The new WEEKLY Gazette:

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The Riviera Gazette
The Côte d’Azur’s English-language newspaper

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The GREAT A8 DEBATE

The Ministry of Transport has re-opened the files on proposals for a northern bypass of the Côte d’Azur’s section of the A8.

Work will begin in the next few weeks to prepare plans for possible routes, ready for a public enquiry next year.

The new motorway would reduce congestion on the existing trunk road by providing a faster but slightly longer alternative route for motorists passing through the region. The A8 would then be left to local traffic.

The idea is by no means a new one. But the problem is there is no free land on which to build the new road.

If the proposed A58 runs too far north it would not be fully used. But too far south and it risks ruining some of the Riviera’s prime residential and tourist areas.

A detailed proposal for the new road was last produced in 1997. Running from Mandelieu to La Turbie, the plan called for the motorway to pass just to the north of Mouans-Sartoux, Valbonne and St Paul de Vence.

But after much public debate the plan was rejected in 2000, with the decision that the route ran too far north and too close to St Paul.

“Logically, the second motorway has to run from Fréjus to La Turbie. It has to cut north of the present motorway, possibly through Biot, Roquefort, Vence, St Paul and the Northern communes of Nice,” a spokesman from Escota’s motorway information centre told The Riviera Gazette.

“The new motorway can’t go too far north of Antibes, as was the plan before, as it wouldn’t be used and the Antibes area will remain jammed.

Underground tunnels are a possible solution. Nothing is certain, yet,” he continued. “The A8 is dangerously overstretched. There are often fatal crashes between Antibes and Nice and it is regularly jammed around Nice during the rush hour.”

The in-depth study will take a year to prepare and is expected to include several routing options. Then the public will get to have its say, again, as the great A8 debate re-opens with a full public enquiry. The road could then be built within ten years.

The €67 million extension of Nice’s ‘voie rapide’, bringing it to the airport and the A8 at Saint-Augustin, got the go-ahead this week. The work will start at the end of 2003.

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Stephanie breaks silence on crash

MONACO’S Princess Stephanie spoke out this week after a twenty year silence on the moments before the car crash that ended her mother’s life.

The Rover 3500 carrying Stephanie and Princess Grace, her Oscar-winning film star mother, plunged 45 metres off a cliff between La Turbie and the Moynatte Corniche on September 13, 1982.

After initially promising reports, it was announced that Grace had died the next day, leading to speculation on the exact circumstances of the accident.

Rumours
In an interview published in German magazine Bunte, the youngest of Grace and HSH Prince Rainier III’s three children scotched persistent rumours that she had been at the wheel of the car when the accident happened.

At just 17 years old, she would have been too young to drive. However, she was unable to shed light on the cause of the accident.

“Did my Mother confuse the brake with the accelerator? I don’t know,” she said.

But the Princess went on to say that she did everything she could to stop the car, pulling on the handbrake and putting the automatic into ‘park’.

This official line is that Grace suffered a mild stroke, causing her to lose control of the car.

Stephanie also dismissed stories of a row with the 52-year-old former Hollywood star, who was known as Grace Kelly before her marriage into Monaco’s royal family.

These centred around allegations that Stephanie, a well-known ‘wild-child’, was involved in a relationship which Princess Grace frowned upon.

The Princess has now spoken out publicly to “protect her three children”.

Two were fathered by Daniel Ducret, a bodyguard, before the pair were married in 1995. The marriage ended when Ducret was filmed cavorting with a Belgian stripper. Her third child Camille was born in 1998 but Stephanie will not be drawn on the identity of the father.

Elephant trainer
One of her many colourful boyfriends included married circus elephant trainer Franco Knie. Stephanie and her children famously travelled with him in his circus caravan, but the pair split earlier this year.

She has lately been seen stepping out with a member of her father’s household staff.

Stephanie feels that she has been victimised by the media, which wrongly blamed her for the accident.

“Guilty? I have nothing to reproach myself for, unless surviving is a crime,” added the 37 year old Princess.

