

CYBERTRONIAN TIMES

THE OFFICIAL FANZINE OF AUTO ASSEMBLY

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Inside:

Episode reviews, toy reviews, articles, features, fiction, artwork, and much more. Spanning the original series to Armada and beyond, this fanzine is dedicated to Transformers in all its incarnations.

**TRANS
FORMERS**

INFINITE FRONTIERS

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Introduction

Welcome to the fifth issue of The Cybertronian Times! I hope you enjoy this issue packed with beginners guides, stories, news and articles, but we are still looking for writers and artists. For the next Auto Assembly we intend to make more of the competitions including the writing competition.

I have also started work on a writers bible for Transformers Unlimited, which is a slight reworking of the "Alternative Transformers" continuity from previous issues of CT, with a toy packaging friendly logo in the hope that at some point an exclusive toy based on the new and altered characters from my story-arcs.

Once the writers bible is complete or at least at a reasonable stage, we will need writers to fill out the story, as well as artists to illustrate the stories or even do comic strips, so feel free to volunteer!

Toy collectors should be looking forward to 2004 with a passion with, at least in the USA, 4 separate Transformers toys lines - Transformers: Energon, Transformers: Alternators, The Transformers: Generation 1 reissues and the Playskool Transformers Go-bots, see the news pages for more...

I must say a public thanks to Simon Plumbe for all his help on getting AA2003 up and running and doing most of the work on this issue. This issue is using our standard Infinite Frontiers fanzine template as used for The Final Frontier Phase 2 and others, but I hope to bring a brand new and more breathtaking design ethic to the next issue and, if costs permit, a bit more colour....

See you next issue!

Sven Harvey
Executive Editor



Transformers News

Transformers Armada

Future releases that have been announced and in some cases have arrived in stores in the USA include recolours of the original Transmetal versions of Cheetor, Rhinox and Airazor, "Powerlinx" repaints of some of the early Armada toys such as Superbase Prime all the way up to wave 3 toys such as Jetfire.

Of course the main new toy of interest is the Armada Unicron, which is already in the computers of Toys R Us in the UK at £59.99. Let the hunt begin...

Transformers Energon

The first leaks of information about Hasbro's Transformers line aimed at the younger audience are getting out. A display at a recent licensing show in the USA showed early concept artwork of the new Optimus Prime who appears to be a bit of a cross between the original Prime, the Japanese Ginrai and Star Convoy. Displayed alongside Prime is a smaller yellow character which is thought to be Hot Shot/Hot Rod. Opposite them and apparently in command of the Decepticons in Armada is Scorponok who looks very similar to the original Scorponok from 1987 but with what appears to be parts of a construction vehicle on him, suggesting he will be a triple changer.

A further leak has appeared on eBay as a prototype of a suspected Energon fire engine, which many are referring to as Transformers Energon Inferno, who also has interesting segments on the toy that suggest he may combine with a further Energon toy.

Transformers Alternators

Initially Hasbro USA and Takara were looking at doing a special one-off 20th anniversary toy, and Hasbro even had a poll put up on one of the fan websites to see what people wanted. Unsurprisingly a hugely well detailed

Optimus Prime toy came out on top, but Hasbro were so impressed by the huge number of responses that they decided to do a whole line aimed at the fans.

The super detailed Prime may or may not be part of the Transformers Alternators line in the USA, which will definitely launch in the states in October this year with the brand new Smokescreen which transforms into a very realistic Subaru rally car fully licensed by the World Rally Championship. In Japan the Prime is apparently referred to as Masterpiece Optimus Prime whilst Smokescreen appears to be referred to as Neo-G1.



But going from the pictures of Smokescreen and Prime seen thus far... They will easily be the best Transformers ever made... Other names being bandied about for Alternators forms are Jazz, Starscream, Megatron and even Grimlock, but as yet nothing has been announced or seen of further toys from the line, though news may well be coming out of OTFCC...

Transformers USA Reissues

The Toys R Us Exclusive USA Reissue range is continuing to expand with toys such as Hoist, Red Alert, Thundercracker. The range is doing well, but don't expect the rest of the Strike Planes in short order, as after the release of Starscream, Skywarp and Thundercracker, Hasbro want a bit of a

change, but with Soundwave coming out in Japan, it wouldn't be a stretch of the imagination to expect Soundwave in the USA.



Transformers Universe

The former "Expanded Universe" line has fully broken from the shackles of the former BotCon. Though the title will appear on the toys released as Official TransFormers Collectors Convention (OTFCC) exclusives, it will also be used on recoloured reissues of past toys giving the current crop a Transformer-buying children the chance of getting their mits on the likes of the original Ultra Optimus Primal, Silverbolt (though his new Purple colour scheme is a little icky), plus past G2 toys and even RID Optimus Prime and Ultra Magnus.

This sounds like a good idea and the general storyline is the Primus has pulled Autobots and Maximals from all over time and dimensions to deal with Unicron and his force of Decepticons, Predacons and Vehicons that have recruited from across the cosmos and dimensions. The storyline will be told by CD-ROMs included in each package. However as yet it is unknown whether any of this will reach the UK...

Transformers Collection Takara Reissues

Thus far after the recently released Starscream and Inferno reissues only Soundwave has been announced. However there are strong rumours that the Dinobots may well be making an appearance soon... It's worth noting that Soundwave's reissue is accompanied by Laserbeak rather than Buzzsaw (not that there is much difference...)

Transformers Go-Bots from Playskool

The Transformers Go-Bots line is due to expand further next year with even a TV show on the way. One big thin though is that they are to hit the UK fully this year!

Transformers Armada: Prelude To Energon game from Atari

The former Infogrames intend to have their Transformers Armada game out in the early part of next year and it appears that the game may well serve to pass the baton from Armada to Energon, but we will see...



Transformers G1 game from Takara

Several screenshots have been made available from this project but recently many fans have been disappointed to learn that Takara have no plans to license the game for release outside of the Far East. However Atari have the ability to release the game if a license agreement can be made between them and Takara, so Atari, its over to you.

Transformers Collecting: A Beginners Guide To G1 by Sven Harvey

G1 or Generation One is the name given to the first line of Transformers toys that ran from 1984 through to 1993 in the UK (it only lasted until 1990 in the USA). G1 or Generation One is an unofficial name that was adopted by fans to differentiate the original Transformers from the toys and characters from Generation 2 (G2), Beast Wars (BW), Beast Wars II (BWII), Beast Wars Neo (BWN), Machine Wars (MW), Beast Machines (BM), Robots In Disguise (RiD) and Armada (Arm). It has since been adopted by Hasbro and Takara for products that are based on early characters such as the Hasbro G1 reissues of Optimus Prime, Ultra Magnus and Starscream.

The early toys are unsurprisingly some of the most collectible. This may well have been simply down to the origins of the majority of the toys. You see the entire of the 1984 range and the majority of the 1985 range were sourced from transforming toy lines from the Japanese partner Hasbro had found to create the Transformers line - Takara. The main sources were the already 10 year old lines such as Diaclone/Diacrone and Microman. Hasbro and Takara simply took the older toys, made a few alterations and created a back-story and set of characters to go with them. Neither company however had foreseen how well the range would be received...

The initial UK range was 24 toys strong, with 6 Mini-Autobot (Brawn, Bumblebee, Huffer, Cliffjumper, Gears and Windcharger), 11 Autobot Cars (Wheeljack, Trailbreaker, Ironhide, Ratchet, Hound, Mirage, Sunstreaker, Jazz, Sideswipe, Bluestreak and Prowl), Optimus Prime, 2 Decepticon Spy Cassette sets (Rumble & Ravage and Frenzy & Laserbeak), 3 Decepticon Strike Planes (Skywarp, Thundercracker and Starscream) and finally Soundwave with Buzzsaw. The final toy that didn't make it to

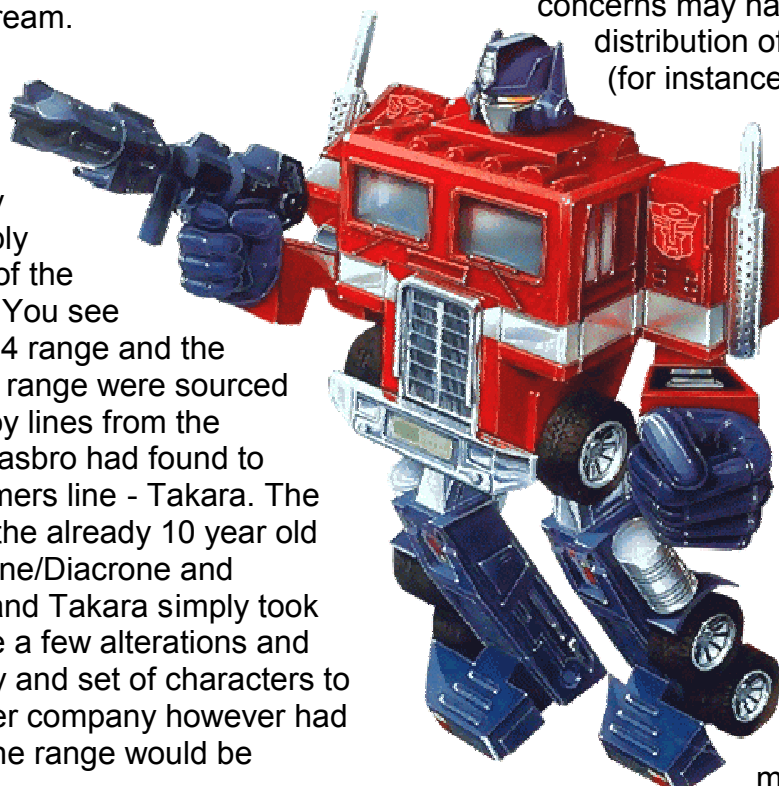
the UK until 1985 was Megatron. Most people conveniently forget that the initial range did include a good number of repaints and remoulds, which worsened in 1985. For instance Starscream, Skywarp and Thundercracker are identical except for their colour scheme, and the following years 3 Strike Planes were basically the same but with different wing attachments! Remember that next time someone complains that there are too many repaints in the current Transformers line!

With the success of the '84 range the companies realised that they didn't have enough different moulds to produce enough new characters for the '85 range. As a result companies such as AP, ToyCo and Bandai were contacted and toys licensed. Copyright concerns may have had bearing on the

distribution of some of these toys (for instance none-of the AP-licensed

Transformers appeared in the UK) but allowed characters such as Shockwave, the Deluxe Autobots, the Deluxe Insecticons and the Robotech Valkrie-like Jetfire to arrive. This also allowed Hasbro and Takara to concentrate on the 1986 line which would be the first made up with a majority of new moulds, many of which would be tied into the big event of that year.

After the UK got the whole range that appeared in the USA in 1984, certain toys from the 1985 range and onwards were never to find their way here. Some of the toys in question such as Shockwave and Swoop were brought to the fore in the TV show and comics and therefore became highly sought after here in the UK. It is still a very lucky UK collector indeed who has both of these early toys in their collection, for instance.



