

RETAIL THERAPY

For the past twenty-five years, the place to buy Tintin paraphernalia of all kinds has not been in Brussels or Belgium but in London's Covent Garden. As part of our celebration of the boy reporter's birthday, we took a visit to The Tintin Shop to give you a sneak peek of what it has to offer...





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CASTING A

Herge has had a huge influence on many artists and creators around the world. Here and on the opposite page, we speak to Britain's GAREN EWING, creator of The Rainbow Orchid, and US cartoonist Jason Lutes, responsible for graphic novels like Jar of Fools and Berlin, to discuss the creator's continuing impact on their work...

GAREN EWING

TRIPWIRE: When did you first see Herge's work?

GAREN EWING: My mum used to buy me an Asterix book one Christmas, and then a Tintin book the next, alternating over the years. Asterix was first, but I think I must have been 7 or 8 (1977-ish) when I first got a Tintin book, and that was 'The Black Island'.

TW: What was it about his work that struck you as a creator?

GE: The strong graphical clarity had an immediate impact, but the other main ingredient was the believable environment, with every little detail contributing towards the story's authenticity. I'm pretty sure it was Tintin that kicked off my life-long fascination and love of adventure stories too, which led me on to authors such as Jules Verne, Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle and all that kind of stuff.

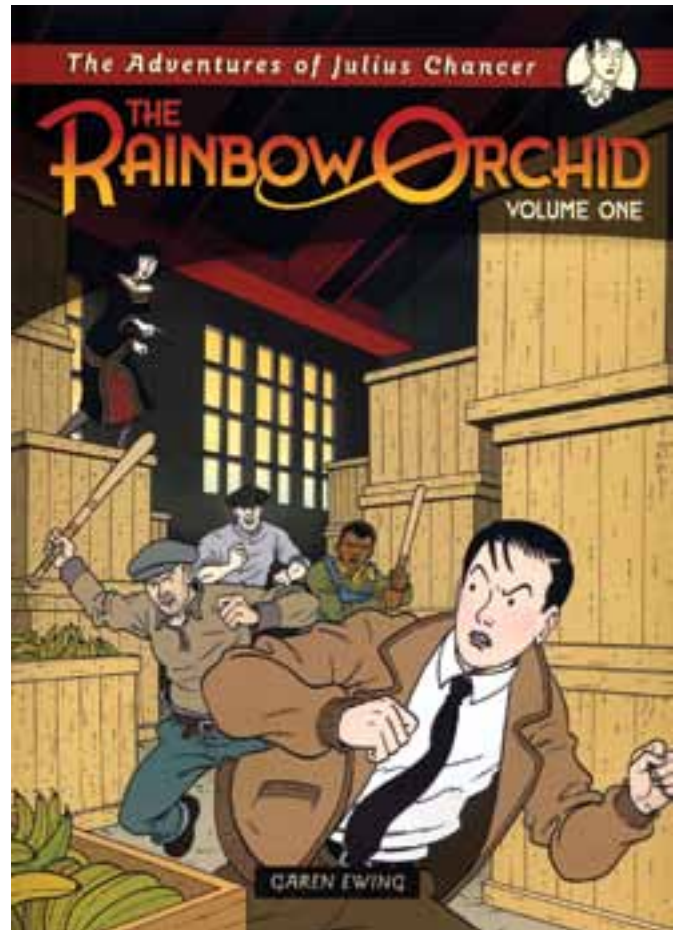
TW: How has he continued to influence your career and work?

GE: My love of Hergé led me further into the European scene, and especially his 'school' of bande dessinée with creators such as Jacobs, Chaland, Floc'h, Swarte, Clerc and Leloup, to name a handful, all of which I've found inspiring. Comics are such hard work that I decided I should just concentrate on the kind of material I enjoy most, so I rather brazenly just went and enrolled myself in that school as well, and I really feel at home there. Tintin and Asterix were my earliest and strongest comics influences, so they run deep.

TW: Why is Herge still an important creator years after his body of work?

GE: I think it all comes down the story – in the end you can't beat a good story, no matter how old it is, and Hergé was a terrific storyteller. Graphically (which, with comics, is totally integral to the storytelling, of course), the clear line style is accessible for younger readers and aesthetically pleasing for older readers, and it has a timeless quality, from ancient Japanese prints to Art Deco to Chris Ware. But the story's the thing.

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LONG SHADOW

JASON LUTES

TRIPWIRE: When did you first see Hergé's work?

