

**The Alain Van Passen Collection:  
At the Crossroads of Comics Collecting and Critique**

***Maaheen Ahmed***

**Abstract:** This essay introduces the Alain Van Passen comics collection recently acquired by Ghent University with the financial support of a European Research Council grant for a project on children in European comics. Covering publications from the 1930s through the 1980s, the collection comprises of French and Belgian comics magazines and fanzines. Since the story of Van Passen's collection is intertwined with the establishment of comics clubs, the essay introduces the rise and organization of francophone comics collecting and highlights the early connections established between early francophone comics criticism and (fan) scholarship. It also discusses the first Belgian comics fanzine, *Ran Tan Plan*, for which Van Passen was an editorial board member and a regular contributor. After arguing for the importance of collector knowledge for comics scholarship, the essay ends with a few remarks on the potential of such private collections for better understanding the materiality of comics making and the vast visual archive contributing to comics history.

**Keywords:** Franco-Belgian comics, comics magazines, comics criticism, fanzines, fans, collecting, materiality

Since fall 2018, I have been involved in moving Belgian collector Alain Van Passen's comics magazines from his house in Brussels to Ghent University's Faculty Library of Arts and Philosophy. Eager to preserve his collection, Van Passen had approached Philippe Capart of *La Crypte Tonique* – a space combining comics archive and dissemination, gallery and shop, which also publishes an eponymous magazine on visual narration. Capart consequently became the indispensable link between the collector, myself and the faculty library, enabling contact and negotiation and even helping with documenting and packing the collection. Titled "Du Privé au Public" [From the Public to the Private], issue 15 of *La Crypte Tonique* will provide an overview of the collection and its context of the dynamic, mutating scene of comics magazine memory and collection from 1941 (the year Alain was born) to 1977 (the year the fanzine *Phénix* ended and also the year the first video rental stores appeared in Brussels). The Faculty Library of Art and Philosophy also played an indispensable role in the transfer of the collection by offering logistic and material resources and personnel to ensure the safe transport, care and cataloguing of the collection.

Like the publication of *Crypte Tonique* no. 15 – digital versions of which will be available for free in English, French and Dutch – the purchase of the collection was enabled through the COMICS project. Funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 758502), COMICS is a multi-researcher project seeking to piece together an intercultural history of

comics through focusing on the representation of children in comics from different linguistic and cultural spheres (English, French, Flemish, Italian and Spanish). Combining the study of the representation of the child, the implied child reader and associations of childishness in comics, the project also engages in a productive dialogue between comics studies and childhood studies.<sup>1</sup>

Bringing together several decades of francophone comics production, from the 1930s through the 1980s, the Van Passen Collection covers most of the French and Belgian components of the project's corpus. Most of the publications target a mixed or primarily male readership, ranging from children to adults. The collection also offers a comprehensive overview of the early years of comics criticism in Belgium and France, most of which took place through fanzines and was strongly marked by the fan and collector perspectives. This scope ensures primary sources and inspiration for both research project and teaching activities even once the COMICS project is completed.

This usefulness to a broader community of readers interested in comics and the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy Library's guarantee to preserve the collection eventually convinced Van Passen to transfer his carefully guarded life's work of collecting and exchanging. Van Passen was well aware that other collectors would only have been interested in buying pieces that were missing from their own collections. Public institutions rarely have the funds or the possibility to justify such purchases, even in a country like Belgium, where comics are touted as being part of the national heritage (cf. Daenen). Further, Van Passen's friend, the Swiss collector Victor Yves Ghébali had arranged for his prolific collection to be transferred to the City Library of Lausanne. The transfer, which took place in 2010 and the subsequent valorization of the Fonds Ghébali by the library and researchers associated with the University of Lausanne convinced Van Passen of the merits of opening his collection to a broader public and to comics scholars. This shows how academia and fan knowledge can be mutually beneficial even though they often follow different paths. Collections and in-depth fan knowledge and bibliographies offer rich possibilities for collaboration between academia and fandom.

### *The Rise of Francophone Comics Collecting*

Growing up in Brussels in the early 1950s, in the same borough of Etterbeek where Hergé spent most of his youth, Alain Van Passen was a passionate moviegoer, comics reader and, as a young boy, comics maker. He was not, however, born with what he would later call the collector's bug.

The beginnings of Van Passen's collection run parallel with the organization of comics collecting through clubs in France and Belgium (with reverberations that traversed national and even linguistic frontiers). It all started in *Fiction*, a monthly magazine of science-fiction and weird literature, which often included translations of American and British short stories. Its readers were also interested in comics from a specific period and genre as suggested by an advertisement published in *Fiction* no. 90 (May 1961). Signed by Jean-Claude Romer, who would make a small name for himself in various jobs related to

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on COMICS, please contact the author via email or visit the project's website at [comics.ugent.be](http://comics.ugent.be). For more information on the Van Passen collection, please contact the author or Ghent University's Faculty Library of Arts and Philosophy ([lib.flw@ugent.be](mailto:lib.flw@ugent.be)).

cinema (acting, script-writing, critique), the advertisement expressed an interest in accessing pre-1940 *illustrés* or illustrated magazines often dominated by comics such as *Robinson*, *Mickey*, *Hop-Là*, *Hurrah*, and *L'Aventureux* (Deloignon 88). Such advertisements for exchanging or buying comics were, in themselves, not uncommon. In this particular instance, however, they were followed, probably unintentionally, by an article that would change the course of comics collecting. Two issues later, in July 1961, *Fiction* published a text titled "Bande dessinée et science fiction, l'âge d'or en France (1934-1940)" (Comics and Science Fiction: The Golden Age in France) by Pierre Strinati, a Swiss speleologist and ardent fan of comics and science fiction (Gabilliet; Boillat).

