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'Tintin': Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson are proud parents

Dec. 19, 2011 | 9:32 p.m.



Peter Jackson and Steven Spielberg at Comic-Con. (Kirk McKoy / Los Angeles Times)

It's hard to think of anywhere farther from Southern California than New Zealand, but if there is such a place, it would be Middle-earth. That's why it was a massive surprise this summer when Peter Jackson — the cinema wizard behind the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy and its upcoming two-part prequel, “The Hobbit” — left his work in Wellington to make a mad dash to Comic-Con International in San Diego. “Madness is the word for it,” Jackson said at the time when asked about the trip, which involved more than 24 hours in the air and less than 24 hours on the ground. “But I’m happy to do it if it helps spread the word about Tintin. He’s like an old friend, one of my oldest, in fact....”

Tintin is the beloved adventure hero who, for five decades, lived in the illustrated tales of the Belgian artist Hergé as well as in the hearts of youngsters everywhere — well, almost everywhere. The global sensation never made it across America’s cultural borders, but Jackson hopes that will change with this week with the U.S. release Wednesday of “The Adventures of Tintin,” the 3-D performance-capture film directed by Steven Spielberg and lovingly produced by Jackson.



Tintin (Jamie Bell) and Snowy in “The Adventures of Tintin.” (WETA Digital Ltd.)

“I read Tintin before I could read,” Jackson said during his Comic-Con visit, where he joined Spielberg for a key early promotion moment for the film. “The challenge we have is getting the people who don’t love Tintin to see the movie.” “The Adventures of Tintin,” which had a production budget of \$130 million, arrives in the U.S. as an unfolding success story; it opened a full two months ago in Europe and already has grossed \$239 million in worldwide box office. In France, the passion for the property was especially clear — the movie’s opening weekend numbers even topped the totals posted by the latest “Harry Potter” film, which will finish the year as the highest-grossing 2011 release worldwide.

The film didn’t arrive in the lifetime of Hergé — the cartoonist born George Remi died in 1982 — and older fans of the character may be startled by the high-velocity vision presented by the movie. “The Adventures of Tintin” presents a turbocharged version of the hero that fans like Jackson grew up with, but the familiar beats are there: Tintin (portrayed by Jamie Bell of “Billy Elliot” fame) is a bright, brave and loyal reporter who, with his dog, Snowy, travels the

world to solve mysteries and embrace adventure, like some sort of cross between Nancy Drew and Indiana Jones. Tintin is joined by a boozy sea captain named Haddock (Andy Serkis, who was Gollum for Jackson in his Tolkien films) and a pair of daft Scotland Yard investigators named Thomson and Thompson (Simon Pegg and Nick Frost), while his nemesis is a mysterious fellow named Ivanovich Sakharine (Daniel Craig).

Jackson and Spielberg have hopes of making a trilogy but already the pair has a sort of finish-line satisfaction in light of all the history they brought with them to the red carpet of the October world premiere in Belgium. For Jackson, the movie feels as if it is part of his career theme too. With his big-screen versions of Tolkien's Middle-earth mythology and his 2005 remake of "King Kong," he was able to return to the north-star influences from his own formative years. "With this project, I was excited first just as a Tintin fan to know that I was finally going to see the film version by Steven that I had been reading about since 1983 in interviews and magazines," Jackson said, acknowledging the long and winding path of the project.

Spielberg had never heard of Tintin before 1981, when he read European reviews of "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and saw repeated comparisons between the Hergé character and his own globe-trotting hero. He secured the rights to make a movie but the project sat on his shelf for years because it was dogged by a major problem: Tintin's pooch pal, Snowy. Spielberg saw no way he could get a real-life canine who could tackle the true sidekick duty that the wire fox terrier handles in the books. "There was too much demanded from the dog and the risk was too high to go with dog trainers and several look-alike dogs," Spielberg said last summer while sitting with Jackson at a San Diego hotel. "I wanted to do a test to see if a digital dog could be in the same scene as a live-action character, so I went to Peter's [visual effects] company, Weta, and about two months later I got the results of the test back."