PRINCESS STEPHANIE... at last year’s Red Cross Ball

LISA STANSFIELD
CANNES 25 OCTOBER 2002

Guide price 349,500 Euros

Guide price 205,900 Euros

Guide price 571,800 Euros

Guide price 646,000 Euros

Guide price 1,067,000 Euros

Guide price 394,800 Euros

Guide price 646,000 Euros

Guide price 1,961,000 Euros

Guide price 571,800 Euros

20 TICKETS TO BE WON!

Enter our competition to see Lisa Stansfield live in Cannes next week by correctly answering the following question:

In which north England town did Lisa Stansfield spend her teenage years, before she hit the big time?

The senders of the first ten correct answers drawn on Wednesday October 23 will each win a pair of tickets for the concert at Palm Beach Casino & Hotel in Cannes. Performance starts 20h30.

Send your answer by e-mail to rochdale@therivieragazette.com or mail it to Rochdale Compy, The Riviera Gazette, 738 Route Notre Dame, Cidx 47, 06330 Roquefort les Pins to arrive no later than midday Wednesday October 23.

Var’s storm record
LAST week’s storms hit the Var badly, causing widespread flooding and landslides. Firemen in the department were called out more than 600 times, mostly to pump out cellars and garages, recover vehicles and clear roads of mud and fallen trees.

A record 170mm of rain fell in 24 hours in Bormes-les-Mimosas as storms lashed the region between Wednesday evening and Friday morning.

School’s out
TEACHERS’ unions have called for an all-out nationwide strike today. The day of action is supported by parents associations and by student unions.

The teachers are protesting against the lack of additional funding for education in the new budget.

Crane falls on RN7
A 72-TONNE crane fell onto the RN7 in Roquebrune Cap-Martin on Saturday, causing traffic chaos.

Twenty five nearby residents were evacuated as a safety precaution after the crane collapsed at 8pm. It was finally removed at midnight.

Holiday rents down
THE Var holiday rental market was down 5% this year, after five years of growth. The drop is due to holiday-makers abandoning month-long lets in favour of long-weekend rentals.

Champion plan
THE Champion supermarket chain has been granted permission to build a new store inNice’s upmarket Mont Boron district.

Residents are protesting, saying it will ruin the tranquility of the area.
### News

**Granny, 92, foils robbers**

A 92-YEAR-OLD Nice grandmother outwitted two thieves who had snatched her handbag from her apartment.

First, in a classic ploy, the robbers had posed as distressed neighbours wanting to use her phone. She helped the pair, but afterwards discovered her bag was missing.

But after she’d called the bank to cancel her cards and chequebook, her entry phone rang. The crooks were on the line, posing as police officers and claiming they had found her bag and needed her pin number.

The quick-witted septuagenarian called the police, who quickly arrived to arrest the dim thieves. Her handbag was recovered.

**Lawyer court busking**

A BERGERAC lawyer who moonlights as a busker faces being disbarred for bringing the legal profession into disrepute.

Valerie Faure, 42 and a keen accordion player, faced a disciplinary hearing last week. But there was laughter as Faure whipped out her squeezebox and played a polka. “Is that so undignified?” she asked.

Buskers in Nice this week thought differently – one, Claire, told the Riviera Gazette: “Having a lawyer amongst our number is more likely to give a bad name to busking!”

Judgement is due next month. If found guilty, the part-time performer faces being disbarred, suspended or given a warning.

**HUNTERS in Guillaumes, an hour inland from Nice, bagged a record-breaking 150-kilogram wild boar on Saturday.**

**MONACO was targeted by an anti-globalisation demonstration last weekend.**

Supporters of Attac, a paradoxically international anti-globalisation organisation, turned out in Monaco, Andorra, Luxembourg and Jersey to protest against tax havens.

But there was no threat of violence and traffic was not brought to a standstill as just fifty demonstrators made their point peacefully.

**MONACO BANKER ‘ROBBED SCHUMI’**

A BRITISH banker is on trial in Monaco for allegedly stealing €18 million from clients whilst working at HSBC.

