



For Immediate Release

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P.O.V.'s "Tintin and I" Offers Rare Look at Beloved Comic-Book Character And His Reclusive Creator, Tuesday, July 11 on PBS

Heard for the First Time, Interviews with Belgian Cartoonist Hergé
Reveal Political and Psychological Forces Behind Creation of Legendary Boy Hero Tintin

Who was Tintin? Indeed, who was his creator, Hergé? Tintin was the determined and resilient hero of a comic book series that took him on thrilling adventures around the world—and on some voyages not quite of this world. Actually, though Tintin is not as well known in the U.S. as in Europe, his distinctive tuft of ginger hair and Hergé's no less distinctive drawing style will ring a bell with many Americans. Appearing from 1929 to 1982, the series took Tintin to the planet's most exotic places to confront all sorts of danger, treachery, and political machinations, with an emphasis on the fast-paced visuals of trains, planes, cars, bombs, and other new technologies.

Both character and creator were unambiguous. Tintin was literally and emblematically a Boy Scout who always lived up to the Boy Scout code, no matter how dire, dark, strange, or adult the situation. Tintin was the ideal with which Hergé totally identified. But, as revealed in Anders Østergaard's **Tintin and I**, it was the treacherous and uncertain world around Tintin into which Hergé poured the reality of his own life. Based on 14 hours of audio interviews recorded in 1971—heard here for the first time—**Tintin and I** shows that Hergé, while trying in life to live up to the idealized Tintin, ended up creating in art a powerful graphic record of the 20th century's tortured history.

Anders Østergaard's **Tintin and I** has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, July 11, 2006** at 10 p.m., as part of the 19th season of public television's groundbreaking P.O.V. series. (Check local listings.) That same evening, P.O.V. presents the award-winning short film **Lawn** by Monteith McCollum, who directed P.O.V.'s **Hybrid** (2002). American television's longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television's premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films.

In 1971, the French-born Numa Sadoul (later an actor as well as a writer) was a young journalist doing a series of interviews with comic-book artists. Drawn to Brussels, the center of European cartoon art, Sadoul took a chance and knocked on the door of the artist he wanted most to meet. He had no reason to expect a welcome from Hergé, *nom de plume* of Georges Remi, whose creation, *The Adventures of Tintin*, already had been captivating millions of European children and not a few adults for over 40 years. Since World War II, Hergé had had to face a blacklist for working under the German occupation, the embarrassment of abandoning his Catholic marriage, and a nervous breakdown. The naturally reticent artist had grown even more reclusive.

But Sadoul wanted to ask what Hergé thought was so enthralling about the *Tintin* series. Tintin, the forever-young art deco Boy Scout who never shied from danger or from doing the right thing, seemed too simple to explain the series' iconic status. To Sadoul's tremendous surprise, Hergé not only welcomed him into his studio but also consented to being interviewed on audiotape. The encounter turned into 14 hours of audio interviews, recorded over four days, in which Hergé, despite protesting that he neither wanted to talk nor had anything interesting to say, proceeded to open up with remarkable candor. Though the interviews later became the basis for a book, they were so

heavily edited and rewritten by Hergé—perhaps recollecting the reasons for his former reticence—that the book was far from a faithful representation of his thoughts over those four days in 1971.

Now, 30 years after the fact, and with the full support of the Hergé estate, Hergé's talks with Sadoul have formed the basis for **Tintin and I**. Hergé's own voice—gentle, prodding, laughing—takes us through the twists and turns of a life he readily admits was written into the adventures of the Boy Scout he once thought he was, or at least strove to be, even as the European world was spinning violently out of control. Director Østergaard, who has obvious affection for Hergé's visual universe, does the master's art homage by animating archival footage of Hergé to sync up with Sadoul's audio, lending Hergé's voice an uncanny visual presence. He has also turned some of the *Tintin* series' most famous panels into 3-D scenes through which Østergaard's camera moves, yielding new insights into Hergé's art, especially its detail and dramatic formal structures.

Sadoul is also on hand, still in awe as he recounts his fortuitous meeting with Hergé. Scholars Harry Thompson (who died in 2005), Fanny Rodwell, and Gérard Valet add their appreciations and accounts of the social and artistic circumstances under which Hergé worked. Even Andy Warhol, in archival footage, turns up for at least 15 seconds in appreciation of Hergé's popular—and just maybe pop—art. But it is the voice of Hergé himself, intertwined with his animated image and striking family and public archival footage, that forms the drama of **Tintin and I**.