The test was eye-opening for Spielberg and not just because it showed a dynamic, pixel-produced Snowy cavorting on a pier. Interacting with the dog was Jackson, dressed up as a sea captain, "auditioning" for the role of Haddock. The goofy bit was Jackson's way of communicating his passion for the childhood stories he loved while growing up in up in Pukerua Bay, a coastal town in New Zealand. Spielberg's reaction to the oddball video? "I knew two things: I was going to run away from live-action, but I was also going to run toward Peter Jackson."

In short order, Jackson came in as a "Tintin" producer and full creative partner to Spielberg, who at the time was in the midst of filming the 2005's "War of the Worlds." "To be asked for our company down in New Zealand to possibly do a CGI dog was exciting and to go from that to, two months later, being invited on board in a more collaborative way was mind-blowing," Jackson said. Spielberg had never directed an animated film before, but "The Adventures of Tintin" is not traditional animation. Rather, it's one of the cutting-edge films testing the traditional definitions of the term by using the Weta performance-capture technologies also employed on "Avatar" and the "Rings" trilogy.

Spielberg "shot" the movie in less than 40 days in Los Angeles and Jackson and his Weta visual effects teams kept tabs from New Zealand, where they were toiling also on "The Hobbit," the live-action, two-film epic that will reach theaters in December 2012 and 2013.

It was moviemaking of the moment, to be sure, but Jackson, working with his idol, the 65-year-old Spielberg, also had a full-circle feeling. It was Spielberg's 1993 film "Jurassic Park" and its digital dinosaurs that changed the life of Jackson, then a filmmaker relying on old-school effects such as models and make-up.

"I walked out of 'Jurassic Park' thinking, 'Wow, if I really want to keep doing what I love doing I'm going to have to get into these computer effects, which I know nothing about,'" Jackson said. "About a month or two later we bought our first computer ... now we've got like 2,000 computers down there and that would never have happened without 'Jurassic Park.'"

Spielberg laughed and added: "Now I know one of the more important reasons why I made 'Jurassic Park' was so you would build the highway that would bring us together on 'Tintin' and to finally get this movie made. I guess it all comes back to Tintin."

For Jackson, coming back to Tintin meant trying to hold on to his different memories of the character and what he most loved about those adventure tales — the vividly colored personalities, the humor and the social satire elements he came to appreciate as a more mature reader.

"What I've tried to do with my contribution to the film was to lock in to the different ways that I loved Tintin both as a child and as an adult," Jackson said. "Hopefully, the film will work on that level, with all the things young viewers will enjoy but also the humor and satire that an adult will pick up. If we can lock in to that DNA that Hergé created, well, that's the plan."

– Geoff Boucher

<http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2011/12/19/tinin-steven-spielberg-and-peter-jackson-are-proud-parents/>

EM HIPÓTESE ALGUMA SERÁ CONSIDERADA A RESPOSTA NESTE CADERNO

Responda às questões abaixo, em português, de acordo com as informações contidas no texto *'Tintin': Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson are proud parents*".

QUESTÃO 01 - Descreva as seguintes personagens do filme "As aventuras de Tintin":

Tintin: _____

Snowy: _____

Haddock: _____

Thompson e Thompson _____

Ivanovich Sakharine _____

QUESTÃO 02 - Qual a repercussão do filme na Europa e qual o desafio a ser enfrentado com relação ao filme nos Estados Unidos?

QUESTÃO 03 - Por que, mesmo possuindo os direitos autorais para filmar "As aventuras de Tintin", Spielberg permaneceu com este projeto arquivado por muito tempo?

QUESTÃO 04 - Que estranhamento a nova versão cinematográfica de Tintim poderia causar aos antigos fãs do desenho animado?

QUESTÃO 05 - Que sensações Jackson espera suscitar com o filme em espectadores de diferentes faixas etárias?