In his article, Strinati waxed nostalgic about the American strips translated into French and diffused by Opera Mundi, successful publisher of Disney comics and strips licensed through King Features Syndicate (Boillat 144). The pre-war comics were often printed in a much larger format and had, for Strinati, poetic and artistic qualities that were absent in post-war productions (Deloignon 88). In a move that will sound familiar to readers of US comics history, Strinati deplored the nefarious effects of the prohibitive French law of 16<sup>th</sup> July 1949 on youth publications. Strinati's article struck a chord with *Fiction's* readers; it was soon clear that many of them were equally nostalgic for the pre-WWII comics imports of their youth. These comics included Guy L'Éclair (Flash Gordon), *Mandrake* (*Mandrake the Magician*), *Yordi* (the *Superman* translation, later also known as *Marc*, *l'Hercule modern*) and *Luke Bradefer* (*Brick Bradford*, which was more successful overseas, especially in its French translation, than in the US). *Fiction* encouraged this discussion: *Fiction* no. 93 (August 1961) sported a cover by Jean-Claude Forest (Deloignon 90), who would soon make a name for himself for the controversially adult *Barbella* strips, but also for participating in the first *Club des bandes dessinées* [Comics Club]. The issue also included a letter by Forest which built on Strinati's project of remembering comics that had disappeared from the contemporary scene. He added certain European productions to the list including *Futuropolis*, one of the earliest French science-fiction comics (Deloignon 90).<sup>2</sup> The idea for a comics club was first floated in *Fiction* with the aim of making forgotten comics available to an increasingly eager group of readers independently of the notices and advertisements published in the magazine. The Club's birth was confirmed by an insert in *Fiction* no. 102 (May 1962).<sup>3</sup>

The Club included not only Forest, Strinati and Romer but also journalist Francis Lacassin, who would eventually give one of the first university courses on comics at the Sorbonne and popularized the term 'ninth art' for comics; *nouveau roman* novelist and theoretician Alain Robbe-Grillet; filmmakers Alain Resnais, Chris Marker and Federico Fellini; the actor and feminist, Delphine Seyrig; philosopher Edgar Morin; semiotician and novelist, Umberto Eco; and the historian Pierre Couperie (whose archives were transferred to the Cité internationale de la bande dessinée in Angoulême in 2010). It is important to note that while Strinati's article in *Fiction* provided the immediate impetus for the formation of a collectors' club, comics collectors had already established networks through, for instance, publishing

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<sup>2</sup> *Futuropolis* would be the name adopted by a cult Parisian bookstore which, following a change of owners, became a pioneering publishing house known for its alternative comics.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview on the rise of comics collecting in France see: Julie Demange, "Bédéphilie," in *Dictionnaire esthétique et thématique de la bande dessinée*, July 2017, <http://neuviemeart.citebd.org/spip.php?article1169>.

advertisements in comics magazines such as *Pilote* that openly targeted older readers.<sup>4</sup> The CBD officialized and unified these informal networks based on advertisements and exchanges.

Van Passen—a keen reader of comics, science fiction and popular literature, and an eager cinema goer since his earliest years—was a subscriber of *Fiction*. He closely followed the formation of the comics club in France and the parallel developments in Belgium and was soon caught up in the zeal of collecting. Collecting and trading incessantly, Van Passen established a broad network of contacts, encompassing people who are well-known today for their contribution to preserving and disseminating comics—including the members of the CBD mentioned above and Jacques Glénat, who started his fanzine, *Schtroumpf*<sup>5</sup> at the age of 17 and went on to establish the famous publishing house that bears his name—and those who remain somewhat forgotten, such as Michel Deligne, of the Curiosity Shop in Brussels (cf. Capart 2018). All shared a few key characteristics and goals: a passion for finding and exchanging comics, disseminating information about comics and comics artists and, wherever possible, reprinting the comics themselves.

#### *Early French and Belgian Fanzines: at the Intersection of Childhood Nostalgia and Fan Scholarship*

In July 1962 the CBD launched the first francophone fanzine on comics, *Giff-Wiff*. Starting as a newsletter for the CBD, *Giff-Wiff* became a *journal de la bande dessinée* (literally, comics journal). It is also described in the CIBDI's online archive as a *revue d'étude* or (comics) studies journal: these two synonyms in French for the fanzine emphasize the research work undertaken by fans. The opening paragraph of the fanzine explains that Giff-Wiff is the name of an imaginary, friendly animal that first appeared in a *Pim, Pam, Poum*, the French translation of Rudolph Dirk's Katzenjammer Kids strip, published in *Le Journal de Mickey* (October-November 1935). A species on the verge of extinction, its only source of nourishment are pearls, or, in the absence of pearls, tapioca.

In 1964, the CBD split into two groups, CELEG<sup>6</sup> and SOCERLID<sup>7</sup>. While members of CELEG wanted to continue working on the Golden Age comics, those of SOCERLID wanted to incorporate contemporary comics productions into the discussion.<sup>8</sup> CELEG would disappear in 1967, along with *Giff-Wiff*, after organizing a landmark exhibition for comics legitimation titled, *Bande dessinée et figuration narrative* [Comics and Figurative Narration] at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris. SOCERLID survived until the late 1970s, as did its fanzine, *Phénix* (1966-1977).