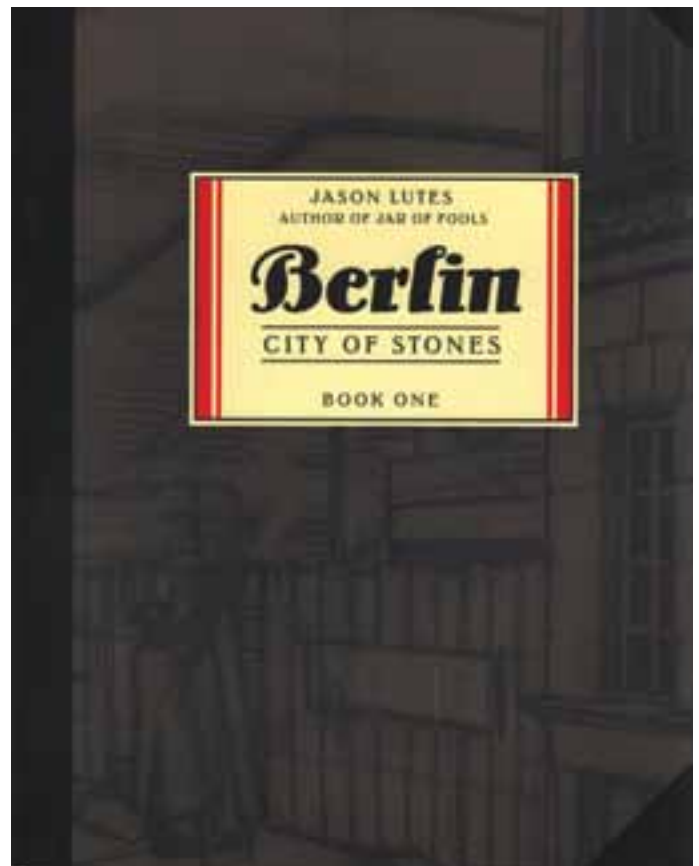
JASON LUTES: I must have been 5 or 6 years old, living in Missoula, Montana. My dad taught French Lit at the University of Montana, and I think Tintin fell into my hands by way of his colleagues, or the children of his colleagues, who knew Hergé from their European travels. When I was 7 I traveled to France for the first time, and got to see a lot of other amazing Franco-Belgian comics, but it was Tintin that always stuck with me.

TW: What was it about his work that struck you as an artist/ creator?

JL: When I was in my mid 20s and starting work on my book Jar of Fools, I sat down with a bunch of Tintin albums and tried to figure out exactly what made them tick. People usually point to the bright colors and ligne claire drawing style as the most compelling aspects of Hergé's work, but if you look past that cosmetic stuff, you find a lot of well-oiled storytelling machinery. For instance, 95% of all character and vehicle movement in Hergé's work is from left to right, which creates a real momentum when coupled with the fact that the books are read left to right. If you compare his earlier stories to his later ones, you'll notice that it took him a while to figure this out, but once he did there are practically no exceptions to the rule. Also, almost every right-hand page ends with a sort of cliffhanger, which compels you to turn the page. Originally an artifact of the serial nature of the early Tintin stories, these little cliffhangers became a standardized component of Hergé's storytelling. Put the left-to-right movement and the cliffhangers together, and it's a like a little engine that practically turns the pages by itself. I discovered a lot of other things, all of which have influenced my own work to some degree, but I'm convinced that these two pretty simple rules of visual storytelling are key to Tintin's popularity.

TW: How has he continued to influence your career and work?

JL: I teach Hergé in my classes at the Center for Cartoon Studies, so my



relationship to his work evolves from year to year through the ongoing dialogue with my students. Beyond the purely mechanical considerations, the biggest lesson I've learned from Hergé is the importance of clear communication. You always know exactly what's going on in a Tintin story, regardless of whether you like the story or think it's believable. He was a master of clarity at every level. One of my goals has always been to reach an audience that does not normally read comics, so the challenge for me personally is to take that standard of clarity and use it to communicate stories that are more internally oriented. I'm not writing and drawing slapstick adventure stories, I'm trying to write and draw novels in comic book form, but I try to use some of the same tools that Hergé used to explore aspects of life that are perhaps more subtle or complicated than what you might find in a Tintin story. Hergé and Chester Brown are probably the two cartoonists who've had the greatest impact on my work, and the extent of their impact would be impossible to measure. It goes wide and deep.

TW: Why is Hergé still an important creator years after his body of work?

JL: His work is timeless in the same way the work of a great musician or great painter can be timeless. The simple fact of it is that, despite the never-ending flood of comic books that hit store shelves or show up in mailboxes