1986 saw the release of Transformers: The Movie and the start of the changeover to purely plastic toys. Of the 1986 range, mainly standard Transformers with some fusilateral combiners (or "Merge Groups") such as the Stunticons, many came in variants. Some of the toys came with either certain body parts in die cast metal, or in plastic. The metal ones, as you may expect, are valued collectors pieces, especially the largest of the merge groups ever made, the Predacons (a team of 5 hunters who transformed into mechanical wild animals and are not to be confused with the Beast Wars Predacons led by the T-Rex Megatron!).

and spacecraft were the order of the day and gimmicks such as the Headmasters, and Targetmasters (where little companions robots changed into the Transformers head or gun respectively) initially sparked interest and were successful in 1987.

One toy of great interest was the double Headmaster, Fortress Maximus. Standing at around 2 feet tall, the toys head transformed into a normal sized Autobot whilst that Autobot, Cerebros could have his head disconnected and transformed into a meched human - Spike Witwicky. Unsurprisingly "Fort Max" turned into a huge (and I mean huge) battle station and never made it to the UK

officially. Mind you I could never work out how anyone other than a fully grown adult could have transformed this behemoth anyway!

However with the introduction of the Powermasters including a new Optimus Prime toy in 1988 wasn't as successful and along with smaller Targetmasters and Headmasters added to the range, kids and collectors alike were beginning to tire of the concepts. Hasbro also introduced the Pretenders that year, which although provided a new idea, really started to get too far away from the idea of the "Robots In Disguise"

The situation was exasperated somewhat by

overuse, especially the Pretenders. These Transformers came with organic outer shells to allow the robot to appear more like a human (a 30 foot tall one at that!) or alien. The concept was overused however, with small and large standard Pretenders, Classic Pretenders, Ultra Pretenders, Pretender Beasts, Mega Pretenders and even combining Pretender Monsters!

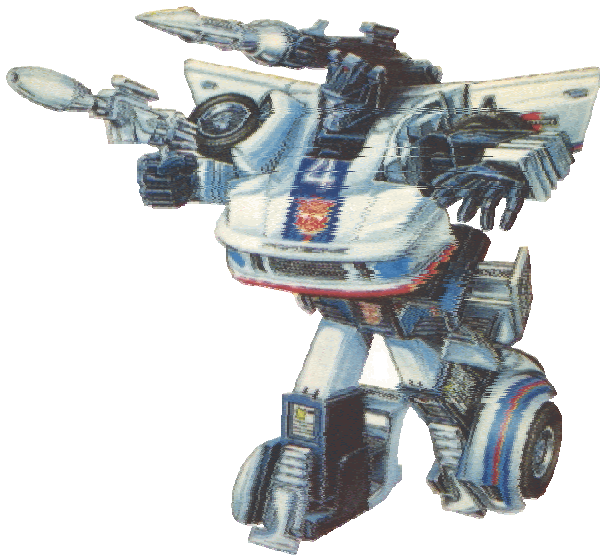


Headmasters!

From 1987 the Transformers started to run into problems. The toy designers started to add gimmicky ideas and combined with the facts that the toys were now 100% plastic and were no longer transforming into recognisable disguise modes the collectors and kids alike started to lose interest. Strange futuristic cars

Micromasters!

Maybe all was not lost though, as in 1989 the Microbots, or Micromasters as they were eventually called, were introduced. These tiny little Transformers not only sparked the imagination of the kids a little more but also cashed in on the current trend in micro toys started by Galoobs Micromachines. Initially the Micromasters came in squads of 4. However this small victory was to be short lived and 1990 saw the end of the Transformers in the USA at least, again possibly due to the over use of the Micromaster concept with Micromaster combiners, Micromaster Transports, Micromaster Stations, Micromaster Combiner Transports, and various Micromaster bases...



What HAD really done for the range in the US was the Action Masters. Not all surprising really as Hasbro had gone alone with a range, which Takara wanted nothing to do with. Yep, the Action Masters were Transformers that didn't transform. How could such a concept succeed?

The toys were basically action figures with transforming accessories. To make matters worse though, the figures were about the same height as the GI Joe/Action Force action figures and not even particularly articulated. They didn't even have articulation at the elbows like most of the earlier actually transforming toys! It was pretty obvious to us all at the time that the Action Masters couldn't succeed. The biggest irony of all in retrospect is the fact that the Action Masters are some

of the most sought after toys by US collectors! The longevity of the brand in the UK however was another story....

The 1990 range in the UK was boosted by re-releases of the early toys. These Classics such as the original Prowl and Jazz were selling well and with the cult following for the still strong UK comic there was still a lot of life in the line, and the success would continue whilst the USA coped without a range at all...

In 1991 the UK and mainland Europe had exclusive Action Master figures (including, shockingly, ones that could actually Transform!!) and through 1991-1993 enjoyed other toys that were never to be released in the US, and some that had even not been released in Japan. Toys such as the Action Master Thundercracker can fetch hefty sums at US Transformer events.

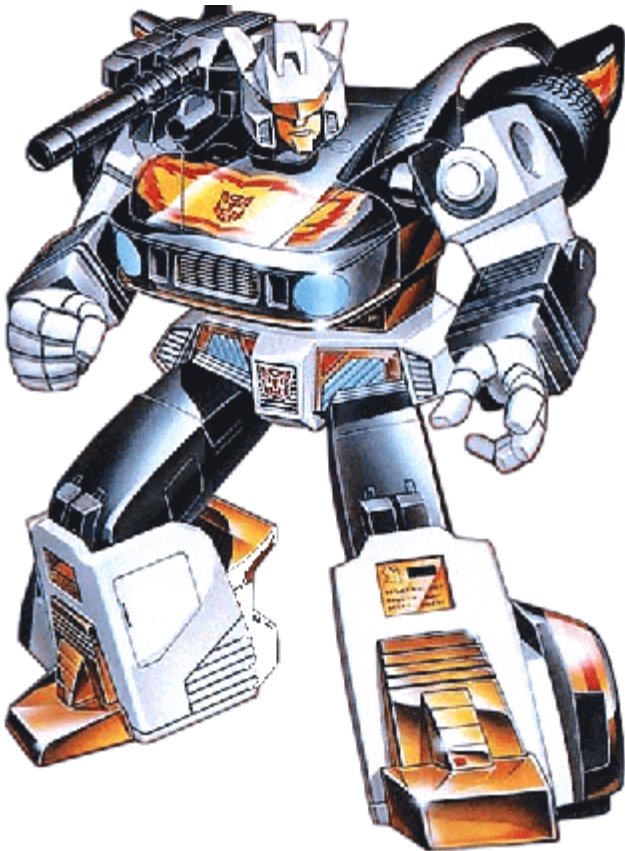
Japanese Classics

It's interesting in retrospect to look at the Japanese market now too. At the time the UK and probably the USA collectors and kids had no concept of the Japanese range. In the UK we were aware of the USA range through the comics and the odd USA Transformers catalogue that would sneak its way in a toy to the UK. The Japanese range in 1985/6 was very similar to the USA one, except with a higher amount of metal parts used in the toys. A good example of this was the Predacon gift pack, with the die cast version of each of the 5 toys presented in a huge gift box. But from 1988 they did go into overdrive a little bit. When we got the all plastic Powermaster Optimus Prime, not only did Japan get a die-cast cab version with the name Ginrai but also an extra trailer for the toy - Godbomber who combined with the Super Ginrai toy to form God Ginrai. A great gift set was also done of the 2, of which a reissue may still be available, metal parts and all, from some Transformers dealers.

From 1989 the Japanese range had a whole set of its own characters such as the Fort Max repaint, Grand Maximus (who came with a Pretender shell for Cerebros), the Breastmasters or Breast Force (don't even

think it - they had little partners who turned into battle armour like breast plates) such as Dezaras, the Brainmasters such as Star Saber (a Cybertron/Autobot leader with serious attitude problems) and Overlord.

Other interesting Japan only releases included Galaxy Shuttle (which some-how even got released in Italy!), Diatras, SonicBomber, Victory Leo (who combined with Star Saber to form Victory Saber).



The range continued on until 1992 in Japan when the range ended with an all-Cybertron/Autobot line up. Including carry overs from the previous year such as Grandas, SkyGarry (should have been Sky Carry but there was a mix-up somewhere in translation!) plus the Micromaster combiner sets Sixliner, Sixbuilder, Sixturbo and Sixwing. Of course the main toy of the 1991/2 range was a new Convoy (Optimus Prime) - Star Convoy who came with the Micromaster version of 1986s Hot Rod, and featured some electronics to get him rolling out (and kind-of walking too).

Canon and Continuity: Exploring the Transformers Multiverse by Keith P. Cooper

Anyone who considers themselves a real Trekkie has the *Star Trek Chronology*, a book that chronicles the events of all the *Star Trek* series and movies like a kind of future history. With a franchise as large as the *Star Trek* universe it's a wonder that any jarring continuity problems have been kept to a minimum (though the writers of *Enterprise* seem intent on causing some kind of paradox). However, the *Star Trek* universe is tiny when compared to that of Transformers. Fans and writers have to contend with so many facets of the same crystal: there's not only the Transformers Generation One cartoon, there's the Marvel US comic book, the Marvel UK comic book, Transformers: The Movie, the Marvel US Generation Two comic book, the Marvel UK Generation Two comic book (yes, all five issues of it), Beast Wars, Beast Machines, Robots in Disguise, Dreamwave's Generation One comic books, Dreamwave's Armada comic books, the UK Armada comic books, the Armada cartoon series, not to mention the Japanese comic books, Headmasters series, Scramble City and Transformers: Takara and a whole slew of Transformers/G.I. Joe crossovers. There are even more Transformers projects in the pipeline. Frankly, its enough to make your head hurt.

So you've taken your aspirin, had a lie down and now you are ready to sift through it all and make some sense of it. Only where do you start? The beginning would usually be a good point, but in this case there are several beginnings. So instead you look to the first Transformers. Only that Transformers were known in Japan as Microman, Microchange and Diaclone, some as far back as 1974. Yet a line has to be drawn somewhere, and that is 1984, when Hasbro made a licensing deal with Takara, the original Japanese makers of Microman *et al* Hasbro hired Marvel comic writers to create a new theme for these toys to make them more sellable, and hence 'The Transformers' were born.

TRANSFORMERS

A limited edition four issue comic book series was launched and proved a mighty success, with a cartoon series following soon after. This seems to be the best point at which to start our Transformers continuity timeline. Yet in these early days of the budding Transformers Multiverse discontinuities were already apparent. In the comic book Sparkplug's son was called Buster whilst in the cartoon he was known as Spike. The comic book did try to address this issue later on, by introducing Buster's brother, who was, funnily enough, called Spike.