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<sup>4</sup> This was the case for Louis Cance who has drawn for some of the most successful French comics magazines of his time, collects comics and is, since 1973, one of the main hands involved in realizing *Hop!*, a fanzine launched at the initiative of a group of high school students at Aurillac who asked for Cance's help with the art. *Hop!* published at a bi-annual rhythm. Exemplifying the extent to which fan-collectors remain interlinked, Van Passen remains one of the two Belgian correspondents for this magazine. Lacassin and Cance had already been in touch through *Pilote* and Cance became one of the first members of the CBD (Groensteen and Cance).

<sup>5</sup> Named after the famous Belgian comic strip by Peyo, *The Smurfs*, the fanzine would eventually become the *Cahiers de la Bande Dessinée*.

<sup>6</sup> Centre d'études des littératures d'expression graphique [Study Center for Graphic Literatures]

<sup>7</sup> Société civile d'étude et de recherche des littératures dessinées [Research Society for Drawn Literatures]

<sup>8</sup> While Olivier Dolignon generalizes this split along members who were interested in the connections between comics and cinema (SOCERLID) and those who considered comics as a narrative art (CELEG) (96), many of CELEG's members retained an affinity to cinema (and to Francis Lacassin).

Originally affiliated to the CBD and then CELEG, the Cercle belge des Amis de la Bande Dessinée, spearheaded by André Leborgne, was formed in 1966 (*Rantanplan*, February-March, 1966). Leborgne would leave his mark on the comics scene in the francophone sphere and especially in Belgium by launching one of the earliest comics prizes, the Prix Saint-Michel as well as the Comics Festival in Brussels that continues today. The Belgian club brought together comics fans and professionals from all walks of life. These included Van Passen, who taught French and History as well as Latin and Greek at school. Only 22 years old, he was one of the club's youngest members. Other members included renowned artists such as Greg (Michel Greg) and Morris (Maurice de Bevere, cf. Fig. 6). Morris and Pierre Vankeer, another founding member, were co-authors, since 1964, of a regular column in the magazine *Spirou* on comics heritage titled "9e art: Musée de la Bande Dessinée" [The Ninth Art: The Comics Museum]. Other members included Thierry Martens, who would edit the long-running *Spirou* from 1968 until 1978 (cf. Fig. 5).

R A N T A N P L A N

BULLETIN DU C. A. B. D.

Février-mars 1966

N° I

EDITORIAL : Pourquoi un Cercle (belge) des Amis des  
Bandes Dessinées ?

Lorsque Francis Lacassin et quelques-uns de nos amis français eurent fondé en 1962 le Club des Bandes Dessinées (qui devait devenir par la suite le CELEG), ils ne tardèrent pas à être rejoints par de nombreux amateurs de Suisse et de Belgique. L'idée était belle et généreuse de créer une grande communauté d'expression française groupant sans distinction de frontière tous ceux qui se sentaient une passion commune pour les bandes dessinées du passé, du présent et de l'avenir.

Sur le plan pratique hélas! il fallut déchanter. D'abord la Loi française reléguait les adhérents étrangers au rang de membres d'honneur, malgré toute la gentillesse et le bon vouloir de nos amis d'Outre-Quévrain qui ne désiraient pas faire de distinction. Mais la Loi est la loi, d'où une certaine gêne. D'autre part les envois postaux isolés et non recommandés de France en Belgique sont fort précaires, d'où pertes de nombreux Giff-Wiff, rééditions abîmées, etc...

Aussi Francis Lacassin nous proposa-t-il en février 65 d'organiser nous-mêmes notre indépendance sur base de la compréhension totale et de la réciprocité des productions. Cette proposition fut acceptée au cours d'une réunion des adhérents belges le 13 février 65. A dater de 1966 la section belge du CELEG devient le CABD dont voici les membres fondateurs : Maurice DE BEVERE (MORRIS), Joseph DELPIERRE, Maurice IMBERECHTS, André LEBORGNE, Gaston LEFEBVRE, Michel REGNIER (GREG), André ROSEN, Florimond RUYSS, Roger SARTON, José SCHOOVAERTS, Urbain VAN CAUWENBERGH, Jacques VAN HERP, Pierre VAN KEER, Alain VAN PASSEN, Jo VERBRUGGHEN. Le Giff-Wiff et les productions du Club nous restent acquises comme par le passé; ces publications seront collectées et distribuées par les soins du comité.

Nous espérons cependant que notre rôle ne restera pas purement passif, que nous sortirons un bulletin acceptable, qu'il sera procédé à des rééditions, etc... Nous sommes assurés du concours de toutes les bonnes volontés. Maintenant il faut faire preuve de volonté tout court.

LE COMITE PROVISOIRE

Greg Leborgne Lefebvre Van Herp Van Keer  
Van Passen

Figure 1 Rantanplan no. 1 (February-March 1966). The first newsletter of the Belgian comics club, Cercle belge des Amis des bandes dessinées, opening with an explanation of the importance of launching the CABD and signed by the club's provisional committee.