Stephen Tropih, 42, is accused of siphoning investment funds from the accounts of clients including Formula One world champion Michael Schumacher.

The missing money came to light and Tropih was arrested as he returned from a holiday in September 2001.

The private investment bank, where the minimum needed to open an account is $250,000, says it has refunded all affected clients.

Tropih’s lawyers have said he is “very sorry and he had been suffering from depression after his divorce.” Judgement is expected on November 5.
**Juvenile prison planned near Eze**

ONE of the country’s first juvenile detention centres could open next year at La Fort de la Drette, between Eze and La Trinité.

A second centre is also to be built in the Alpes-Maritimes, but a suitable site has yet to be identified.

Similar centres are now being established across France as part of the government's new anti-crime measures.

The two new centres will each house ten under-18s, with the aim of rehabilitating repeat offenders.

The Fort de la Drette has been proposed as ideal because it is currently empty and is already owned by the department.

"If agreed, the conversion of La Fort de la Drette could see the centre open as soon as 2003," the Prefecture in Nice confirmed to The Riviera Gazette.

A new jail is also planned for Nice, housing up to 600 convicted criminals in a top security building. It will be built on five hectares by the river Var, north of the Nice golf course. It is due to open in 2007.

The announcements come amid criticism that jails are overcrowded, and a government report which found 28.5% of prison sentences handed down are never actually administered.

A FLAM-FLINGING anarchist has been brought to justice after a 33-year reign of terror.

Belgian Noel Godin, 57, has been ordered to pay one euro in damages to former presidential hopeful Jean-Pierre Chevenement after being found guilty of assaulting the politician with a cream pie during the election campaign earlier this year.

The Paris court ruled that the slapstick attacker must also pay an €800 fine and legal costs.

The pied sniper’s previous targets include Microsoft founder Bill Gates, film director Jean-Luc Godard and French minister of the interior Nicolas Sarkozy.

One victim, philosopher and writer Bernard-Henri Lévy, has been struck six times – most notably in 1994 while he was on stage at the Cannes Film Festival.

Godin admits to a vendetta against Lévy, claiming that French TV’s favourite thinker reacts badly and will let off the hook if he shows a sense of humour and sings a silly song after a pie ambush.

The pastry propagandist, known in France as l’entarteur, describes himself as an ‘anarcho-pâtissière’ who uses humour as a weapon against depressing laws, authority and political power. He has assembled an international network of cream pie collaborators, and now as many as thirty fellow flan fingers take part in each carefully planned attack.

But Chevenement argued that the tart-tossing terrorist is paid by the media to humiliate democracy. And although Godin finances his operations by selling film and photos of the attacks, he told the LA Times that he would never accept money to target an individual. “We want to be pirates with pies,” he says. “We’ll never be mercenaries, because then we’d be a pathetic bunch indeed.”

**Maher trial date set**

THE trial of American nurse Ted Maher will start in Monaco on November 21.

The ex-commando stands accused of causing the deaths of billionaire banker Edmond Safra, 67, and nurse Vivian Torrente, 57, in a fire at Safra’s Monaco penthouse in December 1999.

He will be defended by Michael Griffith, the American lawyer who won freedom for Billy ‘Midnight Express’ Hayes in Turkey.

**Drug driving to be outlawed**

A PROPOSED law making it an offence to drive whilst under the influence of drugs has gained the approval of the French National Assembly.

Offenders will get up to two years in jail and a fine of €4,500. The law – which now goes before the upper house – also authorises police to conduct random drug testing.

**Sats cut out speeding**

A SCHEME to forcibly prevent speeding is being tested in Paris.

Test cars have been fitted with onboard computers and satellite positioning systems that cut out the vehicle’s fuel injection system if legal speed limits are exceeded.

If successful, the devices could be ready to fit in new cars from 2010.

**Var crime down**

THE Var was one of the five departments showing the biggest drop in crime in the year to August 2002.