As recognizable in Europe as Superman or Mickey Mouse in the States, Tintin had neither super powers nor an anthropomorphic fantasyland to provide his fans with escape from a world of economic depression and war. In fact, Tintin, a very pro-active Boy Scout, flew right into the face of predicaments that, in detailed visuals and ever more complicated story lines, all too chillingly replicated the world's real dangers. Colonialism, war, oppression, criminal conspiracies, and the promise and terrors of technology accelerated Tintin through the 20th century—and his creator through an evolution of consciousness.

Given the use of comic art for realism in Europe (and Japan), as distinct from the penchant for escapism in the U.S., it is no surprise that *Tintin* began as a strip in a right-wing Catholic newspaper, explicitly meant to teach political lessons. Norbert Wallez, a charismatic if fanatical and odd Catholic abbot, first suggested such a strip to Georges Remi, who adopted the pseudonym Hergé. Hergé remained under the influence of the *abbé* Wallez and his reactionary views for many years. He even married Wallez's secretary, Germaine Kieckens, who—as Hergé later caricatured in *Tintin*—played the role of mother hen.

A turning point came when a story set in colonial Africa featured egregious racial and geographic stereotypes. Stinging from the criticisms these drawings elicited, Hergé engaged the collaboration of a Chinese artist, Tchang Chong-chen, to ensure that his next book, *The Blue Lotus* (1934), did not portray Chinese culture as a Western cliché. Working with Tchang provided Hergé with an artistic and moral epiphany. He became absorbed with Tchang's—and Asian art's—dedication to pictorial realism and accuracy of detail. This led Hergé to exhaustive research on the settings and people of his succeeding tales—and a greater respect, it would seem, for humanity's diversity. (So great was Tchang's impact on Hergé that the latter spent nearly 40 years famously trying to track Tchang down after distance and war separated them. Their reunion, part genuine and part marketing comeback for Hergé, is documented in **Tintin and I**.)

By 1938, *King Ottokar's Sceptre* was widely seen as a damning parable of Hitler's invasion of Austria. However, the most controversial part of Hergé's career began when the German army occupied Belgium and Hergé continued his strip in *Le Soir*. He jettisoned politics and real-world scenarios during the occupation years to send Tintin off on more traditional adventure fare involving buried treasure and sunken wrecks. In **Tintin and I**, Hergé tells Sadoul that, once Belgium had surrendered, he saw continuing his work as no different from a baker continuing to bake bread. Yet, throughout occupied Europe, the work of artists, writers, and even entertainers was not seen as

equivalent to ordinary work, and Hergé—along with other intellectuals who claimed only to be doing their jobs—was quickly arrested after the war.

Though he was just as quickly released, his reputation came under a cloud and he faced a professional blacklist. It took a broken marriage, a nervous breakdown, a new love, and years of soul searching for Hergé to rebuild his personal and professional lives. **Tintin and I** recounts the crisis in his life in the late 1950s in part by an exploration—literally entering 3-D animations—of the strip that many regard as Hergé’s masterpiece, *Tintin in Tibet* (1960).

“Millions of kids in many different countries have grown up with the adventures of Tintin, which is reason enough to make a portrait of Hergé,” says director Anders Østergaard. “But Hergé’s story, the life of a dreamer whose inner clarity was so much in conflict with the world outside him, was very moving itself. Can’t you, especially if you are an artist or other creative type, just remain inside the dream? You can’t. Not without paying a high price. It’s a sad story, I guess, but the result was Tintin, a visual icon of the 20th century.”

Tintin and I is a production of Angel Production (Denmark) and Moulinsart Production (Belgium) in co-production with Periscope Productions (Belgium), Dune (France), Leapfrog (Switzerland), RTBF (Belgium), Avro (Netherlands) in Association with France 2, VRT, DR TV, France 5, Suisse Romande, SVT, NRK, YLE-FST and RUV.

About the filmmaker:

Anders Østergaard **Director/Writer**

Born in 1965 in Copenhagen, Anders Østergaard trained at Central Television, London, in 1988 and graduated from the Danish School of Journalism in Aarhus, Denmark, in 1991. Østergaard has worked as a copywriter and strategic adviser at Jersild & Co., an advertising agency specializing in social and political campaigns, and as a freelance researcher and assistant director for the documentary units of DR TV and TV 2/DANMARK. His first documentary, **Johannesburg Revisited**, based on the feature film **A World of Strangers** (1962) by Henning Carlsen, was produced in 1996 for TV2/DANMARK, NRK, Nordic Film & TV Fund and the Danish Film Institute. In 1999 he was writer and director of **The Magus**, a portrait of Swedish pianist Jan Johansson. Produced for SVT, DR, NRK and the Danish and Swedish Film Institutes, **The Magus** was awarded Best Documentary at the Odense Film Festival in 1999. Other credits include **A Burning Issue**, about pesticides in Africa, the documentary series **Brothers in Spirit**, and **Malaria!** Østergaard’s new feature documentary, **Gasolin**, which opened March 10, 2006 in Denmark, is currently the country’s most successful theatrically released documentary and one of the top Danish releases of the year. It tells the story of the famous Danish rock band Gasolin.

