

# Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orchestra

Benjamin Tollet

BRUSSEL BAD  
BRUXELLES LES BAINS

20.00

Akenkaai/quai des Péniches

sq. Saintelettesq.

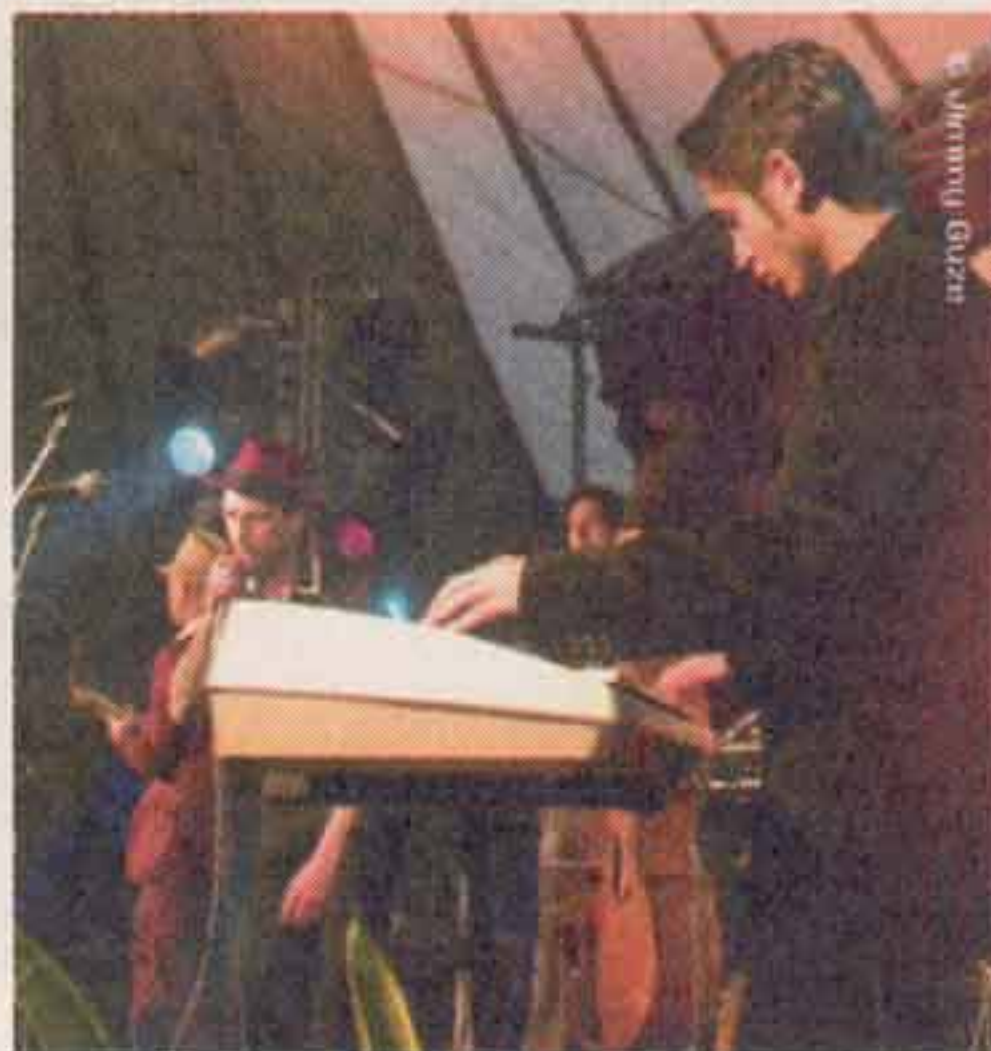
Brussel/Bruxelles

02-279.50.49, [www.brusselbad.be](http://www.brusselbad.be)[www.bruxelleslesbains.be](http://www.bruxelleslesbains.be)

Gratis/Entrée libre/Free entrance

## Dancing on the beach

**E** Combining the pure, raw energy of authentic Romany gipsy music with the latest dance ska rhythm is no easy task, but Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orchestra (AGSO) makes a great job of it. On 7th August they'll be pulling their bathers on for a dip on the beach at 'Brussels-on-Sea'.



"Gipsies hear someone else's rhythm and then play it in their own style. That's what we do, too, taking gipsy rhythms and playing them in our gipsy-ska style," explains vocalist and trumpeter Gregor Engelen. "And it works: you can dance to it, the audience loves it and there's a party on stage," adds alto-saxophonist Kike, who has come specially from Argentina this project.

### Where does your interest in gipsy music come from?

**Gregor Engelen:** I love its power. I played in a band with a Macedonian drummer. When he's drumming, you can't just stand still as a band. Gipsies have rhythms you've never heard of. It's hard to follow for a Belgian, it's simply in their blood. You won't learn it at any music school. I have so much respect for gipsy bands. In Belgium there has been a lot of hype about the films by Goran Bregovic and Emir Kusturica. Everyone tried to be a gipsy and there were gipsy parties and so on. But the music itself is much harder to play than it looks. So we work as much as we can with gipsies.

### Where did the name Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orchestra come from?

**Engelen:** The name says it all: it's ska, it's gipsy, we come from Antwerp and we're a band. The name also makes reference to various other jazz bands: New York Ska Jazz Ensemble, St Petersburg Ska Jazz Review, etc.

### What is special about Romany gipsies?

**Mukti (Kosovar pianist, a gipsy himself):** Romany has many traditions. The people may move on, but the old traditions remain. The whole world seems to know that gipsies are meant to be bad, but it's not true. You can't tar them all with the same brush. Romanies are often very poor, but they're not bothered about that. They don't need much

money as long as they can play music. Everyone can play some sort of instrument. They are nomadic people who don't have their own country, but they also enjoy that freedom. Freedom, health and music are the most important things in life for them.

### AGSO was started in 2004. What stage are you at now?

**Engelen:** At the moment there are eight of us, we have a new drummer and saxophonist. The band is still growing. We hope to add two Macedonian trumpet players soon. We really need to have these guests who expand our repertoire. We are also still looking for an authentic female gipsy vocalist.

### And the first demo is being released soon.

**Engelen:** We are recording the demo in July to send out to concert halls and radio stations. If we really want to release an album we have to watch out. We play traditional numbers, but no-one knows where the tunes come from originally, because everyone plays them. Our pianist Mukti is a gipsy and he makes music all the time. But not everything goes with ska, we have to try to put his music into.

**Kike:** Our inspiration is gipsy music and it has to stay that way. We are doing our own thing, but the music has to come from the other side of the Balkans. Otherwise the meaning of the group disappears.

### What can we expect to hear on 7th August at Brussels-on-Sea?

**Engelen:** Put on your dancing shoes. If you haven't got any, buy some so you can dance properly. Expect a great atmosphere and a lot of energy.

**N** Het Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orchestra combineert de pure, rauwe energie van authentieke Roma-zigeunermuziek met het uiterst dansbare skaritmé. Op 7 juli nemen ze een duik op Brussel Bad.

**F** L'étonnant Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orchestra combine l'énergie brute de la musique tsigane aux rythmes entraînants du ska. Le 7 août à Bruxelles Les Bains, cette fanfare anversoise promet une belle fiesta, sur scène comme au sein du public.