The Var, the Lot, Morbihan, Rhône and Vienne departments can boast crime rate reductions of between 16 and 22 percent.

**CREAM AND PUNISHMENT**

By Jenny Paul

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WHEN my kids first came to the Riviera the thing they loved most about it was the rain.

I'm a New Jersey girl, but my children were born in the Turks and Caicos islands and in Brisbane, Australia. We're used to unrelenting sunny weather so the diverse climate here is a constant source of amazement for us.

I researched the area carefully before I moved here in '96 to start a new life – and the CIV and Mougins schools had the international outlook I wanted for my kids.

My husband Charles and his family moved to Paris from Algeria in 1962, and then to Cannes a year later, having found the rain up north too depressing. In 1976 Charles' mother found this place, in Chateauneuf-de-Grasse, with nothing on it but a run-down old barn, which she set about renovating herself.

Having always been a keen tennis player, she soon decided that a tennis club would be a perfect use of the land, and so the Tennis de la Plaine le Vignal was born. She and her brother dug out the ground for the first court and a club and restaurant was founded with her as the manageress and cook, serving giant paellas and couscous to hungry players.

But Charles chose to follow a career in engineering over an offer to join the French national tennis team – something he now admits he regrets a little.

I broke my neck in a skiing accident when I was 18, and was a quadriplegic and then paraplegic for nearly twenty years. Intense physiotherapy saw the nerve-endings repair and I made a slow but determined recovery.

After so long immobile, you develop a passion for anything physically demanding. Tennis gives me the physical and mental challenge I crave. Charles and I still try to play at least three or four hours a week.

I met Charles in '98 when some friends convinced me to try out for a place in the Tennis club's team for the annual 'Madame Figaro' championship. Charles was also making big changes in his life, having given up engineering to come and help his mother run the tennis club. I got in to the team, and Charles coached us to win first for our Department, then our Region, and finally we came third at a National level.

After that he asked me to dinner, and not speaking a word of each others' language, we both turned up with dictionaries – it was hilarious. The evening flew past with us frantically flicking pages as we began to discover how much we had in common.

We were married last year in the Cote d'Azur – I love running along the beach and I almost feel like I'm back in the Caribbean when I'm there. The international diversity here makes it so special, the mix of cultures, food and style, combined with natural beauty. But my two great passions – apart from tennis and Charles – are champagne and chocolate. And what better place to indulge than the south of France...

Lori Gardet tells Alison Craddock about a remarkable recovery and why she loves the rain on the Riviera...
Thursday 17

● The Night of the Festival de Blues begins tonight with local band Baroche Cool Jazz and New York Born Billy Perry singing with his band at 9 pm. French blues musician Chris Lancry and Bill Dunham will join them for an evening of blues and jazz. Carol and Hiram Bullock play on Saturday night. The festival continues on Sunday between 5 and 9 pm. For tickets see the Fête de la Musique book. Call 04 99 19 09 20 for information or to book.

● The L’Insolent Osiris Jazz Quintet performs tonight at the Piccolo, Carnot. Tickets are 9 pm. Olson arrived in Nice from his native Sweden in 1993 and formed the quintet in June 2001. Tickets are €7, call 09 56 09 29 90 to book.

● The Professional Yachtman’s Association is having an exhibition of paintings by French and German Constance Hamm from France, opens today, playing in four lanes. There is €48 per person and a buffet lunch. Call 04 93 55 36 88 for info.

● Continuing today is the Foire de Monaco and the Festival de Blues.

Friday 18

● Gala at the Cine, a short film noir festival, begins today in Cannes. Several English-language films will be screened, including, The Third Man (1949) at 4 pm on Saturday and Gun Crazy (1950) at 8 pm on Sunday at 13:9. Admission is €5.

● The British Association of the Var is meeting for lunch today at La Bonne Maman in Rappers. Lunch costs €40 including wine. Call 04 94 06 28 16 for information or to book.