When the Club launched its own fanzine in 1966, Van Passen was part of its editorial board. Like *Giff-Wiff* this Belgian fanzine was also named after a comics animal, this time after the dog Rantanplan in Morris' *Lucky Luke*. Vankeer proposed the name Rantanplan because of its twofold significance: it was, most famously, the name of Lucky Luke's dog; for an older generation of comics readers, however, Rantanplan was also the name of the children's club in *Bicot*, the French translation of the Winnie Winkle strips, named after Perry Winkle instead of her sister. Called *Rinkeydinks* in the original strips, the club acquired the name of Rantanplan in the French version (Gordon 40). For Vankeer, the name connected older and younger generations of comics readers. The name also shows the extent to which childhood nostalgia was part of the glue connecting members to the club. This included the appreciation of certain 'childish' elements, such as funny animals and onomatopoeic sounds (*rantanplan*). Hence childhood memories, which clearly had a strong presence in the early organization of comics collecting, also wielded considerable influence on collectors' and fans' studies of comics.

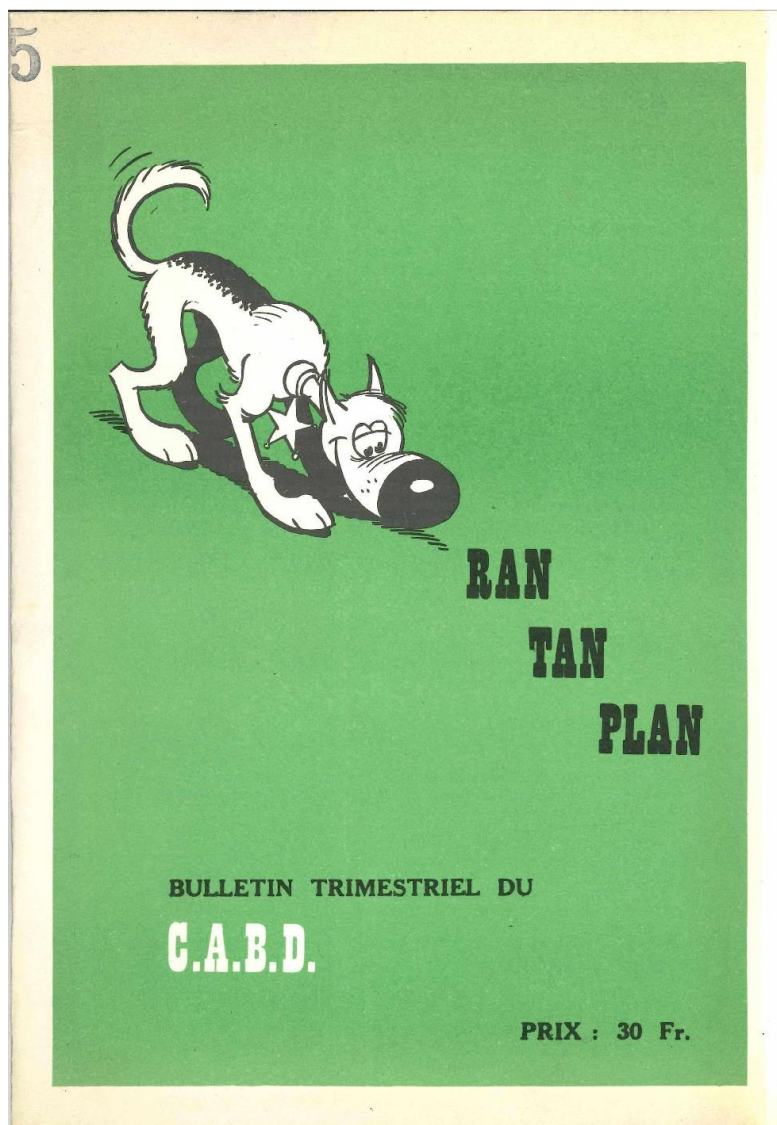


Figure 2 *Ran Tan Plan* no. 5 (1967). Cover displays the fanzine's namesake, Rantanplan, sniffing the title.

Already the first newsletter (Fig. 1) – *Rantanplan* would not be published as a fanzine until its fifth issue, when it was re-baptised *Ran Tan Plan* (Fig. 2) – combines several functions of the comics clubs: the study of comics, especially in the form of revisiting the ‘golden age’, a function covered by a column started by Vankeer in the very first newsletter on the golden age of comics; the republication of hard to find comics; and the exchange and commerce of comics. From its second issue onwards, *Rantanplan* published offers by individual members for exchanging comics (primarily magazines).



Figure 3 *Ran Tan Plan* no. 8-9 (January 1968). Special issue on the Belgian comics artists Maurice Tillieux, with one of his most well-known characters, the detective Gil Jourdan, on the cover.



