



01

## Play misty for me

- Sailors have traditionally played the hornpipes, but what if they could orchestrate ships' foghorns?

Frenchman Raoul de la Roche Aymon, who collects foghorns taken from scrapped ships, has built a contraption on which they can be played. He calls it a fog organ — or, more romantically, *La Voix des Oceans* — and describes it as looking a bit like a “steampunk time-travel machine”.

Raoul has worked with Belgian composer and pianist Heleen Van Haegenborgh, who has written musical pieces incorporating the fog organ.

The horns are all sizes. One was from *HMS Intrepid*, a British amphibious landing ship that took part in the Falklands War. Another is the massive hooter from the *SS Norway*. Two metres long and weighing 150kg, it originally graced the longest passenger ship of its time when it was built as the *SS France* in 1960. It cost €1,800 (\$1,970) at an auction.

The 40-horn fog organ sits on a trailer linked via an air compressor to a pickup truck, with a keyboard on which to play it. Raoul, who drives round the country with the fog organ, tells the *Financial Times*: “The sound is incredibly loud, designed to travel for six miles across the water.”

He thinks the noise — up to 120 decibels — is beautiful, “deep and sad, like how you would imagine dead ships to sound”. But the organ is so powerful it can damage human hearing and he has to go deep into the woods when he wants to play it, to avoid annoying his neighbours. “You need to be about 100 metres away to be safe. I was not careful at the beginning and now I have a little tinnitus.”

Despite his interest, Raoul is not a sailor. He lives and works with one of his brothers

on a 1,500-hectare estate in central France that has been in his family for more than 500 years. But an opportunity to play at an appropriate site came when Van Haegenborgh invited him to use the fog organ at a concert at the dockside Van Heyghen Recycling yard in her hometown, Ghent.

Van Haegenborgh has released a CD and DVD, *Signaux*, which features experimental pieces for piano and the foghorns that revive the sounds of departed ships.

So, what's it like, playing a concert with the world's loudest horn section?

“Actually, you can't compare it to anything,” Van Haegenborgh tells *TW+*. She uses protective headphones, but “it's so, so, so loud that you feel it in your whole body”.

One problem is that she can't really practise because of the risk of disturbing people. “So I always first make a [digital] reconstruction at home with Midi sounds... but in reality it's always different and there are always surprises, which is nice. It keeps you awake!” ✕ *Paul Berrill*



02

## The other *TradeWinds* Tangled web

Cast your mind back, way back. No, even further. Further. Back into the subtle brume of time before the internet existed. This is the setting for the latest episode in our series on *The Other TradeWinds* — those organisations, products, entities and various things that share our name but don't have the good fortune to be us. Never have, never will.

Our tale opens with the launch of the much-loved *TradeWinds* blue newspaper in 1990 by Norwegian media company NHST. By 2000, deciding that this internet thing might be here for a while, our overlords in Oslo decided to set up a website. And of course they would call it *tradewinds.com*.

Whoops! Not possible: *tradewinds.com* had already been taken by someone else. The domain name was registered in July 1994 — 1994! No one had websites in those days. Back then, the world wide web was still made of wood, lovingly crafted by monks in mountain-top monasteries.

So we had to make do with *tradewinds.no* (the “.no” standing for Norway) before changing to the familiar *tradewindsnews.com* that is your entry to the world's most trusted maritime site. But gently stroke the surface of any experienced *TradeWinder* and you'll find a lingering resentment about the one that got away. The domain name that might have been.

So who exactly is this *tradewinds.com* outfit? This *Other TradeWinds* turns out to be a Los Angeles investment firm, *Tradewinds Global Investors*. We phone them to talk about the link between our two great companies. The initial signs are not good. “I haven't worked here very long... I can't really discuss this... uh, how did you get my name?”

Hmm. It's almost as though your reluctance to talk conceals a shameful secret. Like *Stealing Our Domain Name*, maybe!?

Look, surely we can come to a sensible arrangement that would erase our pain and ease your guilt. Could we discuss swapping *tradewinds.com* for... well, not *tradewindsnews.com*, obviously, that's too valuable, but maybe *tradewinds.no*?

The conversation turns frosty. “While an interesting connection, to be sure,” our contact replies sniffily, “we'll have to take a pass, given our very disparate businesses.”

Okay, what say we alternate. You can have *tradewinds.com* on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and we'll have it on Tuesday ...

Click. Brrr ...

We'll take that as a “no”, then. Maybe even a “.no”.

+ For an idea of the fog organ's power and sound, see [tinyurl.com/gmx6v64](http://tinyurl.com/gmx6v64) and [tinyurl.com/gpopjkk](http://tinyurl.com/gpopjkk)

01 Van Haegenborgh at the Ghent fog organ concert (Photograph: ???)

02 Raoul de la Roche Aymon at his estate in Burgundy with Heleen Van Haegenborgh (Photograph: Renaud Chilbert)