The initial four issue comic book series proved such a success that it was continued, and ran for 80 issues, unprecedented for a comic book based on a toy. The comic was also launched in the United Kingdom by Marvel. This comic ran fortnightly at first before soon becoming weekly, and it reprinted all the US stories at the same time as producing its own original story arcs. Because it featured US stories, the original UK stories had to fit into US continuity, though they did go off on a tangent, focusing more on the Transformers on Cybertron (the Wreckers, Ultra Magnus, Emirate Xaaron) and the future Transformers as seen in the movie (Galvatron, Rodimus Prime, Unicron), whilst the US stories centred mostly around the present day Transformers.

Writer Simon Furman produced some of the most memorable Transformer stories whilst working on Transformers UK, taking advantage of the wealth of characters introduced in the movie that were ignored by the US comic scribes. As such he could do as he liked with these characters, knowing that it was unlikely to interfere with US continuity in any major way. He even went as far as to come up with a whole back story regarding the creation of the Transformers by the 'Light God' Primus. The grand finale of the UK continuity plotline was *Time Wars*, an epic which resulted in the deaths of most of the Wreckers, Galvatron, Cyclonus and Scourge.

Shortly afterwards, Furman was invited to write for the US comic book when incumbent writer Bob Budiansky decided to leave.

Furman was pretty much given carte blanche to do as he liked on the US comic book, as Marvel had decided it had a limited lifespan left anyway. One would have expected that with Furman doing the writing chores it would result in even closer ties to the UK stories; instead it brought about possibly the greatest discontinuity of the Marvel comic book storyline.

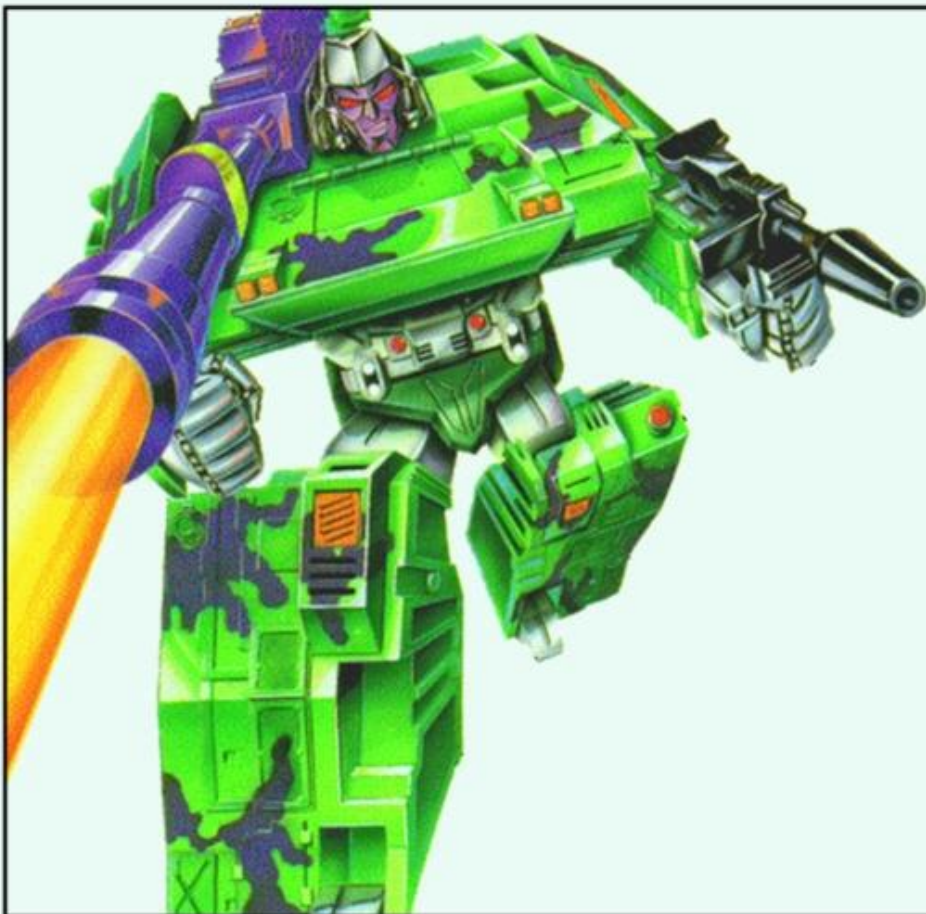
US comic books fans had not seen anything of Galvatron, Unicron or the mystical elements of the Transformers' creation and so Furman decided to re-introduce them for the American audience in a storyline as epic as anything he had written for the UK comic. He got around the fact that Galvatron had already been killed by plucking him from an alternate universe, but there was no way he could get around the complications of Unicron being a major part of the storyline. At the end Unicron is destroyed by Optimus Prime and the Creation Matrix, but this then renders the events of Transformers: the Movie impossible. Up until now the movie had been regarded as canon by the comic book, but now there was a problem.

There is however an explanation, though it is convoluted. Whether Furman had this in mind or not is unknown, and probably if he came out and told us it would spoil it anyway - after all, it gives the fans something to debate and talk about. The explanation, possibly, goes like this:

Galvatron initially time-jumped back to 1986 in *Target 2006*. His intent wasn't to change the past, but to alter his future by building a weapon that would destroy Unicron once Galvatron had returned to his own time. In the end Galvatron was prevented from doing this and returned to his own time having suffered defeat. When Rodimus Prime then beat him at the end of the Movie and hurled him into space, Galvatron time-jumped back into the past to escape. So enraged by his ignominious defeat he no longer cared whether he altered history or not and he set a chain of events into motion that resulted in

the temporal space rift that eventually proved to be his downfall in *Time Wary*. However the time rift signalled a change in the course of history: the Transformers entered an alternate timeline that would now no longer result in the events of the Movie. Whether this is a paradox or not is up for discussion, for of course no one has actually travelled back in time in real life to test such a paradox. For the convenience of the Transformers storyline it can surely be considered a sufficient explanation.

When the US comic book ended, Furman wrote a follow up story for the final LJK annual in 1991, entitled *Another Time, Another Place*. In this story Megatron is finally killed by Optimus Prime and Grimlock. At the time it was potentially the final Transformers comic book story ever to be told, but when Generation Two came along this story became apocryphal. As it was a one off story and is so hard to find, it's easy to label it as such.



Generation Two didn't cause any major continuity problems, simply continuing the story from where it left off at the end of issue

80 of the original US comic book. Written once again by Simon Furman, it evolved the Transformers back story considerably, however it only lasted for 12 issues. In the UK the comic was loosely reprinted by publishers Fleetway (of 2000AD fame) but it too was cancelled after only five issues, only two of which featured original stories. They put a slightly different spin on the US story, but because they are generally so poorly regarded and so few issues were made, we can stamp the UK Generation Two comic with the label 'apocrypha', along with *Another Time, Another Place*.

And so Generation Two ended prematurely in 1994, concluding the era of the Marvel Transformers universe. Though perhaps Generation Two didn't reach the heights of previous stories, it was a good ending, with room for further stories in the future. Just who is the Liege Maximo anyway?

The Liege Maximo, the evil enemy only briefly seen lurking in the shadows at the end of the Generation Two storyline, also featured in a story called *Alignment* written by Furman for a fan convention. This is an unofficial story so at this time it cannot be considered as canon, and this particular storyline appears to be on hold for the time being.

In 1995 Hasbro reinvented the Transformers franchise as *Beast Wars*, wherein robots from Cybertron crashed on prehistoric Earth and could transform into animals. At first *Beast Wars* was seen as an independent continuity from what had gone before, but a chance mention of the Matrix sent the fans into a frenzy and

the writers wondering what all the fuss was about. After the writers did a bit of research, they realised they had just mentioned

something that was at the very core of the original Transformers storyline, and thus the writers decided to bring the Beast Wars story into the original Transformers arc.

previously established Transformers universe, and as such, it might be best to leave them to stand by themselves.



As the Beast Wars story was set in prehistoric Earth the writers even went as far as writing a story (*The Agenda*) where the Maximals and Predacons find the crashed Ark and the bodies of Optimus Prime, Megatron *et al.* Add to this references to Unicron and Primus we see that Beast Wars is placed very firmly into established Transformers continuity. Indeed, Beast Wars is the first time that the name of the Autobot's crashed spaceship, the Ark, is spoken on television. The ship had previously only been called the Ark in the comics. As a result, Beast Wars more closely follows comic book continuity than it does the original cartoon.

After three seasons of Beast Wars, the show evolved into a new concept: Beast Machines. Beast Machines ran for one season between 1999 and 2000. This placed the characters from Beast Wars back on Cybertron, but the continuity begins to fall on the original cartoon side (such as references to *The Key to Vector Sigma*). As Beast Wars and Beast Machines undoubtedly are set in the same universe, it is hard to see how they can fit as one into any

Let's take a quick survey of where we've come to. So far we have three different Transformers continuities: the Marvel comics, the original cartoon and Beast Wars/Beast Machines. In 2001 Hasbro released yet another incarnation of Transformers, namely 'Robots in Disguise'. This was generally poorly received and viewed mostly as a stop-gap before the next big Transformers project: Armada.

In the meantime, Hasbro were pushing for a new Transformers comic book, and discussed it

with several comics publishers, including Marvel and Benchpress. Hasbro eventually announced a licensing deal with a publisher out of Toronto called Dreamwave. A relatively new and growing comic book publisher, Dreamwave took on the task of bringing Transformers back to the comic reading public with a vengeance, and a little controversy, it has to be said.

Since the early nineties the popularity of Transformers had been on the wane, but in the past few years had experienced something of a renaissance, mostly due to fan sites on the internet. Dreamwave acted on this resurgent popularity and 2002 saw their first release, a six-issue Generation One story, with many collectible covers and limited edition previews that saw Transformers rise to the top of the comic charts, selling over half a million with the first few issues. The multitude of alternate Autobot/Decepticon covers, holofoil covers, Dynamic Forces covers, second and third reprint covers and so on no doubt had something to do with the dramatic sales figure as the fans collected them all, similar to the phenomenon in 1984

in the UK music charts when Frankie Goes To Hollywood stormed to number one with their first three singles, no doubt helped by dozens of different mixes of the same tracks all on sale at the same time. However nobody could deny it - Transformers was once again a hot property.

The initial Dreamwave comic had a mixed reception. Written by Chris Sarracini and with art by Dreamwave president Pat Lee, the story focused on the original Autobots and Decepticons that crashed in the Ark. The comics provided a brief back story regarding a united Autobot-Human attack on the Decepticons that defeated them, but basically it was assumed that the continuity followed the cartoon (there was no way it could follow the Marvel comic book because Ratchet turns up in the Dreamwave comics, even though he died in the Marvel comics, and Megatron had reverted back to his previous appearance). At the climax of the initial six-issue story, Wheeljack and Superion were both killed.

Next followed a Simon Furman six-part story called *The War Within*, which focused on the early days of the Cybertronian war and Optimus Prime becoming leader of the Autobots. *The War Within* could fairly easily fit into the Marvel comic book continuity, with only a few mistakes such as the Constructicons existing on Cybertron when in the Marvel timeline they were created on Earth four million years later. However, we could always be charitable and say that Shockwave re-created the Constructicons on Earth using the blueprints of Decepticons he had once known on Cybertron. Otherwise, the continuity is quite good here, even including Megatron's insane plan to turn Cybertron into a mobile battle station.