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Saturday 19

● I’Hôtel Atlantique, a social group celebrating the ancient ties between France and Scotland, is organizing a day trip today. Included is a visit to a chateau and vineyard with wine tastings and a ‘gastronomic afternoon’. Tickets are €33. Call Brian McDowell on 04 95 92 57 38 for info.

● The British Association of the Var is running a day trip to Italy today, visiting the medieval Ligurian village of Colletta di Castelbianco. Tickets, including lunch, costs €40. Call Asking Leader on a 02 37 95 30 12 for information/bookings.

● A new exhibition of paintings by Belgian artist Jan Frans Van den Veeren and German Constance Hamm from France, opens today at the Galerie de la Grande Roue in Nice. Admission is free. The exhibition is open from 11 am to 7 pm daily until October 27.

● If you’re a foodie, this year’s olive festival from Nice, holds an Agricultural Fair all day today. See farm animals and a traditional local olive oil. See also 04 93 55 03 05 for info.

● For rock enthusiasts, a two-day hill-climb competition, a ‘Course de Côte’, takes place today and tomorrow in Biot. It starts from the bottom of the chemin de la Chemin de l’Ouest on the6 August.

● Auctioneers Jean-Pierre Besch are at Cannes’ Hotel d’Auteuil tomorrow afternoon for a sale of rare furniture and decorative items. See page 9 for more info.

● The next Agricultural Fair takes place today in the Var, at Chateau and vineyard with wine tastings and a ‘gastronomic afternoon’. The Fair will take place from 11 am to 7 pm daily until October 27.

● Sunday 20

● Chestnut festivals – Fêtes de Châtaignes – are being held in the region’s growing area, particularly in the Var’s Massif des Maures region and in the Nice hinterland. Celebrations, in the heart of the Maure mountains, is the Bioucan, with a big market today selling anything and everything made of chestnut, plus other local delicacies and crafts. Street entertainers add to the carnal atmosphere. Nearby La Garde Freinet has a large Provincial market today and next Sunday with chestnut flour bread, marroon glacé, chocolates and, of course, roast chestnuts on offer.

● In Valbelle, an hour and a half inland from Nice, today’s chestnut festival includes free wine and roast chestnuts at 3 pm and festivities and dancing all day.

● The Festival of Traditions takes place in the Château Nesly Orangers, Antibes. Buy tickets for €13 on Saturday then feast on al fresco canapés and Friday night in the hills of the Côte d’Azur. There’s a ‘brave’ run of the event being held for the fourth year in the Port de Plaisance. Containers of food are offered from midday Sunday. There’s a broad range of food from many French regions, and music in the evening.

● Concarnier sings Dominique Otafuro performs traditional songs from Corsica and around the Mediterranean on Friday night at 8 pm. Tickets cost €12, call 04 93 92 85 43 for info.

● Burgers hunters should head to Saint-Jeanneot today for the town’s twice yearly second hand sale or to Beaufort-sur-Mer for the fortnightly free-brass sale in the Port de Plaisance.

Monday 21

● The Tax Free World exhibition opens in Cannes today. 12,300 professionals will attend to find out what’s new in the luxury and duty-free shops will be offering next year.

Tuesday 22

● Kurt Elling plays jazz at the CDAC in Grimaux, Nice tonight at 9 pm. Tickets are €42.

● Line dancing classes take place tonight and every Tuesday night at Mouria school at 6.30 pm. Register are welcome. Each lesson costs €4. More info from Julie Duques on 04 93 90 10 36.

Wednesday 23

● Cards Nordique, the Scandinavian social group, is holding a ‘jazz & fun’ afternoon. The festival climaxes on October 26 at the Salle des Jeunes. There’s a single and comedy concert, including, Two way tickets will be sold on the day. Call 04 93 90 10 36 for further info.

● The Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice performs music by Rimsky-Korsakov at the Auditorium Rainier III, Monaco on Thursday. Tickets are €39 Call 03 92 12 16 99 for info.

The Riviera Gazette welcomes your news, letters and comments. Contact us at the address above.