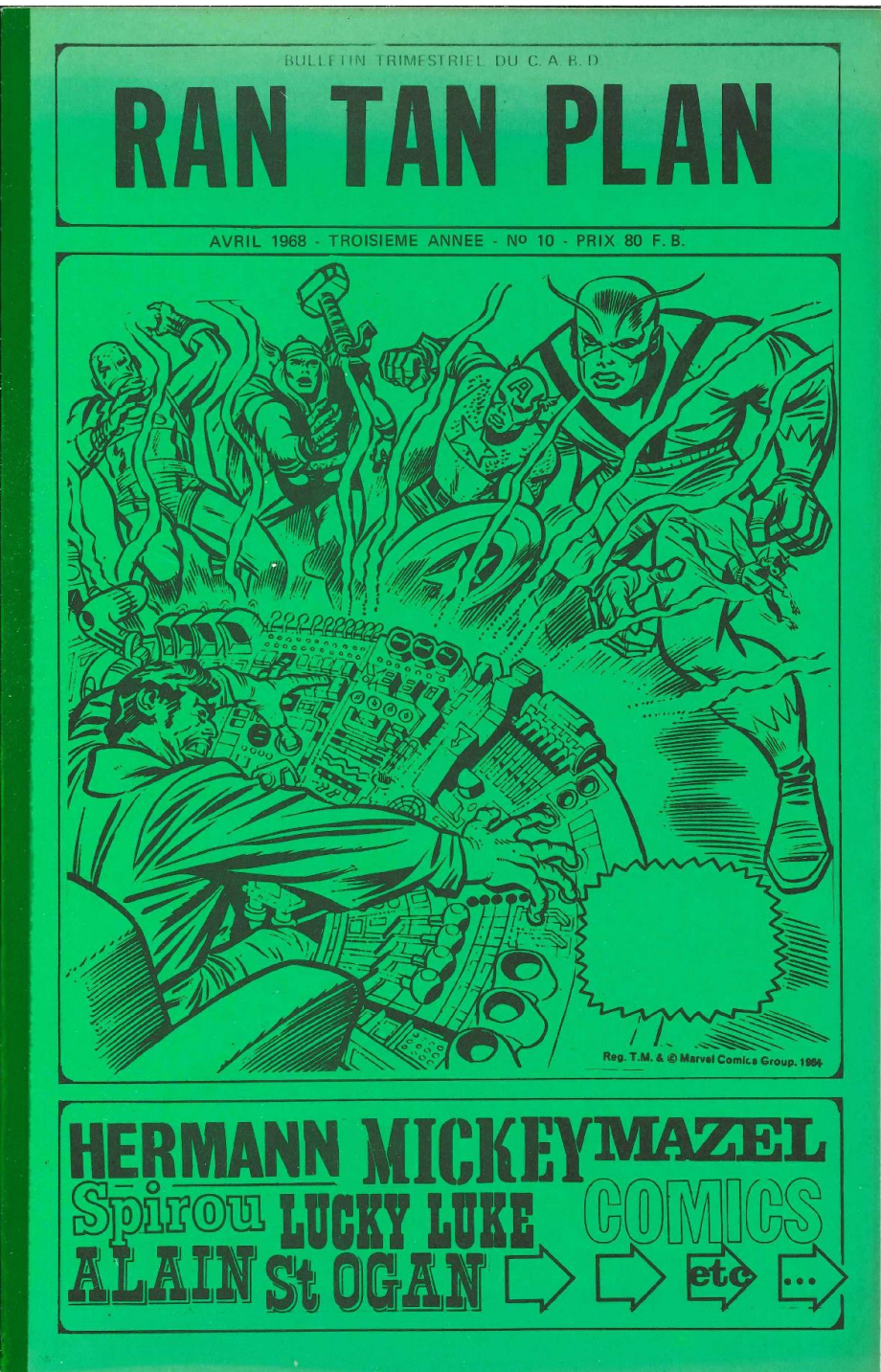


Figure 4 *Ran Tan Plan* no. 10 (April 1968). The cover is dominated by Marvel superheroes while the lower tier announces more diverse content on, among others, Alain Saint-Ogan, Lucky Luke, Spirou and Mickey.

BULLETIN TRIMESTRIEL DU C. A. B. D.

# RAN TAN PLAN

JUILLET 1968 - TROISIEME ANNEE - N° 11 - PRIX 80 F. B.



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AGE D'OR de la B. D.

P. VANKEER  
VAN HERP.

## JEAN RAY

JOURNAL de Spirou

la SFenBD

P. VANKEER de laet

Figure 5 Ran Tan Plan no. 11 (July 1968). A small Rantanplan sniffs near the title and articles by members of the CABD are announced at the lower end of the cover. The cover image is from The Adventures of Spirou.

# ran tan plan

22



Figure 6 *Ran Tan Plan* no. 22 (1971). The dog Rantanplan reappears in the cover drawing by Morris: here, he traipses behind the Daltons.

Almost every issue contained an offer by Van Passen. He very quickly established a name for himself for his encyclopedic, almost obsessive knowledge of comics and popular culture in America, the UK, France, Belgium and Italy. The first biography of the Club's members (*Ran Tan Plan* 5, 1967) mentions how Van Passen watched sixty horror films over a month, at the rate of two films per day in order to better understand the mythology of demons. It ends with a tongue in cheek remark on how he collects everything that is printed, from the tram ticket to the *Moniteur belge* (the official gazette of the Belgian Department of Justice).

“Le zombie de la bande. Caserne dans les salles obscures dans l’espoir de faire la connaissance de la créature de Frankenstein. S’est tapé dernièrement 60 films à raison de deux par jour pour chercher la lumière éclatante de la mythologie démoniaque. Accessoirement collectionne tout ce qui est imprimé du ticket de tram jusqu’au Moniteur.”

[The zombie of the gang. Stakes out in cinema halls in hopes of meeting Frankenstein's creature. Recently watched 60 movies, at the rate of two a day, in search of the brilliant light of demonic mythology. Incidentally collects all things printed, from tram tickets to the Monitor.]<sup>9</sup>

For a 1974 TV program focusing on comics fans in France and Belgium, Van Passen is filmed at his home, one full of paintings by his parents and their artist friends and also, of course, comics. He shoos away the cheeky comics character called Coquelicot (Poppy) created for the program, who in turn makes a remark about how protective Van Passen is about his collection. Barely able to suppress a smile when the interviewer shares Leborgne's description of him as 'erudite', Van Passen goes on to specify his interest in bibliographies and looking at comics from both historical and anecdotal perspectives.

