



Tintin: The Complete Companion

Books Reviewed:

[Tintin: The Complete Companion](#) [1]

Issue:

[132](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Geoff Fox](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

It is always intriguing to spend time inside someone else's obsession and this splendidly designed and produced volume certainly allows its reader to do that. Michael Farr, the dustjacket asserts, is 'Now the leading British expert on all aspects of Tintin' (what does that 'Now' imply?). His meticulously compiled book gives its lay reader no reason to doubt the assertion. Mr Farr is clear that his hero is 'the most recognisable figure in all fiction'. He does not set out to write a critical appraisal of Herg?'s work - there is little discussion here, for example, of artistic techniques, the crafting of narrative or Tintin's enduring appeal. This is indeed a 'companion', crammed with information. The Tintin aficionado would probably read with the primary texts at hand, for the straightforward structure deals in detail with each of Tintin's adventures from **Tintin in the Land of the Soviets** (1929) to the 'tantalisingly incomplete' **Tintin and Alph-Art** some 54 years later. This simple organisation serves Farr's purposes well. He is concerned to give us Herg?'s sources, to reflect the way the artist responded to contemporary events and to trace such developments as the reworking of the stories as they went into colour versions or what is gained and lost in translation (the books sell four million copies annually in more than fifty languages). The numerous illustrations include not only extracts from the adventures but also the images Farr has found in Herg?'s files which the artist used extensively with great attention to accuracy and detail. The origins of Herg?'s dynamic and entertaining cast list are explored: Captain Haddock, Professor Calculus, Bianca Castafiore, Thomson and Thompson, General Alcazar and - Tintin's own Professor Moriarty - the villainous Roberto Rastapopoulous. The structure also allows Farr to trace the relationship between Herg?'s troubled personal life and his work and to touch lightly on the political difficulties the artist got into during the second world war. There is considerable interest here for the browsing student of literary phenomena. For Tintin devotees, any recommendation (let alone a star rating) would be mere irrelevance. For them, this is required reading.

Running Order:

44

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[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/tintin-the-complete-companion>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/132>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/geoff-fox>