However, Dreamwave then proceeded to shoot themselves in the foot, continuity wise. Firstly, they had planned a series of books entitled *Profiles*, which as the name suggests would profile all the Transformers as well as showcase art by Dreamwave artists. However, it was never released as *Profiles*, and instead reappeared a few months later as *More Than Meets The Eye*. Rumours floated around Transformers random that Dreamwave had attempted to rewrite

Transformers continuity so radically that some Transformers would actually become female, and that names like Prowl and Mirage were just codenames, not their real names. Apparently Hasbro had given them a sharp rap on the knuckles and told Dreamwave that they couldn't change continuity. Whether this is a true story or not is unclear, however it would have been fascinating to read, if not very popular amongst Hasbro or the fans.

To be fair to Dreamwave they couldn't continue the comic book story from where it had left off at the end of Generation Two because Marvel held the rights to characters such as the Liege Maximo and Emirate Xaaron, and so the decision to create their own continuity was a sensible one from a creative viewpoint. This is evident in their second volume of their Generation One stories, entitled *War and Peace*. In this story Shockwave and Ultra Magnus have together unified Cybertron in the absence of Optimus Prime and Megatron, and also Scourge turns up, despite the story being set two years before the Movie. Still errors crop up - despite Wheeljack's apparent demise in Volume One, he appears briefly in the background in Volume Two.



Now there is another, completely new Transformers continuity, Armada. This certainly bared little resemblance to the previous continuities when it appeared on the scene in 2002 and at first it appeared there was less of a chance of any crossover as there was with Beast Wars. In the Armada universe, the Autobots and Decepticons are still led by characters called Optimus Prime and Megatron, and the Decepticons seek domination over the Autobots on Cybertron, but there the similarities with other Transformer continuities ends. The source of the Decepticon's power are smaller Transformers called Mini-cons. When the Mini-cons try and escape to present day Earth they are pursued by Megatron and the Decepticons, and thus begins a series of

adventures on Earth together with the human children the Mini-cons have befriended.

The confusion for continuity buffs will come from the use of old Transformer names in Armada. Starscream, Red Alert, Cyclonus and others are present, some who look similar to previous incarnations and some who don't, but they are different characters. A cartoon series accompanies the Dreamwave comic, as does a UK comic book written by Simon Furman. However, issue 14 looks particularly interesting - a certain Galvatron appears on the cover, no doubt wreaking even more continuity confusion and mayhem.

We haven't even begun to look at Japanese transformers continuity which can be pretty difficult to understand - a topic for another time perhaps. But with the next big project for 2004 being called Transformers: Energon; plus the new toy line Transformers: Universe, featuring some of the best characters from all incarnations of Transformers, *as well* as the promise of a possible big-screen, live action Transformers movie coining our way in the next few years, Transformers continuity is just going to get more and more complex. No doubt about it, Transformers are a major franchise now, just as they were back in the mid-eighties, and perhaps the more different continuities there are, the healthier the Transformers Multiverse will remain.

Transformers Collecting: A Beginners Guide To The European G1 Extension, G2 and Machine Wars by Sven Harvey

In 1991 following the discontinuation of The Transformers in the USA at the end of the 1990 range, the UK market, where the Transformers always had a good fan base, and across Europe a range of toys was released to finish off the Action Masters - standard Action Masters such as Bombshell, Charger, Powerflash, Sideswipe, Take-Off and Tracks were never released in the USA but were joined by the Action Master Elites Double Punch, Omega Supreme (mis-spelt Supreme on the card), Turbo-Master and Windmill plus the Exo-Suit Action Masters Circuit, Rumbler, Slicer, and Thundercracker.

Classic Re-issues

In 1992 the UK and European Hasbro companies finally struck out on their own with some new toys in a range exclusive to themselves. Continuing on from 1991 were several classic reissues, continuing the idea that the European arm of Hasbro had started a couple of years earlier. The re-issue range consisted of 6 of the original 84/95 Autobot Cars (the ever popular Jazz, Prowl, Sideswipe, Tracks, Inferno and Wheeljack), the 1987 Throttlebots, 3 of the 1985 Dinobots (Grimlock of course plus Snarl and Sludge), 4 of the 1985/6 Triple Changers (Blitzwing, Octane, Springer and Sandstorm), and the Autobot Brainmasters also from Japan were recoloured as Flame, Gripper and Lightspeed for release, but without their combiner parts to make a recolour of Road Caesar.

Of course no reissue range could be complete without an Optimus Prime and the original 1984/5 toy was reissued in the gold packaging that signified the classic re-release range. The previous years of the Classics re-release range also included the Arialbots, Protectobots, Stunticons, Combaticons, and the Dinobot, Slag.

Further reissues introduced for the 1992 range, featuring new black packaging with a printed circuit board design and faction specific colour band to the right included the 1985/6 Constructicons in a new yellow livery but minus their ability to combine and even their individual names plus recolours of 4 of the 5 former Japanese Destron Breastforce team as the Rescue Force (with no names nor breastforce partners).

1992 - Turbomasters Vs Predators

A further 8 recolours of Japanese only toys from the previous year formed the small toy range from the new forces for the Autobots and Decepticons - the Turbomasters (Flash, Boss, Hurricane and Scorch) and Predators (Falcon, Talon, Sky Dive and Snare).

Alongside these traditional cars for Autobots and planes for Decepticons the medium sized toys switched it around with the Turbomaster being a helicopter - Rotorstorm and his

counterpart being a missile launcher truck - Stalker. The leaders were the Autobot lorry, Thunderclash and the Decepticon bomber, Skyquake.

As a group these were the first toys to have fluorescent material built into their construction, most appropriately in their heads. These light-pipes worked similarly to fibre optics allowing light to be collected and basically fed through to a particular point, in this case to the eyes of the character. Usually set up with a window in the back of the head this allowed the eyes to seemingly glow, much like the eyes of the characters on screen in the various TV shows.

1993 - Generation 2 hits the USA

Late 1992 saw the release of Transformers: Generation 2 in the US with a mixture of new toys and retooled and recoloured toys from the early years. The initial range, exclusive to Toys R Us in the for the first 3 months of the line (November to January, I believe) consisted of a slight redeco of the original Jazz toy, a black recolour of Sideswipe (also from 1984/5) and a re-issue of 1985s Inferno. All came with new weaponry with firing launchers.

The Decepticons were represented by recoloured Starscream and Ramjet which also sported the firing missile launchers plus electronics packs with flashing lights plus engine and weapons sounds. Topping the range off for the short period was another reissue of the original Optimus Prime, this time featuring a slight recolour to the cab and the trailer was black with an unfortunate start of a new trend - the characters name was written across the trailer - so much for robots in disguise!

The final Generation 1 range in the UK

In 1993 the new logos introduced for the Generation 2 line in the USA were applied to the complete new range in the UK.



Part of the range were the Decepticons Skyscorchers, small basic jets whose underbelly instrument pods and the like became the robots weapons - Hawk, Snipe, Terradive and Tornado (released in the USA as the G2 Decepticon Jets - Eagle Eye, Afterburner, Terradive and Windrazor), the Autobot Axcelerators, small cars whose engines turned into their guns - Hotrider, Rapido, Skram, and Zap (G2 Autobots Cars in the USA - Turbofire, Rapido, Sram and Windbreaker).

The Autobot Aquaspeeders, using a new technology, were cars with panels that changed colour when hit by warm water, which the

robots weapons could spray - Aquafend, Deluge, Jetstorm and Speedstream (released as G2 colour change cars in the US as Decepticons Deluge and Jetstorm and the Autobots Drench and Gobots), alongside on the shelves were the Stormtroopers, the Decepticon counterparts of the Aquaspeeders - Aquablast, Hydradread, Drench and Rage (not released in the USA).

Further gimmicks were introduced with the Lightformers - Deftwing and Ironfist, and the Trakkons -Calcar and Fearswoop which had scopes you could look through to view an enemy target which could be "fired at" by activating a feature where light blasts streaked toward the target in the viewfinder. The largest of the new toys were the

Obliterators. Pyro was the Autobot Commander, who was called Spark in other part of Europe transformed into a Samba style fire engine whose robot face looks remarkably like Optimus Prime. His Decepticon counterpart, Clench (Colossus in other parts of Europe) was a pick up truck with reasonable possibility and a rather loud colour scheme hidden within its grey truck guise.

In the USA the Generation 2 line expanded with the items listed above plus vacuum metalised reissues of Beachcomber, Hubcap, Seaspray and Bumblebee from the original mini-autobot lines from 1984-1986 and various other toys.



1994 - Generation 2 hits the UK

1994 saw the UK toys issued for the first time in 1993 reissued in Generation 2 packaging as G2 finally hit the UK along with selected items from the USA range. Generation 2 ran until 1995 in the USA and 1996 in the UK when the range was curtailed prematurely as the Transformers brand was handed over to the Kenner subsidiary. During this time some great toys were introduced including the tank version of Megatron, the Combat Hero Megatron (Archforce in the UK) which was essentially a smaller yet more poseable version of the green tank Megatron in a striking Decepticon purple and Combat Hero Optimus Prime (Sureshot in the UK). The Combat Heroes were equipped with soft tipped missiles that could be fired using a air firing system with the included bellows-like pump.

The laser rods, Illuminators in the UK (Electro, Jolt, Sizzle/Fireball and

Volt/Hot Rod plus the lasercycles Road Pig and Road Rocket) were equipped with lightsabers using similar technology to fibre optics and an LED in the robots fist. This was extended to a further Optimus Prime toy in the form of laser-rod Optimus Prime which was at the time the most articulated Prime which included a gun which used the lighting system and a trailer battlestation with the air firing missile system, disc launcher and ripple missile launcher, and one of my favourite Transformers ever produced.

In the USA two Autobots and two Decepticons referred to as the Rotorforce were released - Leadfoot (Indy Car) named Hotfoot in the UK, Manta Ray (hydrofoil) renamed Piranha in the UK, Powerdrive (helicopter) called Blade in the UK and Ransack (Corsair plane) more appropriately monikered Blitz in the UK.

Recolours of the Dinobots Grimlock, Slag and Snarl were released in both the USA and UK, initially in the original grey with Grimlock later



appearing in dark blue and turquoise whilst Slag and Snarl took turns in green and red colourations. The USA also received recolours of the Arialbots and the Combaticons, with the Arialbots also making a brief appearance as an exclusive to Woolworths in the UK alongside the recoloured and metalised Mini-Autobots.

Two Decepticons were released with an interesting gimmick. These two Autorollers - Dirtbag and Roadblock which both had vehicle modes resembling construction vehicles, and could freewheel. However at the flick of a switch, rolling the vehicles along would transform the toys into robot mode a motion that could be reversed by reversing the vehicle. The switch could be positioned to allow freewheeling in both modes as well as to allow the automatic transformation.

