martin Lapointe to Ottawa for a sixth-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Florida Panthers traded defenseman Ruslan Salei to the Avalanche for Karlis Skrastins and a third-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Washington Capitals traded prospect Ted Ruth to the Columbus Blue Jackets for Sergei Fedorov.

The Blue Jackets traded defenseman Adam Foote to the Colorado Avalanche for a pair of draft picks.

The Pittsburgh Penguins traded Colby Armstrong, Erik Christensen, and prospect Angelo Esposito to the Thrashers for Marian Hossa, Pascal Dupuis, and a pair of draft picks.

Toronto traded defenseman Hal Gill to the Penguins for a pair of draft picks.

The Leafs also traded forward Chad Kilger to the Florida Panthers for a third-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Vancouver Canucks traded forward Matt Cooke to the Washington Capitals for Matt Pettinger.

The Islanders traded forward Chris Simon to the Minnesota Wild for a sixth-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Islanders also traded defenseman Marc-Andre Bergeron to the Anaheim Ducks for a third-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Sharks traded defenseman Rob Davison to the Islanders for a seventh-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Los Angeles Kings traded defenseman Brad Stuart to the

Detroit Red Wings for a pair of picks in the 2008 entry draft.

The Kings also traded goaltender Jean-Sebastien Aubin to Anaheim for a seventh-round draft pick.

The St. Louis Blues traded defenseman Christian Backman to the Rangers for a fourth-round pick in the 2008 entry draft.

The Coyotes traded goalie David LeNeveu, forward Fredrik Sjostrom, and forward Josh Gratton to the Rangers for forward Marcel Hossa, goalie Al Montoya, and a draft pick.

Atlanta Thrashers traded center Alexandre Giroux to the Capitals for center Joe Motzko.

The Anaheim Ducks traded Brandon Bochenski to the Nashville Predators for future considerations.

#### Game summaries

##### *Pittsburgh Penguins @ New York Islanders*

Evgeni Malkin scored the first goal for Pittsburgh. Jeff Taffe scored on a 5-on-3 power play to give the Penguins a two goal lead after 1 period. Frans Nielsen put the Islanders on the scoreboard at 10:26 in the second period. Jordan Staal gave the Penguins a two goal lead again after scoring a goal 12:55 into the third period. Connor James gave Pittsburgh their largest lead of the game with a power play goal, his first career NHL goal. Ruslan Fedotenko scored a power play goal for the Islanders with 1:17 left in the game. It wasn't enough to overcome a 3 goal deficit though, and the Penguins break a two game losing streak. Ty Conklin made 50 saves and picked up his 17th win of the season.

##### *Minnesota Wild @ Washington Capitals*

Brooks Laich scored his first goal of the night early in the first period to give Washington an early 1-0 lead. Shaone Morrisonn gave the Capitals a two goal lead going into the first intermission. Branko Radivojevic cut Washington's lead in half with the only Minnesota goal of the night. Eric Fehr got it back for the Capitals a few minutes later. Laich scored his second goal of the night before the second period was over. There was no goals in the third period. Laich had a career high 4 points. Olie Kolzig made 25 saves in 26 shots for his 22nd win of the season. The Wild are now winless in their last 4 games. The Capitals snapped a 3 game losing streak.

##### *New Jersey Devils @ Carolina Hurricanes*

Brian Gionta broke a scoreless tie 1:50 into the second period to give New Jersey their only lead of the game. Sergei Samsonov put Carolina on the board and tied the score just over 4 minutes later. The score would stay 1-1 until 1:36 into the 4-on-4 overtime, when Samsonov scored his second of the night, off his own rebound. The Devils snap a 5 game winning streak, and the Hurricanes pick up their third straight win. Cam Ward made 23 saves for Carolina, earning his 28th win.