After more than a decade of passionate fandom and experimentation with diverse publication formats, *Ran Tan Plan* ceased publication in 1978. Van Passen however remained active in other fanzines, and remains, to this day, on the editorial board of *Hop!* (see note 2).

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<sup>9</sup> *Ran Tan Plan* no. 5 (1967), p. 16.



Figure 7 *Ran Tan Plan* no. 29 (autumn 1973). The cover image is by the American underground artist George Metzger.



Figure 8 *Ran Tan Plan* no. 31 (autumn 1974). The cover shows the hero of the newly launched medieval adventure comic, Ramiro: The Bastard by Belgian comics artist William Vance.

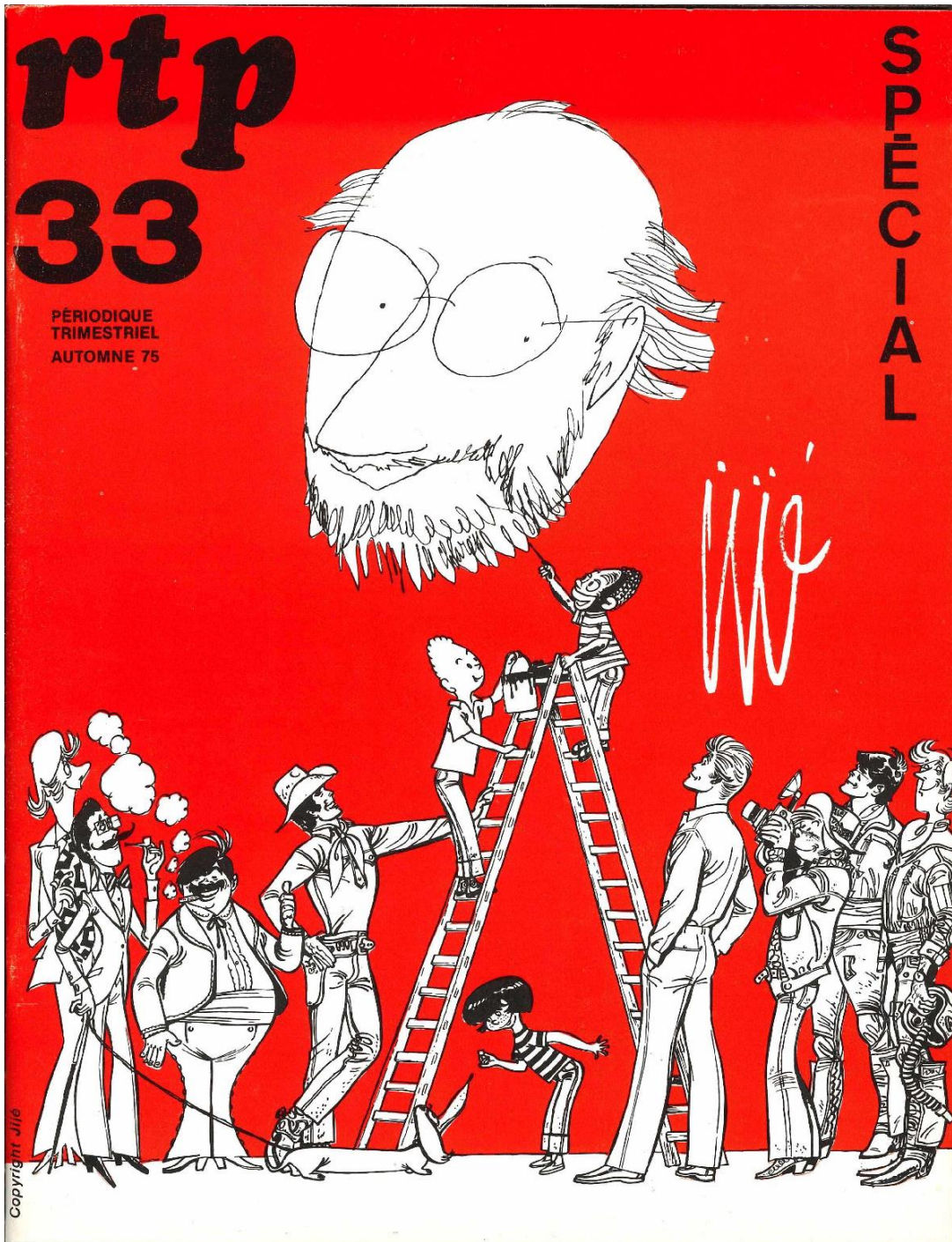


Figure 9 *Ran Tan Plan* no. 33 (autumn 1975). This issue is dedicated to Jijé (Joseph Gillain), leading artist of what is often called the Marcinelle school.

# Bibliographie Générale :

## les oeuvres de Jijé par Alain Van Passen

Les pages qui suivent repré- sentent les premières données parues dans l'album CIBRISTY de la rédaction "Blondin et Cirage" contre les gangsters", revues et éventuellement corrigées, et enchaînées en se poursuivant jusqu'à nos jours. Il va sans dire que tout complément d'information ou rectificatif sera les bienvenus, cette bibliographie étant comprise comme un travail d'équipe.

