

The Arts

Blistering strange connection

WHAT childhood would be complete without walk-on parts for Tintin, his dog, Snowy, and the flawed but loveable Captain Archibald Haddock? The oddly coiffured Belgian foreign correspondent is now a global popular cultural icon and to commemorate his 75th anniversary and encourage further generations to engage with the full complexity of Tintin's world, the National Maritime Museum is staging Tintin at Sea.

In truth, the aquatic connection is a little fishy, since, as the catalogue acknowledges, it was only in Tintin's

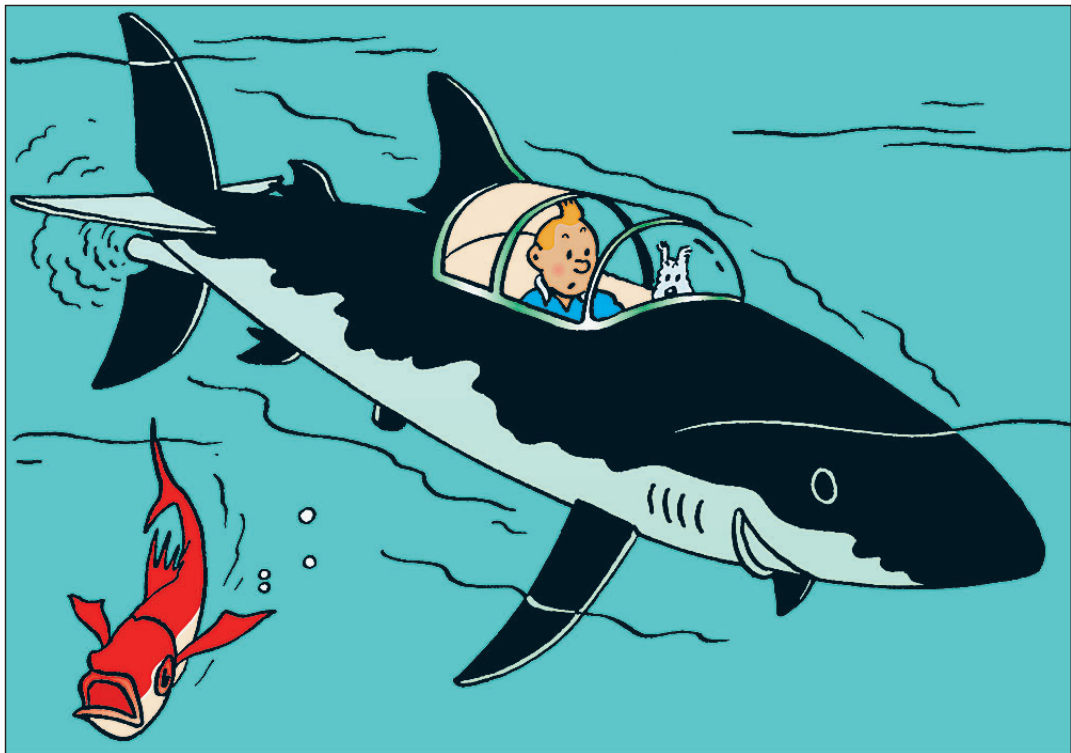
EXHIBITION

The Adventures of Tintin at Sea
National Maritime Museum, SE10

Nick Hackworth

ninth adventure, *The Crab with the Golden Claws*, that the sea gets the leading role the Maritime Museum believes it should have had all along.

The show, then, is an odd mix of the story of the cartoon character's birth, including rare originals by Georges Remi, Tintin's creator, who gave himself the pseudonym Hergé,



Cultural icon: Tintin and Snowy search for the Unicorn in Red Rackham's Treasure (1944)

©Hergé/Moulinart

and displays of Tintin's other sea-bound escapades, including the sail to the North Pole in *The Shooting Star* and the search for pirate treasure in *The Secret of the Unicorn* and *Red Rackham's Treasure*.

On show are 1930s life jackets, star maps, models of ships that figure in the stories and a working one-man submarine modelled on the one that

appears in *Red Rackham's Treasure*.

The show will appeal to anyone with an interest in the comic for here there are gems to be uncovered, such as the story of the naming of Captain Haddock, the drunk sea captain, who becomes one of Tintin's best friends. A haddock, said Hergé's wife, was "a sad English fish", the name thus encapsulating all the pathetic qualities that Hergé wanted

to bring to the old salty sea dog.

First prize for interest, however, goes to the oddest item on show, Andy Warhol portraits of Remi, who was a collector of contemporary art. Now what would Tintin, Snowy or, for that matter, Captain Haddock have made of that den of voyeurism, loose sexual morality and narcotic assumption that was Warhol's Factory? We shall never know.

A legend – but you couldn't tell

WORLD

Cheikha Remitti

Festival Hall

Simon Broughton

IT'S no mean feat, aged 84, virtually to fill the Royal Festival Hall. But the Algerian Cheikha Remitti is no ordinary singer. Known as the "grandmother of rai", she started performing in 1936 and her outspoken and risqué songs were the antecedents of the pop rai made internationally famous by Khaled and others.