##### *Ottawa Senators @ Boston Bruins*

Shawn Thornton gave the Bruins a 1 goal lead 5:24 into the first period. David Krejci doubled the Boston lead with 2:37 left in the first. Zdeno Chara picked up his 13th goal of the season when he scored 2:15 into the second period on Boston's first power play. Chara also scored on an empty net with 1:27 left in the game while Boston was short handed. The Senators get blanked in their second game

straight. Boston wins their 4th straight. Tim Thomas made 22 saves, and gets his third shutout of the season.

#### *Atlanta Thrashers @ Montreal Canadiens*

Maxim Lapierre scored 12:47 into the first to give Montreal their first lead of the game. Ilya Kovalchuk scored his 41st goal of the season to make it a 1-1 tie after two periods. In the first half of the third period, Montreal lit the lamp 4 times. First, Christopher Higgins scored two back-to-back, the latter being a power play goal. Andrei Markov gave Montreal a 3 goal lead 8:17 into the period. Then, Sergei Kostitsyn scored his 7th goal of the year at 9:04. Carey Price made 26 saves for Montreal. Higgins had an assist to go with his back-to-back goals.

#### *Dallas Stars @ St. Louis Blues*

Keith Tkachuk scored first for the Blues on a power play to give them an early 1-0. The lead would hold until the third period, when a pair of goals by Loui Eriksson and a power play goal by Jere Lehtinen put Dallas up by two. St. Louis, who outshot the Stars 28-21 through the game, only had two shots in the final period to Dallas's 7. Marty Turco gave up the first shot he saw, but stopped 27 shots after that to pick up his 29th win of the season.

#### *Colorado Avalanche @ Calgary Flames*

Ryan Smyth scored to put the Avalanche at an early 1-0 lead. Dustin Boyd tied the score for Calgary 15:35 into the first period. Robyn Regehr put Calgary in the lead with a power play goal in the second period. Milan Hejduk retied the score 13:33 through the third period to send the game to overtime. Paul Stastny scored the game winning power play goal

3:02 into overtime to give the Avalanche their second win in 8 games, and snap Calgary's 4 game winning streak. Jose Theodore made 29 saves and picked up the victory for Colorado.

#### *Detroit Red Wings @ Edmonton Oilers*

Tom Gilbert broke a scoreless tie in the second period to give Edmonton the first lead of the game. They would increase their lead to 2-0 early in the third when Geoff Sanderson scored his third goal of the season. Jonathan Ericsson scored his first career NHL goal on a Detroit power play to cut Edmonton's lead in half less than 4 minutes later. Pavel Datsyuk made it a tie game 12:18 into the third period. Valtteri Filppula gave Detroit their first lead of the game with 2:16 left in regulation, but Fernando Pisani scored for Edmonton with 29 seconds left in regulation. Robert Nilsson scored the only shootout goal for Edmonton, giving the Oilers their second straight victory and the Red Wings their 9th loss in 10 games. Mathieu Garon made 40 saves, earning his 21st win of the season for Edmonton.

#### **Today in History**

1838 – Lower Canada Rebellion:

Robert Nelson, leader of the Patriotes, proclaimed the independence of Lower Canada.

1870 – The Bulgarian Exarchate, the official name of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church before its

autocephaly was recognized by the other Orthodox churches in the 1950s, was established by the firman of Sultan Abdülâziz of the Ottoman Empire.

1947 – Civil disorder in Taiwan was brutally suppressed by the Chinese Nationalist military in the 228 Incident.

1972 – U.S. President Richard Nixon's visit to the People's

Republic of China concluded with the two countries issuing the Shanghai Communiqué, pledging to work toward the full normalization of diplomatic relations.

1986 – Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme was assassinated by a lone gunman in Stockholm while walking home from a movie theatre with his wife Lisbet Palme. February 28 is Peace Memorial Day in Taiwan.

#### **Quote of the Day**

The best defense against usurpatory government is an assertive citizenry. ~ William F. Buckley, Jr.

#### **Word of the Day**

irony n

1. A statement that, when taken in context, may actually mean the opposite of what is written literally.
2. The quality or state of an event being both coincidental and contradictory in a humorous or poignant and extremely improbable way.

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