A large stealth bomber was released with the name Dreadwing which included a smaller

jet, Smokescreen which docks with the larger plane and both transformed into robots whilst the larger bomber had a third mode - missile firing tank. This "ATB" was due to be recoloured and released as Megatron and Starscream but this recolour even after reaching the sample stage was cancelled along with recolours of the Combat Heroes and recolours of the Autorollers as "General" Optimus Prime and "Sargent" Hound.

Two waves of Cyberjets - very poseable small jets were released - the first consisted of Decepticons which were set against the all Autobot first wave of the Gobots. These Cyberjets were Hooligan, Skyjack and Space Case with a second wave using the same moulds but different colours consisting of the Autobots Jetfire, Air Raid and Strafe though the decision to make them Autobots obviously came late as all three have Decepticon insignia!



Gobot Transformers?

A range of simple basic toys, primarily Autobots were produced as the pocket money offerings. Called the Gobots after Hasbro had acquired the Tonka corporation along with their Robo Machines and Gobots rights, allowing Hasbro to use the names copyrighted to the Transformers original rival!

These Gobots started in 1994 with six characters (Blow-Out, Double Clutch, Firecracker, Gearhead, Highbeam, and Motormouth), all new but the toys were recoloured to produce a further run of toys with characters from the early years of Transformers - Soundwave, Bumblebee, Sideswipe, Ironhide, Frenzy, Mirage, Optimus Prime and even Megatron having new small car forms! Several new moulds reach the prototype

stage for G2 Gobots, but were not released thanks to the sudden switch to Beast Wars. However they were eventually released as RiD Spychangers!

As part of the UK Generation 2 range, recolours of the 1988 Sparkabots and Firecons were released. Fizzle was recoloured as Sizzle, the 1988 Sizzle recoloured as Blaze whilst Sparkstalker and Flamefeather simply got a make over in translucent plastic. Also unreleased in the USA were the Generation 2 Powermasters which had motors controlled by the included weapons, but looked very crude. Included in the assortment was yet another Ironhide as a military 4WD vehicle, Bulletbike, Meanstreak and Staxx.

1997 - Machine Wars

This Machine Wars line released alongside the 1997 Beast Wars line consisted of 3 levels of toys. The largest toys were recolours of the Turbomaster and Predator leaders from the UK line of 1992, but with no missiles and a much lower quality plastic as Optimus Prime and Starscream. The mid level toys were again from the UK line of 1993 with Rotorstorm being recoloured as Sandstorm and Stalker as Soundwave.

The small toys however were completely new. Designed in a way consistent with the later Generation 2 toys and early Beast Wars basic toys, there were 4 moulds each used twice with different colour scheme - the race car mould was released as Prowl and Mirage, the tow truck as Hubcap and Hoist, a jet a s Thundercracker and Skywarp and a different jet fighter as Megatron and his clone Megaplex.



Armada: The UK Comic by Simon Plumbe

Panini Comics, better known for their range of sticker albums including the original G1 album from the early 80s, have released a brand new monthly Armada comic for the UK market, but is it worth getting...?



Before I go on, unlike many of the US and UK Transformers comics released over the years, I have to stress that this comic is definitely aimed at the children's market. Each issue is just £1.75 and is released once a month. The contents are what you'd come to expect from a comic aimed at the younger audience, comprising of a mix of comic strips, puzzles, features, competitions, and posters. As with most current UK titles, each issue also comes complete with a cover-mounted gift.

Each issue spans just 32 pages and out of that, only 14 pages are given over to the comic strips themselves, and the rest being dedicated to a variety of puzzles, posters, competitions and a limited number of features.

For the features and other content, this varies from simple puzzles, illustrated character profiles, posters to colour in, and plenty of competitions to win videos and an assortment of toys. There is also a letters page, which also features a selection of fan art, but this is again aimed at children and I don't think there will be many "serious" letters published from the die-hard fans.

One thing of note in the first issue were that there was a letter and some artwork in the letters page, although I think the winner of the prize for the star letter was a little dubious... a 9 year old from Tyne And Wear called Daniel Whitwicky!!

One major point that has attracted many Transformers fans to the title is the fact that all of the strips in the comic have all been written by Simon Furman (even if they spelt his name wrong in Issue 1!), with artwork from, amongst others, TF veterans Andrew Wildman and Lee Sullivan.

Generally, these strips are broken down into two short stories of around 7 pages each. While this may not seem like a great deal, for a younger audience this is a much better format and the stories are, understandably, easier to digest and help keep the readers attention better.

Things were different to start off though. In the first issue, there was a single story spanning all 14 pages which was continued in the second issue, again taking up all 14 pages. The third issue saw the conclusion of the story in the first seven pages with the remaining seven pages dedicated to a short story focusing on the Mini-cons.

Finally, in terms of what I have been looking at, Issue 4 (which we will be giving away to the first few hundred lucky Auto Assembly attendees!) featured two short stories - one concentrating on the main characters, the other being another Mini-con adventure.

The stories themselves aren't too deep and involving, but they are well written with some strong dialogue that certainly stays true to the characters. The artwork isn't what fans have seen from other Transformers comics in the

past, but it does suit the target audience well, with bold colours and a strong animated feel.

Then we come onto the free gifts. The first issue brought back memories from the first British TF comic and gave away a sticker album and stickers (but that's another story...), and to be honest, that's the main reason why I bought this issue (and the original for that matter!). However, subsequent issues went for cheap toys including a water squirter and disc launcher. Certainly nothing spectacular. How about a free exclusive Mini-con at some point?!



Overall, from the more "mature" fans point of view, it's certainly not the best Transformers comic ever released and it isn't as good as the original G1 comic, but it's great for the target market and anything that creates interest in Transformers amongst a new generation of fans is a good thing.

Let's hope that we get another title for the die-hard Transformers fans as well. How about it, Panini...?

Transformers Collecting: A Beginners Guide to Beast Era Transformers by Sven Harvey

In late 1995 the main Hasbro US company handed Transformers over to Kenner Boys Toys (a subsidiary of theirs). Kenner scrutinised the sales figures from the range over the years and found that the ranges with the most regular top sales were those based on animals of some description (in fact the Dinobots from 1985 are the best selling Transformers sub-range, hence the number of reissues of the toys after 1985 in the UK at least).

Beast Wars

Kenner's deliberations resulted in a new line that debuted in the US in 1996 and the UK in 1998. Beast Wars was very well received by the general public but was met with some reservations (to say the least) from the traditional Transformers fans and collectors.

many of the fans still do not accept the range to this day, but its success across the globe was to the same magnitude as that of the first Transformers ranges. This success was very much due at least partly to the excellent TV show produced by Canada's Mainframe (whom had produced ReBoot, and since have been responsible for Shadow Raiders, the ReBoot TV movies, Action Man and Cubix.) The fully computer generated show borrowed heavily from the continuity of both the original comics and TV show. The storylines formed a great story arc through the three seasons of the show and was aptly brought to its conclusion by Simon Furman.

The TV show premise was that the Maximals (descendants of the Autobots) and the Predacons (descendants of the Decepticons, and Unicron?) crash land on a planet, which

later turned out to be Earth. However they had been flung back in time and the human race has yet to fully evolve. It turned out that this renegade band of Predacons leader, Megatron had time travelled on purpose to find the Ark (the ship that brought the Autobots and Decepticons to Earth) and kill Optimus Prime before he is brought out of stasis in 1984 to start off the Earth based G1 storyline. The result is some damned good storytelling and some great drama as the very evolution of the Maximals is threatened by Megatron's interference in the timeline!

The first few lines from the Beast Wars brand were incredibly lifelike animals with dynamic robot modes in most cases. Characters such as Waspinator (deluxe sized wasp), Rattrap (basic sized rat), Cheetor (deluxe sized cheetah), Tarantulas (deluxe sized tarantula) joined Optimus Primal (originally a basic sized bat but the main toy was an ultra sized gorilla) and Megatron (originally a basic sized alligator but the main toy was an ultra sized tyrannosaurus rex).



The Beast Wars toy series consisted of many "basic" sized toys (with UK prices around £6 each at the time - they vary now in the collectors market between £6-10 for the likes of the Transmetals 2 Optimus Minor and £50-60 for the likes of the original Rattrap and

original Terrosaur), a very large number of "Deluxe sized toys (around £10 each originally but fetching from £10-15 for the likes of Retrax upto over £75 for the original-type Cheetor or Waspinator MOSC), 11 "Mega" sized toys (originally around £15 each but stretch upto nearly £100 for the ultra rare Polar Claw these days), 8 "Ultra" sized toys (originally around £20 but can be in three figures these days), and the single "Super" sized toy, Optimal Optimus, from the latter part of the Transmetals (1) range which originally sold for around £35.

Following the success of the first few waves of the normal realistically styled animal Beast Wars toys, Kenner realised that a gimmick would need to be added to maintain interest, but rather than one gimmick they went for two...



Coming of the Fuzors (and Transmetals)

The range was subdivided after the first couple of years into the Transmetals and the Fuzors. The normal Beast Wars toys resembled very organic animals in Beast Mode with the Predacons tending to be reptilian and insectoid lifeforms whilst the Maximals tended to be mammalian. This changed with the Transmetals whose Beast Modes were more metallic, and more like the

past beast Transformers such as the Insecticons and Dinobots, whilst the robot modes had organic parts. Most of the main characters got toy Transmetal forms, though not all made it to the TV show, with Primal getting two different Transmetals (1) forms. The later Transmetals 2 took it further with a more traditional Transformers style meched out look, and Cheetor and Megatron got TM2ed up after getting Transmetalised previously.

The Fuzors were VERY strange. These were Maximals and Predacons whose Beast Modes had been formed by the fusion of two creatures (put down to scanning errors in the TV show!) Most of these didn't work but the two that stood out and were involved in the TV show as a result were the Maximal, Silverbolt, whose Beast mode was a very

mythological fusion of an eagle and a wolf whilst Quickstrike, a Predacon, was a nightmarish merging of a scorpions main body where the stinging tail took the form of a cobra.

Its also worth noting that recoloured versions of some of the original and Transmetals toys were released when Beast Wars started showing on Fox Kids in the USA in the following years. These toys packaging had the Fox Kids logos on them in the USA, but the character artwork stayed the same. These toys did get limited

releases on the continent, but never made it to the UK officially. They are generally referred to as Fox Kids or FK Repaints.

In Japan, Takara got held up a little bit... After the first season of 26 episode Beast Wars, they were a bit stuck as to continue the show they would need another 26 episodes the following year. Hasbro had contracted Mainframe to make only 13 episodes in season 2 and then a further 13 episodes in

the 3rd season. This meant that between the airing of the original series of Beast Wars and the airing of "our" seasons 2 and 3 there would be a 2 year gap in the Japanese market. As a result Takara produced two further Beast Wars lines...

Beast Wars II

This line was a reasonable success for Takara and along with a traditional cel animated show the toy line consisted primarily of repaints of Beast Wars toys not released in Japan, toys from the Generation 2 line (including fully developed, yet unreleased toys) and even two repaints from Machine Wars! Stand out toys in the range were the Cybertron (Maximal) leader, Lio Convoy - basically an Optimus Primal that transformed into a lion, Galvatron, the Destron's (Predacons) leader who transformed into a mechanical dragon and drill tank, plus the cyborg beasts. Its worth noting that apart from Galvatron, the first wave of Predacons were in fact all vehicles!