D'ailleurs, bien des collectionneurs et spécialistes de la bande dessinée se sont mis de la partie. Qu'il nous soit permis ici de remercier de leur aide bienveillante et efficace :

- mademoiselle Jacqueline Martin, dont le recensement pour tout ce qui concerne PILOTE a été fort précieusement :

- monsieur Philippe Bessières, responsable de tous les renseignements sur LE CR OSSE et PETITS BELGES, et qui me fit un grand encours dans la mise au point de la liste d'albums :

- monsieur Louis Cance, à qui nous devons, entre autres, les indications sur les publications moins connues, publicitaires et autres ;  
 - messieurs Michel Deligne et Jacques Wilmart, qui ont fourni d'indispensables précisions à propos de MOUNTIGUE ;  
 - messieurs Georges Cosse et André Leborgne, qui nous ont aidé à constituer une liste d'albums la plus précise possible.

**I. LE CR OSSE**  
 hebdomadaire à caractère religieux (26x18)  
 une planche en noir et blanc à la dernière page  
**Déroulement de Jijé**  
 de n° 38 (17. 9. 39) au n° 42 (26. 9. 37)  
**Les nouvelles aventures de Jijé**  
 de n° 7 (13. 10. 37) au n° 48 (3. 7. 39)  
 suite après "Déroulement de Jijé" dans le n° 1 (3. 10. 37)  
 plusieurs interruptions de l'histoire : n° 37 (12. 6. 38), n° 38 (12. 6. 38), n° 27 (2. 4. 39), n° 39 (11. 4. 39)  
 livraison des planches au n° 21 (5. 3. 39) et n° 24 (13. 3. 39)  
**Extrait des indices**  
 de n° 48 (3. 7. 39) au n° 32 (9. 5. 40)  
 interruption de l'histoire au n° 12 (17. 12. 38)  
 arrêt brutal de l'histoire au n° 32 (9. 5. 40)  
**B. Les dessins.**

a) illustrations  
 n° 9 (01. 10. 37) signé J. Gillain  
 n° 1 (03. 10. 37) signé Jijé  
 n° 14 (08. 01. 38) signé Jijé  
 n° 1 (01. 10. 39) signé J. Gillain  
 n° 16 (04. 02. 40) signé Jijé  
 n° 20 (11. 02. 40) signé J. Gillain  
 n° 23 (03. 03. 40) signé J. Gillain  
 n° 24 (10. 03. 40) non signé

b) couvertures  
 n° 10 (08. 12. 38) signé J. Gillain  
 n° 11 (15. 12. 38) signé Jijé  
 n° 12 (22. 12. 38) signé Jijé  
 n° 13 (29. 12. 38) signé Jijé  
 n° 14 (05. 01. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 15 (12. 01. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 16 (19. 01. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 17 (26. 01. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 18 (02. 02. 39) non signé  
 n° 19 (09. 02. 39) non signé  
 n° 20 (16. 02. 39) non signé  
 n° 21 (23. 02. 39) non signé  
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 n° 28 (12. 04. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 29 (19. 04. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 30 (26. 04. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 31 (03. 05. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 32 (10. 05. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 33 (17. 05. 39) non signé  
 n° 34 (24. 05. 39) signé Jijé  
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 n° 36 (07. 06. 39) signé Jijé

**I. LES ILLUSTRÉS**  
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 n° 20 (16. 02. 39) non signé  
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 n° 22 (03. 03. 39) non signé  
 n° 23 (08. 03. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 24 (15. 03. 39) non signé  
 n° 25 (22. 03. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 26 (29. 03. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 27 (05. 04. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 28 (12. 04. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 29 (19. 04. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 30 (26. 04. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 31 (03. 05. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 32 (10. 05. 39) non signé  
 n° 33 (17. 05. 39) non signé  
 n° 34 (24. 05. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 35 (31. 05. 39) non signé  
 n° 36 (07. 06. 39) signé Jijé

**B. Les dessins.**  
 a) illustrations  
 n° 44 (24. 10. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 15 (13. 04. 41) signé Jijé  
 n° 2 (11. 01. 42) signé Jijé  
 n° 14 (08. 04. 42) signé Jijé  
 n° 39 (10. 06. 42) signé Jijé

b) couvertures  
 n° 29 (16. 07. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 20 (23. 07. 39) non signé  
 n° 31 (30. 07. 39) non signé  
 n° 25 (22. 06. 41) non signé  
 n° 27 (08. 07. 41) non signé  
 n° 29 (20. 07. 41) non signé  
 n° 31 (07. 08. 41) non signé  
 n° 35 (03. 09. 39) signé Jijé  
 n° 37 (10. 09. 39) non signé  
 n° 41 (08. 10. 39) non signé  
 n° 45 (05. 10. 39) non signé  
 n° 43 (22. 10. 39) non signé  
 n° 48 (28. 10. 39) non signé  
 n° 45 (05. 11. 39) non signé  
 n° 46 (12. 11. 39) non signé  
 n° 47 (19. 11. 39) non signé  
 n° 48 (26. 11. 39) non signé  
 n° 50 (03. 12. 39) non signé  
 n° 28 (27. 10. 40) non signé  
 n° 34 (06. 12. 40) non signé  
 n° 35 (13. 12. 40) non signé  
 n° 36 (20. 12. 40) non signé  
 n° 5 (02. 02. 41) signé Jijé  
 n° 5 (02. 02. 41) signé Jijé  
 n° 3 (16. 02. 41) signé Jijé  
 n° 11 (16. 03. 41) signé Jijé  
 n° 9 (02. 03. 41) signé Jijé  
 n° 17 (17. 03. 41) non signé  
 n° 3 (19. 01. 43) non signé  
 n° 15 (12. 04. 42) non signé  
 n° 17 (20. 04. 42) non signé  
 n° 21 (24. 04. 42) non signé  
 n° 23 (01. 05. 42) non signé  
 n° 29 (15. 07. 42) non signé  
 n° 33 (02. 08. 42) non signé