Credits:

Director/Writer: Anders Østergaard
Cinematographer: Simon Plum
Editor: Anders Villadsen
Music: Joachim Holbek, Hafdan E.

Running Time: 72:00

Awards & Festivals:

- Danish Film Critics Awards, 2005 – *The Bodil Award, Best Documentary*
- European Documentary Film Festival, Oslo, 2004 – *Eurodok Award, Best Documentary*

- Hot Docs International Documentary Festival, Toronto, 2004 – *Honorable Mention, Best International Documentary (Feature)*
- Semaine du documentaire de Création Européen, 2003 – *Second Prize, Best Documentary*
- Adelaide International Film Festival, Australia, 2005
- Mar Del Plata International Film Festival, Argentina, 2005
- Cape Town South African International Documentary Film Festival, 2005
- Sheffield International Documentary Festival, Great Britain, 2004/2005
- Göteborg Film Festival, Sweden, 2004
- Rouen, Festival du Cinema Nordique, France, 2004
- Sao Paulo It's All True International Documentary Film Festival, Brazil, 2004
- Hong Kong International Film Festival, 2004
- München Documentary Festival, Germany, 2004
- SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival, Silver Spring, Md., 2004
- Auckland International Film Festival, New Zealand, 2004
- Melbourne International Film Festival, Australia, 2004
- Vancouver International Film Festival, Canada, 2004
- Berlin Prix Europa Festival, Germany, 2004
- Montréal Rencontres International Du Documentaire, Canada, 2004
- Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival, 2003

Lawn by Monteith McCollum

On **Tuesday, July 11**, P.O.V. presents the 12-minute film **Lawn** by Monteith McCollum. “Your lawn is a reflection of your character,” a woman says in a phone conversation at the beginning of the film. **Lawn** explores our relationship with nature and our desire to control it. Filmed over a period of months through time-lapse, stop-motion, and long takes, it depicts an untamed yard (McCollum’s) living and dying. Throughout the film the faceless woman (earth scientist Sarah Little) reveals the logic behind our desire to make lawns into homogeneous, bug-less plots. She recounts her experience with a man struggling to go chemical-free to ensure the health of his child. McCollum, also unseen, places a telephone call to his local lawn-care provider to discuss the possibilities of a weed-less, insect-less earth.

McCollum directed, photographed, and edited **Lawn**, which won Jury Awards at the Los Angeles and Black Maria film festivals. His first film, the feature-length **Hybrid**, also broadcast on P.O.V., won an Independent Spirit “Truer Than Fiction” Award and the first NYFA Prize from the New York Foundation for the Arts, along with Best of Festival Awards at the South by Southwest (SXSW), San Francisco International and Amsterdam International Documentary festivals, to name a few. Born in Chicago, he is a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago where he studied film and painting. He lives with his wife and filmmaking partner, Ariana Gerstein, and their daughter, Maya (who has a cameo role in **Lawn**) in upstate New York, where he teaches filmmaking.

Original Online Content on P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

The **Tintin and I** companion website (www.pbs.org/pov/tintinandi) offers exclusive streaming video clips from the film and a wealth of additional resources, including a Q&A with filmmaker Anders Østergaard, ample opportunities for viewers to “talk back” and talk to each other about the film, and the following special features:

- American cartooning roundtable: A group of American cartoonists discuss their different approaches to cartooning, their influences, the impact of cartoons on a culture (particularly American culture), and the idea of low/high art in American cartooning world.
- Tintin's effect on American artists and culture: Explore Tintin’s influence on cartoonists, artists, filmmakers, and pop-culture icons, including Steven Spielberg, David Bowie, Wim Wenders, Andy Warhol, Dustin Hoffman, and Roy Lichtenstein.



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and in its 19th season on PBS, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running series on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought nearly 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V. is available online at www.pbs.org/pov.

P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. It also produces a Web site for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information and feedback on the issues. In addition, www.pbs.org/pov houses our unique *Talking Back* feature, filmmaker interviews and viewer resources, and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as myriad special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these originally produced materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences nationally. P.O.V. also works closely with local public television stations to partner with local museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. *Youth Views*, P.O.V.'s youth engagement initiative, expands these efforts by working directly with youth service organizations.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s Community Engagement activities and the *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston, and Thirteen/WNET New York.

American Documentary, Inc. (www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback, to educational opportunities and community participation. Cara Mertes is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.

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TAPE REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.