The Cyborg Beasts were literally were organic Transformers that looked like they had been assimilated by the Borg - there were 4 of these, one being an altered Dinobot, with an altered Waspinator, Wolfgang and Cybershark. There was even a cinematic release of the Beast Wars II movie in Japan. The TV show lasted the required 26 episodes but with season 3 of the CGI Beast Wars still not available for another year, Takara created a line of completely new moulds to fill the gap...

Beast Wars Neo

The second Takara only Beast line was essentially a battle between the mammalian forces of the Cybertrons (Maximals) and saurian forces of the Destrons (Predacons). Completely new moulds were created such as the Wooley Mammoth, Big Convoy, who had a removable Creation Matrix, a giraffe called Longrack, a hare called Stampy, a Penguin called Break and a cobra called Corhadra. That was just the good guys though! The Destrons were led by Magmatron whose beast mode involved him splitting into three to form an Allosaurus, a

Pterodon, and a Pleasiosaur, simultaneously. His forces included a remoulded Dinobot called Hardhead, plus a tricerotops called Guiledart, Arcadis, an archeopterix, a Stegasaurus called Saberback, a Styracosaurus called Killpunch as well as a Nautilus Shellfish called Dead End, an Anklyosaur called Bazooka and a Dimetreodon called Sling. The line as a whole was filled out with further western Beast Wars toys not released in Japan plus a very few recolours but also a raccoon that was also a real alarm clock called Heinlad (Time Boy!).



The 26 episodes, again of the cel animated show crated for Beast Wars Neo ran in 1998-1999 and was replaced by the second and third seasons of the CGI Beast Wars Metals series (the start of the western season 2 dealt with the introduction of the Fuzors and Transmetals, whilst season 3 saw the phasing in of the Transmetals 2.) The toy range for Beast Wars Metals consisted primarily of the Transmetals and Transmetals 2s from the UK and USA plus the Fuzors Silverbolt and Quickstrike who appeared in the show.

Beast Wars Mutants

A very last range of Beast Wars toys were released alongside the first Beast Machines toys. These characters were essentially Fuzors gone wrong. The mutants had 2 beast modes but no robot modes, though a robot head was hidden on the body somewhere. These included a new Soundwave who was a bat and a crocodile... strange... very, very strange...



Beast Machines

Season 4 of Beast Wars was commissioned along with season 5 by Hasbro. Mainframe was to work based on the conceptual drawings that Hasbro provided of the next toy line - but this time Beast Wars had become Beast Machines. The new story was set on the Transformers' home planet of Cybertron,



and even though Megatron had seemingly been defeated in the "Nemesis, Part 2" episode of Beast Wars, it seems he had slipped captivity and arrived back on Cybertron some time before the Maximals. Optimus Primal with what was left of his crew - Rattrap, Blackarachnia and Cheetor were seemingly the only Transformers left alive on Cybertron following Megatron's enslavement of the planet using armies of drones to hunt down every last Transformer and remove their Sparks, their life forces...

It was a strange premise with political correctness gone mad. The Maximals had no weaponry and after being "reformatted" (no wonder they didn't know what was going on!) even had to learn how to transform! The idea was to make the show spiritual for some strange reason, but it backfired and thanks to a lot of discontinuities with previous Transformers stories, it didn't end up making much sense. Having said all that, taken on its own and ignoring the mistake in continuity it isn't that bad, though it was much darker than Beast Wars and sorely missed the lighter moments that enriched its predecessor.

The toy line started the trend back to vehicles as the forces led by Megatron in the storyline were called Vehicons. The Maximals were the usual array of beasts but done as a fusion of the organic look of the original Beast Wars toys with a technological element. Though an interesting premise the Maximal toys in Beast Machines were pretty much a disappointment to start with as none of them really looked right, or, indeed, like the characters in the show.

The Vehicons on the other hand were much more interesting. The initial Vehicons released consisted of Tankorr, a Mega sized tank with cutting saws at the front, Mirage - a very good looking basic sized Indy car; a wonderful futuristically styled deluxe jet called Jetstorm and the not-so-great basic construction vehicle, Scavenger.

I Am Transformed!

As the line developed, the initial mega sized Cheetor was replaced by the deluxe sized and far superior Night Slash Cheetor and the supreme sized (bloody enormous) version. In beast mode the supreme Cheetor was roughly the size of a normal pet cat and featured light and sound effects, but had very little surface detail, which was unforgivable for a toy of this size. Optimus went from a very poor deluxe sized representation to an excellent, if rather too orange, form as the mega sized Blast Punch Optimus Primal. The Vehicon line-up was also strengthened with an electronic ultra-sized version of Jetstorm, which was decent if lacking a little detail - a problem affecting many of the larger scale Beast Machines toys.

Dinobots!

Alongside the normal Beast Machines toys Hasbro also issued 4 of the dinosaur moulds from Takaras Beast Wars Neo line as the Dinobots - another faction allied, though not fully loyal, to the Maximal cause. The line was extended with three repaints from the Beast Wars lines (including a way superior colour scheme for the original t-rex Megatron, with the awful name "T-Wrecks") plus a retailer exclusive issue of Magmatron also from the Beast Wars Neo line.

Officially the UK only got the first wave of the Beast Machines toys in the end and none of the "new" Dinobots, though some did get through via several grey import routes. In fact with the poorly performing Beast Machines line being ended rather abruptly in the USA in early 2001, Hasbro UK were pretty much left high and dry with nothing to sell, so for the Christmas market Woolworths got a sneaky pre-issue of the following years line, Transformers: Robots In

Disguise.

However, it must be noted that the best Beast Machines toy wasn't ready in time to be included in the Beast Machines line and was eventually released right at the end of the life of the Transformers Robots In Disguise line in the USA in July 2002. Supreme sized Air Attack Optimus Primal was exclusive to Toys R Us in North America and shipped in Robots in Disguise packaging, though it was very clearly a leftover of Beast Machines. This wonderful 12 inch tall rendition of the Maximal leader featured light and sound effects, including the voice of actor Gary Chalk who provided Primal's voice in Beast Wars and Beast Machines (and vocalises for Optimus Prime in Transformers Armada), The most interesting features included individually poseable fingers (!) as well as orientation sensors (mercury switches?) which changed the jet pack sound effect depending on whether the toy was "climbing", cruising at a set altitude or "diving". Overall the toy is quite possibly the best Beast Era transformer in the world.



TRANSFORMERS

UNLIMITED

Transformers: Unlimited **"Tempered Tyranny"** by Sven Harvey

'Things are going well' he thought. Those he trusted were once again by his side, whilst those who would be of use were not far away. Plus there had been no contact from his enemies in some time... well except for that rather rash incursion from a small team he had personally dealt with*...

* - See "What's In Another Body?" from The Cybertronian Times issue 1.

His plans were moving along, differently from before, but hauntingly familiar.

His companion padded softly across the chamber.

"All is well" he grinned, toothily
"Excellent... and your wounds?"

"FULLY healed... my powers have all returned to me."

He nodded silently as the companion settled next to his throne, staying alert as ever.

He stood and strided confidently to his viewport overlooking the landscape, his companion looking up as he went to ensure his safety.

Megatron looked out from the throne room in the new Decepticon fortress that stood where Tarn used to be - his home city state before the wars. The Autobots had been swept completely from HIS planet now and rebuilding was continuing... his armies were growing in power if not numbers.

His thoughts were off-world however - what was Prime doing? It was obvious to him that his real nemesis had returned much in the same way as his own sanity. He knew things were far from over.

It was clear from their recent mission to spy on Autobot together that he and Ravage had a much more seasoned Autobot command structure to deal with, even more competent as a whole than Earthforce, whom he had only just managed to second guess and outmanoeuvre to recover the fallen Replicons, now regenerating in the medical centre beneath him in this new fortress.

Repairs to the Warworld were almost complete and soon his warriors could plunder the resources they needed to expand HIS empire from Cybertron. He vowed silently to rid the universe of these abominable second generation Decepticons and replace that accursed mockery of his insignia with his original and true design across the Galaxy and beyond. Woe betide those who dared oppose him. Madness would no longer be his guide or companion - destruction of his fellow higher beings - those of Cybertronian origin - would only come if and when necessary. Even the likes of Shockwave and Starscream, who 'recently' had caused him difficulties, could be useful as they were when he last looked upon the metal vistas of home in this way...

He had regained it all, plus more... no Autobot insignia stained the landscape now Iacon had fallen. The planet belonged to the Decepticons, HIS Decepticons fully.

He had more time to plan and experiment - his intellect, now unclouded by mental instability, and cunning put to good use - even his 'failed' organic/Cybertronian fusion experiment was back in his mind. Further research was needed and now his main supporter in such an endeavour, Razorclaw, was back to functionality, progress could be made... He had even uncovered Thunderwings research about the Microbots which allowed the creation of the Decepticon

Micromasters and then lost. Could that be of some use?

The silence was broken by a comms signal. Slightly irritated Megatron answered the call and recognised his comms officer; "Ah Soundwave, speak" "Lord Megatron, I think you had better come down here - I'd rather not communicate this across a channel, suffice to say that the Hub may have enough problems before we attack..." "This had better be good" "Good isn't a word I would use, sir"

Puzzled Megatron strode toward the turbolift his bodyguard and friend alongside him. 'What could have Soundwave have discovered'. He was about to find out.

Light years away...

'Things are going well' he thought. Those he could trust were positioned where he wanted them, whilst those he could use were at his beck and call. Plus there had been no contact from his enemies in some time. The Leige Maximo had disappeared, unseen since his encounter on Cybertron, leaving an empire he could lead and mould in the Maximos absence. Those fools who followed the Maximo would follow him... or die.

His plans were moving along nicely, and as he looked out across the web of his central domain - known as the Imperial Hub - from his newly carved throne, he watched as a messenger arrived through a transwarp portal.

Intrigued, he ordered the messenger brought before him.

Panic stricken the messenger froze before the giant. His news wouldn't be well received. He braced himself. "Report!" "Courier Warpcore reporting sir..." he stammered "Imperial outpost Alpha-six-four is gone sir..." "Gone?" "Completely destroyed"

"How?"

"Err..."

Warpcore didn't see him move. Suddenly a searing hot energy sword rested about his neck.

"Get on with it... while you can"

"Uuuuuu" The sword started to move into Warpcores neck

"I've always wanted to have a close up view of a real warpcore breach" smiled the antagonist "NOW tell me..."

"It was.... It was..."

An impatient hiss leaked from the leaders faceplate

"Unicron!" cried Warpcore expecting to lose his head...

"WHAT?... You are sure?"

The smaller Cybertronian nodded silently. Panic now spread over another visage. A flash and a sword cleft a wall.

"Not... now..." growled the Shadow.