**Blondin et Cirage en Afrique**  
 de n° 37 (12. 3. 39) au n° 38 (12. 6. 39)  
 interruptions : n° 32 (24. 12. 39), n° 3 (3. 4. 40), n° 18 (9. 5. 40)  
 non parution du journal entre le 12. 5. 40 et le 1. 9. 40



Figure 10 Excerpt from Jijé's bibliography by Van Passen from *Ran Tan Plan* no. 33.

*From House to Library:<sup>10</sup>the Private and Public Facets of a Collection*

While discussing SOCERLID's role in mythifying Alain Saint-Ogan (who was often hailed as a pioneer in bande dessinée through his early use of word balloons), Julien Baudry highlights the role played by collectors in facilitating comics research. Although often dismissed as partial and not scientifically rigorous, fan scholarship is important because it is often oriented around searching for a rare, difficult to find piece and often results in detailed bibliographies that are a useful starting point for research. Baudry goes so far as to suggest that 'collectionnisme' can be one of the driving forces behind writing on comics. In using the word 'collectionnisme', Baudry refers to the Thierry Groentsteen's phrase, 'collusion avec le collectionnisme' to describe SOCERLID's indulgence in the nostalgic comic fannishness and the obsession associated with collectors (Groentsteen 116). Indeed, collectors and the process of collecting are often dismissed for lack of objectivity and theoretical rigor (see Martin). In their annotated reprint of comics critic Jean-Philippe Martin's article, the editors of the online journal *Comicalités* recall Boltanski's assessment of collecting habits as a kind of mimicry of intellectual work. However, obsessive collecting can also be a boon, and indeed a necessary corollary for academic work, as in the case of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library in Ohio, or, more recently, the Fonds Ghébali at the City Library of Lausanne

<sup>10</sup> This title alludes to the forthcoming *Crypte Tonique* no. 15.



Recently academics working on popular culture have highlighted the more positive aspects of collectors' work. Summarizing a lecture by Henry Jenkins on his forthcoming volume on *Comics and Stuff*, Tarleton Gillespie writes: "Collectors are not just people who own stuff, they're people who desire stuff and know stuff, creating forms of knowledge that former generations might have thought as trivial." Collecting is a life work, a practice triggered by nostalgia but eventually offering a personal perspective on popular culture memory. Heavily reliant on networks, uniting people around a shared passion, it is also a means of socializing. McCracken suggests several "shared social practices through which meaning is manufactured and managed" in collections (Jenkins 229). These practices include: exchange, possession, grooming (or preserving), and divestment. While discussing these social practices, Jenkins is careful to emphasize the affective dimension, how "memories, associations, and sentiments are transferred onto collected objects" (Jenkins 229). In a remark that works in tandem with Baudry's on the role played by collections in enabling comics research, Jenkins links comics artists and collectors through the almost necessary, inevitable practice of establishing a line of ancestry: "Comic artists have often had to become collectors and curators, simply to get access to their 'aesthetic ancestors'" (223)

Collections are also a core part of personal history, occupying psychological and social space as well as physical space. Van Passen points out that one of the practical factors facilitating his collecting habits is the fact that he has not moved since 1960, when his parents bought the house where he currently lives. He brought his childhood magazines with him when he moved to this house; this was before he actively started collecting not only comic books but also other elements of popular fiction such as films, books on the cinema and popular fiction. Comics, books, film reels, and cassettes all need space. In Van Passen's house they are in constant competition with the many paintings, images, figurines and knickknacks.

Coquelicot was an astute observer. Van Passen carefully guarded his collection; borrowing was strictly prohibited and reading and scanning were only permitted in Van Passen's living room, under his watchful eye. With the move to the library, the collection will soon be accessible to researchers and anyone who is interested (while maintaining the protocol for precious and fragile collections established by the library).

Harboring the possibility of fostering countless research projects, a collection like Van Passen's, which is complete and in excellent condition, is a rare opportunity to appreciate the materiality of comics production, in this case, over several crucial decades in comics history, punctuated by the Second World War, the 'Disneyfication' of comics and the subsequent and infamous law of 1949 intended to counter American and Italian influences. The changing formats (sizes, colors) that become immediately perceptible and tangible in this collection are precious sources that can feed comics studies' recent interest in materiality (cf., for instance, Kashtan). Further, comics scholarship has already highlighted the relevance of comics archives, especially because of its deep roots in the process of making comics (cf. Gardner). This is confirmed by, for instance, Benoît Crucifix's careful analysis of Charles Burns' swipe files and Ebony Flowers Kalir's emphasis on the centrality of copying images to the process of making comics. Van Passen's collection fills a gap of several cubic meters of visual material and stories that have inspired generations of comics artists. It will, beyond doubt, be a source of inspiration for generations of comics scholars and other readers of comics.

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