Remitti walked on stage to a massive cheer and looked like the fairy off a Christmas tree in a gold-and-purple tinsel dress, a tiara like a golden crown and sparkly shoes. Sadly, she was with a five-piece turbo-charged rock band cranked-up loud and drenched in reverb. It was mixed to a North African not a Western aesthetic. Remitti was certainly audible, but all the colour and detail of her voice was lost in the heavy miking.

Every song was pitched at the same level and one merged into another. We were certainly in the presence of a legend, but apart from the young crowd snapping her on their mobile phones, you could be forgiven for not realising it. In her last numbers she pushed up the pace and, inspired by the crowd gyrating at her feet, starting jumping up and down and kicking out with her shiny shoes. Presumably for her own safety she had to be forcibly removed.

Remitti's support came on second. Said Senhadji is a hugely popular young Moroccan singer who was accompanied by a much crisper band and had the front of the hall in a lithe frenzy of waving arms and twisting bodies.

We're friends again, really

POP

Sugababes

Hammersmith Apollo

Chris Elwell-Sutton

PERSISTENT tales of infighting have allowed many of us to forget that the Sugababes, who inked their first record deal at 14, are the UK's most credible and talented all-girl popsters. If this performance was a chance to show solidarity and put the focus back onto their music, it was only 50 per cent successful. But what a 50 per cent it was.

With a slick live band and a classy set, the Babes strutted down the steps and launched into their 2003 hit *Freak Like Me*. Dressed in Top Shop-style tops and jeans, they had the all-seated venue on its feet almost immediately and provided one delightful hit after another.

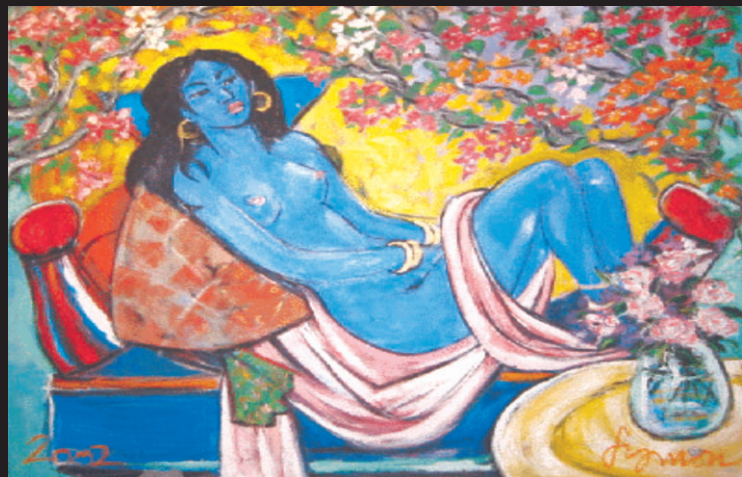
Highlights included *Stronger*, *Round Round*, a beautiful acoustic version of *Shape of My Heart* and *Breathin' Easy*, which had the whole crowd clapping in time. Keisha's solo, which showed off a stunning, soulful voice over an R&B track, was another standout moment.

But something wasn't right. The music was generally fantastic, but there was little chemistry between them and they seemed awkward about some routines, especially in their attempts at pole dancing during *Virgin Sexy*, which will fail to secure highly paid

lapdancing work should they ever fall on hard times. The Babes have yet to find the perfect way to fuse their serious, grown-up, edgy side and their status as kiddy pop pin-ups.

Or perhaps the problem was the atmosphere within the group. At one point, Heidi announced: "I want you to know that Mutya and Keisha aren't bitches and don't bully me." This would have been more convincing had it been delivered by all three, arm in arm, rather than just by Heidi, standing at a safe distance and wearing an expression that suggested she might have been relieved of her lunch money during the soundcheck.

This bizarre outburst would fail to convince even the most loyal bunny-ear-clad fan that the Sugababes are best pals. But does that matter? As the cheers continued long after they'd rounded things off with a blistering rendition of *Hole in the Head*, it was clear that the audience thought not.



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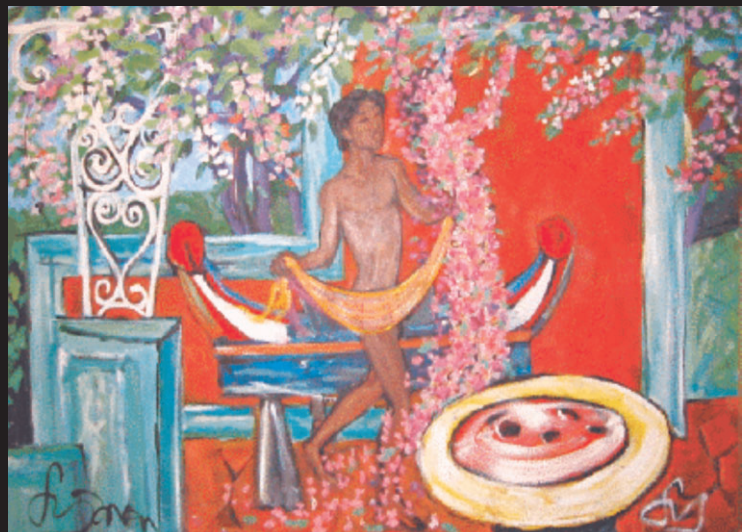
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