Moments passed in silence, the room shocked and dismayed at the news until

"Soundbyte - get a message out to all outposts and get the commanders here for an emergency session. We need to prepare..."

Light years away...

'Things are going well' He thought. Those he trusted were placed in positions he knew suited them. The re-building work was going brilliantly, and with Ratchets excellence and a little help from Primus the entire contingent of Autobots on Earth and on Autobase were fully functional.

Ultra Magnus was getting ready to take Cybertron's moons whilst Jazz was overseeing Grapple, Road Hauler and Wheeljack's work on Autobot City: Earth in the Great Lakes area between Canada and the United States of America.

Prime looked back from his thoughts to the screen and realised his presence was needed elsewhere.

Optimus Prime strided to the council chamber - the doors opened and the Autobot High Council looked as one to their leader; Jazz, Prowl, Grimlock, Fortress Maximus, Jetfire,

Roadhandler, Pyro, Thunderclash, Convoy, Sureshot and Ratchet.

"Well my friends" started the supreme Autobot commander "things appear to finally be going out way. The Replibots are fully functional after Jazz's skirmish with Megatron allowed his team to get them to safety and its with great pleasure that I have witnessed some Autobot 'families', as our human friends have termed them, are back together after millions of years. Its more than good for the Spark to see Sideswipe, Sunstreaker, Clamp Down, Deep Cover and Mach Alert rallying around Red Alert as he embarked on the final leg of his journey back to fitness following the horrific injuries he suffered at the hands of the second generation Decepticons. Morale has been getting better, but I expect that has a lot to do with the talent and personalities in this room. I guess its difficult to be pessimistic when your led by a team of living legends!" "And led by the biggest Legend of them all!" Magnus cried out.

"Yeah right! You would do as well Ultra Magnus... but less of this mutual appreciation, we have work to do. Unfortunately the internal problems on Earth have set us back a bit as the UN Security Council has had other matters to deal with and President Bush isn't nearly as happy with our presence as President Clinton..." "Bear in mind Prime that we haven't had to save 'dubya' from a Decepticon kidnap plot as we had to with Bill." reminded Jazz "True, but at least the Canadian government and the Commonwealth have been more supportive - we even have NASA and ESA getting involved with the early warning satellite systems, thanks to you and Blaster. Autobot: City really is becoming more and more of a reality as construction is well underway. Autobase is fully functional and defended whilst our training facilities on new Cybertron are bringing even our least experienced warriors up to speed. It will take time to regain Cybertron but we are in the best position we have been in for a long time. Now its time to take the fight to all of the Decepticons, with the best of luck to us all..."

With that and an air of steely determination in the air the various commanders left each one

determined not to let their race or their leader down. They had managed a lot in a relatively short time, but was it all enough?

Prime made is way to the command centre, and was met by a rather panicked Twincaster.

"What is it?" asked the crimson giant "We have intercepted a transmission from the Hub. It consisted of just one word..."

"Don't tell me.." whispered Prime "Unicron" continued the comms officer. Finger and thumb either side of his nasal ridge, his optic sensors closed, Optimus Prime head drooped slightly as he spoke softly to himself

"Why now?" He reset his vocaliser and spoke more clearly "Twincaster. Sound the General Alert and call back the High Council. Things just got a lot more complicated."

Transformers: Unlimited "Corporeal Change" by Sven Harvey

It had been a complete disaster from beginning to end. So obviously a trap, but he hadn't seen it... And now... all could be lost.

I had read the report about Megatron's assault... he had taken many of his troops into the newly discovered Mirtonian Constellation. Of course we had found out about the Decepticon campaign into the outer sectors of that area of the Galaxy... But I realise now that we had learned of it too easily.

I took command of the Autobots in the area to flush out Megatron leaving Convoy behind in command of Autobase. I should have realised that the brief but brutal attack and retreat of the Decepticons from sector 17 of the constellation was carefully orchestrated. I sent my forces in pursuit and arrived on the inhabited planet in the sector to witness the devastation and see what I could do to help.

Too late!

Too late the warning came from the local inhabitants of this poor planet.

Too late the dawning in my own psyche that things were going too well.

Too late I realised that Megatron and a small number of his closest allies were missing from the assault force my Autobots were in pursuit of.

I heard the hum of the weapon powering up and span.

Too late to avoid the blast.

Too late to bring my own weapon to bear.

Too late to do anything but feel the searing pain as the rail gun fusion blast tore through my abdomen and various other blasts swept aside my limbs leaving me totally powerless to stop my nemesis in the victory he had so long grasped for.

One of the Insecticons crept over my cerebral circuits. The feeling of total revulsion swept over my spark. What more could they do to me?

Through the searing pain Megatron reached down towards me. He wanted the Matrix... and my death. Feedback from the damage had destroyed all of my communication systems.

All I can do now is look through the pain at the evil grin as comes closer.

Some "real" Optimus Prime I turned out to be...

But it wasn't over.

Primus Bless my friend. The calming voice of logic rang out as Megatron was knocked off his feet in surprise.

Of course, with his grasp of military situations it wouldn't really have taken him long to figure out Megatron's gameplan.

The whole Autobot force had returned under his command and Megatron knowing his was outnumbered, turned in frustration on the warrior who led the forces back to save me

and let loose with a huge blast from his rail gun.

Hit full on by the blast my friend dropped from his sky-cycle like a lead weight and burning crashed by me. Alive.

He doused the flames himself, but his body was broken, and standing was beyond him. The other Autobots forced Megatron and his team away, as my friend turned to me.

"By the Matrix, Prime... Look at us! At least my body's not too bad.. But.. but."

I could hear the pain in his voice as he spoke to me... Was I really that bad?

The Matrix within my chest pulsated, Matrix energy washing over me keeping me alive as a strange feeling washed over what was left of my body.

Luckily First Aid was soon in arriving and he ordered Prowl and I to be stretchered in to the starship. First Aid knew my injuries were beyond him and he placed me in a stasis tube for the trip back to Autobase as he contacted a mortified Ratchet to get Autobase's medical centre ready for my arrival...

Maybe, just maybe I would make it... My optic sensors closed down as the stasis tube locked up...

Once again I awoke... Ratchet was standing over me...

"I'm sorry Prime..." said Ratchet. "We didn't have the immediate resources or enough time to wait to bring you back as you were."

"The only choice we had was to put you into a body that was already ready - one that Convoy had refused following his battle with the Liege Maximo when he was still "Optimus Prime". It was the only way to save you... The only..."

Ratchet's head dropped into his hands in despair.

What could be so bad?

"Ratchet... old friend... You saved my life.
That is enough"

"But Prime... it little more than a combat
configuration"

"Ratchet... I've just learned the lengths
Megatron will go to. It's obvious that between
his army, especially as its so huge now, plus
the Empire I'm gonna have to get more tough
anyway... What could be so bad... Eh, what's
this...?"

I reached to a holster on my back, or what I
though felt like a holster, but it was a
scabbard. A huge energy sword slipped
handle first into my hand unit and hummed
menacingly.

"That was Grimlock's idea" remarked
Ratchet.

"Really wouldn't have guessed" I mocked
"Maybe its time we listened a little more to
Grimlock's suggestions... If we had I wouldn't
have been filleted by Megatron..."

I stood, realising I was somewhat taller than
before and looked into the mirror.

Not too shabby... not bad at all. Not really me,
but lets face it I need to change. The Optimus
Prime that crashed on Earth had to get a little
wiser and a little more ready to defend those
who needed it, because all I was doing before
was getting myself nearly destroyed over and
over again. And that was helping no-one.
Freedom Is The Right Of All Sentient Beings
and looking like this can only help safeguard
that... At least I don't look like I'm going to
turn into a Fire Engine or something...

Transformers: Unlimited
The Continued Beast Wars
"Regenesis Part 3"
by Sven Harvey

The cyber-monkey was tiring. He had been
travelling for hours, maybe even days,
swinging from tree to tree and running across
plains, drawn to what was up ahead.

What it was, the new "Transmetal 2" did not
know, but he had to reach it as quickly as
possible. Jumping to the top of the tree in
front of him, the monkey spied his quarry and
simply stopped in awe. His intelligence had
grown during the journey and memories that
he knew were not his own came to the fore...
Mount St. Hillary and within it, the Ark.

The repairs they could do were virtually
complete, Depth Charge was almost
recognisable yet still showing no signs of life,
whilst the winged cat that seemed to be
defeated in the same battle seemed a lot
more complicated than they thought.

Cybershark was losing his patience and
hope.

"Glider, we need to find help"

"I copy that, but if I am right and we are on
"ancient" Earth, where will the help come
from?" replied Nightglider.

"I don't know, maybe the Axalon is on the
planet somewhere, if we can get these two to
a CR chamber, things may be a lot easier."
the finned Maximal confirmed.

"Simply put, I need to start a proper search.
Lets put together a search plan of the planet,
I'll take in as much from the air as I can, and
we can try and track down something of use".

The primate found himself at a jury-rigged set
of doors, slightly ajar, fortunately and he
made his way in. Strange energies seemed to
pulsate from areas around him but he was
drawn to a main chamber.

Slumped in some form of man command
chair was a huge crimson and blue form. The
monkey climbed the form until he could see
his own reflection in the two shiny panels on
the upper part of the figure he was climbing.
He stared, trying to comprehend his own
reflection.

Unknown to the primate a glow had started to
emanate from the chest plate he was staring
at himself in. Intrigued by this other monkey
the creature held out his hand to try and

touch his mirror-counterpart. One touch is all it took. As he made contact with the structure, a slight depressurisation took place as the panels opened up. Startled, the primate dashed down from the form and hid behind what appeared to be a pile of metal parts.

Behind the opening panels a silver unit emblazoned with a red face was revealed which in itself opened upwards with another hiss of hydraulics, revealing a glow from a strange pulsating, well, thing, in some form of metal holder. The glow extended and beams reached out from the pulsating orb stretching towards the pile of metal parts and a separate beam stretched out to the young primate. The panicked primate and the metal was lifted into the air, with the metal returning to its robot like form. Energies pulsed out from the orb. The primates eyes flashed as data started to flood his cybernetic brain, as lifeforces stirred within the metal forms to his side. He came of age and fully to consciousness as a deep voiced echoed in the chamber - "Welcome Optimus Minor".

The new Maximal was gently returned to the ground as the energies flowing into the large metal form increased.

Gradually the energies subsided and as the giant form was also lower to the floor its optic sensors came on line. From its crouched position it looked up towards the huge crimson form the energies had emanated from with recognition in its eyes. The deep voice echoed again seemingly from what Minor now realised was the Creation Matrix "Arise, Primal Prime..."

The new Prime stood towering over Optimus Minor yet being dwarfed by the form of Optimus Prime, the "ancient" Autobot that the Matrix had done its work from.

"Its time to see who's around" Said the new Maximal commander to Optimus Minor. Minor just stood there mouth agape. Primal Prime smiled, closed his eyes and tapped into the Matrix psionically. The Matrix glowed brighter and a flash of light, a signal issued forth up through the roof of the volcano.

