

Melodies of Piaf fill Paris air

IT'S 50 years since she died and Paris still feels a bit more like Paris with Edith Piaf playing in the background.



Edith Piaf

It was hard not to hear that unmistakable sound on Thursday as radio stations marked the anniversary by playing her most famous recordings, filling the capital's cafes and bistros with a throaty voice that has moved with the passage of time.

It was a day for remembering Piaf the woman, as well as the performer, with hundreds of fans making a pilgrimage to Belleville, the still down-at-heel Paris neighbourhood where she was born Edith Giovanna Gassion to a singer mother who was

soon to abandon her.

On the front of 72 Rue de Belleville, there is a plaque that declares: "On the steps of this house Edith Piaf, whose voice would later move the entire world, was born into utter destitution on December 19, 1915."

She was actually born in a hospital round the corner. The idea that Piaf literally entered the world via

the streets of Paris was one of the many myths she cultivated about herself, most of which have been debunked by recent biographies.

Self-serving invention was so integral to her character that Le Monde journalist Robert Belleret entitled his recent biography of the star, *Piaf, a French myth*. Even as she lay dying from liver cancer in the southern French town of Grasse, she was planning the way her death would be presented, leaving precise instructions for her body to be whisked up to Paris and for the world to be told she had died in the city where she was born, and which inspired many of her songs.

She was interred in the famous Pere Lachaise cemetery.

McCartney performs flash NY show

FORMER Beatle Paul McCartney has performed a flash concert in New York's Times Square, sparking a Twitter frenzy by announcing the free gig at an hour's notice.

"Wow! Really excited to be playing New York Times Square at 1pm this afternoon!" he wrote to his 1.6 million followers in a message re-tweeted more than 540 times.

Coinciding with lunchtime for

thousands of busy New Yorkers, McCartney's impromptu set included four tracks from his latest album *New*, which comes out next week.

Excited fans flooded Twitter with mobile phone pictures and jerky video clips taken from the crowd of McCartney and his band performing.

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