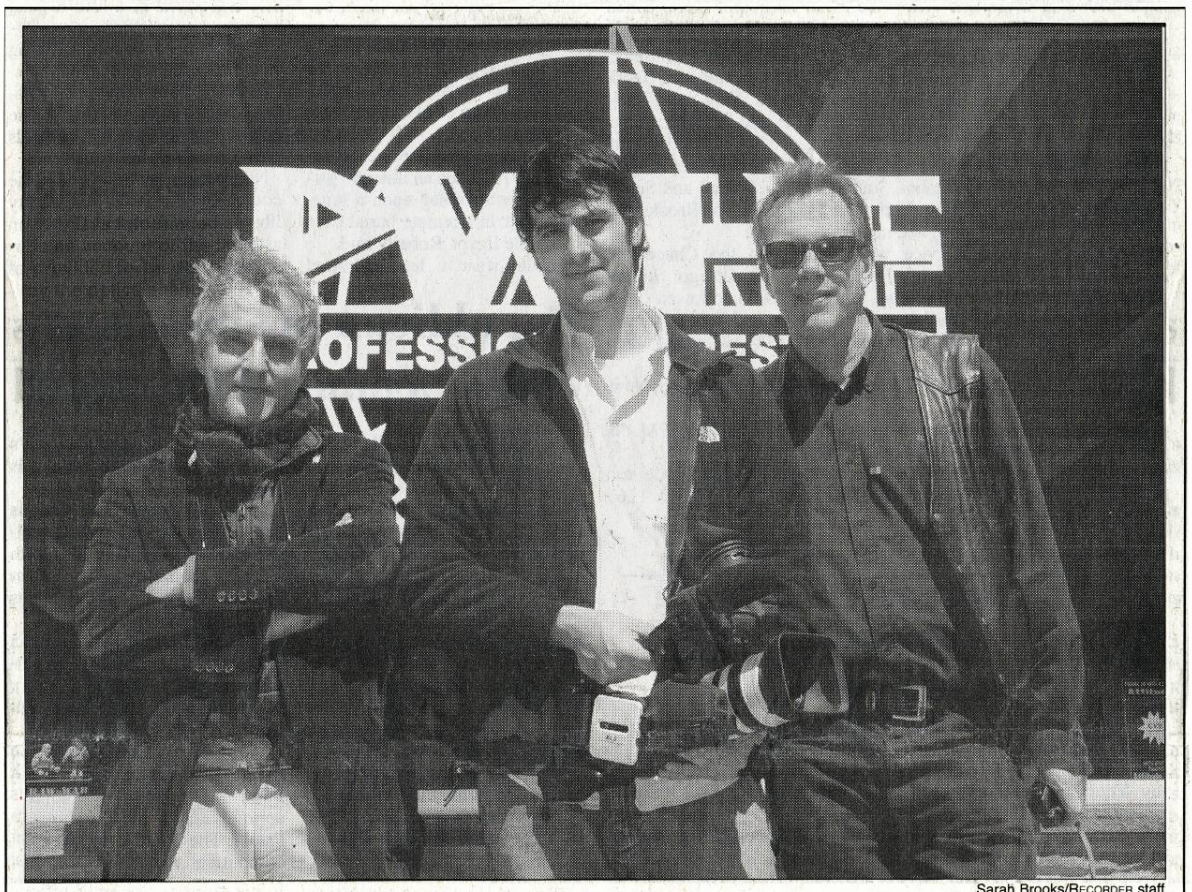
The Recorder

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Sarah Brooks/RECORDER staff

Rogier van Eck, left, and Rob Rombout, right, stand with their videographer, Syracuse University student Colin Bannon, in front of Amsterdam's Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame Thursday afternoon. The two filmmakers from Brussels, Belgium, were in Amsterdam compiling historical and cultural information for a documentary featuring the various Amsterdams around the world.

What's in a name?

Two filmmakers from Belgium are documenting the world's Amsterdams

By SARAH BROOKS
Recorder News Staff

In compiling information for their second documentary featuring the numerous places in the world named Amsterdam, Rogier van Eck and Rob Rombout of Brussels, Belgium, have stopped in the Mohawk Valley for a few days to check out the culture and sites the area has to offer.

Among their list of sites to see Thursday afternoon were the Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame on East Main Street, the Noteworthy Indian Museum on Prospect Street, Wilbur H. Lynch Middle School, and Amsterdam High School. The two filmmakers said they also met with Assemblyman Paul D. Tonko, D-Amsterdam, and were also going to meet with musician Alex Torres.

"Our opinion is there is stories everywhere," van Eck said.

After conversing with residents of Amsterdam's Polish and Italian communities, both van Eck and Rombout said they learned about the economy and social awareness of the city.

The two filmmakers, who also teach at a film school in Brussels, have already made a film, which was released three years ago, called *Amsterdam via Amsterdam*. The film is a journey from the capital of Holland to two islands that share the same name.

One of the islands is situated in the French Austral and Antarctic Lands while the other is part of the Norwegian Spitsberg archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. "One near the North Pole and one near the South Pole," van Eck pointed out.

"Behind the same name, you have two completely different stories," Rombout added.

The two islands, in comparison with Holland's capital city of Amsterdam, are desolate. The northern island is mostly desert land while the climate of the southern one is "fantastic," according to van Eck.

Both he and Rombout were in the United States earlier in April to present this film during a film festival in Syracuse. They were nominated for Best European Documentary and Best Feature Documentary at the Syracuse Film and International Video Festival.

It was in Syracuse that the two met up with the film student who is now their videographer in Montgomery County's Amsterdam this week.

"I love their film they made," said Colin Bannon, a junior at Syracuse University. "I said I would help [in their new one] however I could."

Bannon has let the two stay at his home in Queensbury, Warren County, until their departure today.

The new film van Eck and Rombout are working on will "mix portions of different places wearing the same name," van Eck said. It will incorporate shots of Amsterdam, N.Y., with shots of one of the largest towns in Guyana, called New Amsterdam; shots of a small sheep town called Amsterdam in Mpumalanga, South Africa, and shots of the Amsterdam in northern Holland.

Rombout said in North America alone, there are five or six locations with the Amsterdam name.

"We chose New York state because of the large Dutch population," van Eck said, noting the population of different cultures and history.

Michael Chiara, Amsterdam's city assessor, took the two filmmakers on a tour Wednesday to places around the city that included the First Reformed Church, the armory and City Hall. Chiara said the filmmakers took shots overlooking the city from the armory.

"They wanted to know about the culture of Amsterdam," he said.

The two filmmakers anticipate a return to this Amsterdam in October. They both said this is when the "real filming" will occur.

To look at other documentaries and films by Rogier van Eck and Rob Rombout, go to www.robrombout.com.