* * *

Every on-line Maximal on the planet turned to see the signal and their eyes flashed in recognition and immediately started their journey to the source of the signal. Cybershark and Nightglider out on search duties radioed each other and once they had hidden the inert form of Depth Charge and his companion set off for the source.

* * *

Unfortunately Terrorsaur, Scorponok and the pile of spare parts once referred to as Inferno also saw the signal and though not knowing what it was decided to investigate... However they were not the only non-Maximals to do so...

* * *

Flying across the landscape Nightglider spied the source of the signal.

"No..." He thought "It couldn't be..."

But it was and contemplating the implications that really worried him

"Cybershark, come in... The source of the signal... It Mount St. Hillary"

"What? It can't be!" Replied the other Maximal

"Oh it is, a little less worse for lack of wear, but its definitely the resting place of the Ark after it crashed on Earth"

"Oh wonderful... that makes things real simple... Don't enter the volcano until I get there, lets be careful, OK?"

"Oh yeah.."

Next: Maximals Unite



TRANSFORMERS MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE! FORIMERS GENERATION ONE

Transformers Collecting: A Beginners Guide To Reissues by Sven Harvey

Since early 2000, modern reissues of early Transformers have been taking place in Japan. Of course they nicked the idea from Hasbro UK who did a classics re-issue line from 1989-1993!

Transformers: Generation One

Car Robots was Takara's 15th anniversary range but Takara also decided to try and make themselves more solvent (Takara were not in the best of shape at the time) by releasing a collectors range. The first release was of course C-01, Convoy (Optimus Prime) in his original form. This was followed by such illuminaries as Ultra Magnus, Hot Rod, Starscream, and Megatron. One interesting reissue was God Ginrai - in Japan the toy we called Powermaster Optimus Prime was an entirely different character and in Japan the toy had a die cast cab (our was plastic) and an optional extra trailer called Godbomber, which had its own robot mode and combined with the super version of Ginrai (the cab/standard robot mode combined with the first trailer to create the super robot) to form the ultra sized God Ginrai. A wonderful set this weighed in at around £100 from dealers in the UK...

Alongside these reissues a range of small PVC collectors figures, marketed in a similar way to trading cards were released, the sets of which consisted of 6 coloured figures and six clear or pewter figures. Chase figures and multi part figures also featured in the line

which lasted 8 assortments or "acts" and came to a conclusion very recently (ACT 9 upwards are Armada figures).

Takara also introduced the Transformers into their super-deformed Choro-Q line with deformed Convoy, Megatron and Rodimus Convoy toys that still transformed plus "mega" sized PVC figures of Convoy, Megatron, Rodimus Prime, Hot Rodimus (Hot Rod) Star Saber, and Victory Leo to date.

The Transformers: Generation One logo and line is being phased out at the moment, with the forthcoming MyClone line of super deformed non-transforming action figures which may or may not be under the banner. Transformers: Generation Zero was used at a recent gaming event in Tokyo to introduce a G1 video game currently in development.

Takara had continued with the limited G1 reissues, but it was becoming clear that things needed to be done in a much better way, than the reissues in simplified versions of the original packaging. A further reissue of Convoy (Optimus Prime) as New Year Convoy which had some slight colouring alterations (blue eyes rather than yellow and blue tinted windshields to match his on-screen appearance) and came with extras in the box such as the larger version of the original toys gun, a Cybertron (Autobot) logo mousemat, a bunch of extra Cybertron logo stickers, a better coloured version of the Action Master Optimus Prime figure from 1991 and most importantly a (unpainted) metal replica of the Creation Matrix, the Cybertrons/Autobots sacred life giving force, that was scaled to fit into the Convoy/Optimus

Prime toys chest cavity and came with a neck chain so that you could wear it...

The New Year Convoys sold out faster than the previous reissues. Had the world gone Generation 1 crazy? It seemed so to Takara, so they took a break and looked long and hard at the reissue programme.

Transformers Collection

Takara decided to restart the reissues with a few of the toys most sought after by collectors - the original Autobot/Cybertron cars that came from the Diaclone range that preceded Transformers. Also rather than simply doing a basic version of the packaging as before, they opted for brand new collectors packaging. What they came up with is a total revelation. Each toy in the Transformers Collection comes in a heavy duty corrugated cardboard box, which opens up book style, with a gorgeous cover image, by Dreamwave.

The front cover is Velcro fastened shut and opening it reveals collector cards, in Japanese of course, which introduce the character of the toys, plus the history of the toy, part of the G1 TV show episode guide and a guide to some of the toys released alongside the one in the box. These cards can be removed (but I wouldn't!). Turning the pages of card make you realise the care gone into these new reissues. As you turn the final page/collector card, which incidentally folds out to show you some artwork from Dreamwave, you are greeted by the toy encased in plastic.

The best part though is the fact that the box can be opened without damage and the plastic tray containing the toy removed along with a plastic bag with the transformation instructions, sticker sheet and tech specs collectors card featuring the original character box artwork. The tray itself is made of card with two plastic parts, the first of which lifts off to free the toy and accessories. The second plastic part, which is a tray, lifts out of the card, and reveals that the card tray is designed so it can be folded out and inverted into a display stand, which the plastic tray parts can reinforce to allow the toy to be displayed on the stand.

All in all a stunning package. They are the same die-cast toys as their predecessors, and owning every version of Jazz that has been released I can tell you a few changes have had to take place. The old Porsche and Martini stickers have had to go for legal reasons and a couple of changes to the mould have taken place, possibly due to its use over the years to produce so many reissues and slight changes to Jazz over the years. The fact is though, that these issues are, in my opinion at least, far superior to the original Japanese issues of 1985, and if done in the USA and UK fully in English would be a collectors dream.

The range is still expanding and currently consists of Jazz (Meister), Prowl, Tracks, Skids, Smokescreen, Megatron (with extras!), Sideswipe and Optimus Prime (Convoy). The next two figures due for release are Starscream and Inferno, whilst there are rumours abound that all five Dinobots may be making an appearance in the line in the not too distant future along with Soundwave and the Decepticon (Destron) cassettes.

Interestingly alongside these reissues, the Japanese specialist eHobby Japan, have been working with Takara to issue special versions of the moulds.

When Jazz and Prowl were released, a special gold chrome version of Jazz was released along with a version of Bluestreak with the black bonnet as depicted in the original TV show. Following this a couple of Diaclone issues were made - a red Tracks and a silver Skids with the original Diaclone head.

Alongside Smokescreen and Megatron came "Silverstreak" - a Bluestreak in silver chrome and the unchromed and blue legged version of Megatron, that was shown in some press stills, as the Megatron clone introduced in Machine Wars as Megaplex! With the release of Prime and Sideswipe, rather than do a recolour of Prime, Sideswipes mould was recoloured as Deep Cover in blue and black whilst the Red Alert mould (Sideswipe with roof lights) became the police car Clamp Down, which is very reminiscent of a Diaclone

toy and of Mach Alert/Prowl from Carobots/RiD!

The specials due to coincide with Starscream and Inferno are Sunstorm (also known as Tango Starscream as due to the orange colour scheme, it appears that Decepticons do know when they have been Tangoed.) and Road Hauler - a green version of Infernos body double, Grapple. Interestingly Road Hauler did make an appearance, sort of at least, in the original TV series when in the original 3 part story, Hound was, well, hauled up a cliff face by a green road crane Autobot that Cliffjumper that he called Hauler.

As for future specials, it could prove interesting to see what they do with the toys rumoured to follow Starscream and Inferno.

Hasbro Generation 1 Commemorative Series

However after noticing the amount of the earlier Japanese reissues that crossed the Pacific, Hasbro decided to reissue a few early toys in 1984/5 styled packaging. Thus far Optimus Prime, Ultra Magnus and Rodimus Major have been released. A few changes have had to take place to stay within toy laws in the USA, such as shortened smoke stacks on Prime and Magnus, longer (silly looking) missiles and Hot Rod getting renamed Rodimus Major due to Mattel now owning the name Hot Rod (whoever let that happen at Hasbro must not work for them any more considering Hot Rods popularity in the USA...). By all accounts they have been doing very well and Starscream should be followed soon after mirroring the reissue pattern from Japan. The only toy likely not to be released is Megatron due to USA laws... Typical of the states that though... You can buy a real handgun from shops in the "high street" but not a perfectly harmless two thirds scale toy gun with a massive Decepticon logo on it...

Hasbro have also westernised the PVC range for release in the US (and UK?). Renamed Transformers: Heroes Of Cybertron the range is on blister cards so you can see what you are buying. They have also been altered to have "light pipe" eyes, but do not come with

stands. However in each pack is a collectors card with the character, name and function on the front with the bio-profile and tech specs on the back (not all accurate to the original toy though - Optimus Prime speed is 10/10 is it? I don't think so, he's a bloody truck!). Included in the two waves of the figures thus far though has been Powermaster Optimus Prime in Apex armour. An interesting twist as it allows the God Ginrai reissue from Japan to be released in the USA (and UK!), this is the God Ginrai PVC figure but his collector card introduces the second trailer for Powermaster Prime as Roller, who some may recall is the name of the small scout car in the original Optimus Primes trailer, that is actually part of him. Hasbro have also adapted God Ginrai's "Fire Guts" attack into Powermaster Primes "Spark Attack" - an ultimate attack to fend of Decepticon aggressors!

These figures have been quite popular thus far in the USA, and though ACT-8 of the Japanese range is the last at least for the time being there are plenty of moulds for Hasbro to play with, and wave 3 of Heroes of Cybertron is already in US stores.

Further toys that have been announced for the Generation Commemorative series for the USA (and hence probably the UK) include Powermaster Prime with Apex armour (as mentioned earlier), Jazz, Prowl, Thundercracker, Skywarp, Hoist, Prowl, Red Alert and Silverstreak (Bluestreak).



"The War Reborn, Part 1" by Andrew Hettig

The Year is 2035 and the world is a very different place, global cleansing has been achieved and world peace has finally been established. High on top of the new Empire State Building in new New York, a man stood solitary wearing a long red trench coat, a black sleeveless T-shirt tucked into a pair of grey trousers which in turn were tucked into a pair of black boots embroidered with buckles. Upon his face he wore a pair of red sunglasses, the collar of his coat was turned up at the base of it and his hair swayed with a synchronised rhythm as the cold night air swept past. He stood there on the edge of the building, his toes poking off the ledge. Many people would be terrified to be in such a position but this figure simply stood, his face blank, his head held down as he watched the people and cars moving past some five thousand feet down.

He sighed, he knew it had been 25 years since *it* had *ended*, but why, why did he feel as though *they* would return? A ringing noise came from his left pocket causing him to jerk his head up and return to reality. He reached into an internal pocket on his jacket and produced a sleek designed device similar in appearance to a mobile phone. Using his index finger he pushed a small button on the side, the top flipped up to reveal a small screen. The screen blinked for a millisecond, then revealed a video image of a girl about sixteen years of age with long black hair tied into a pony tail protruding from the top left side of her head. She smiled a big smile that lit her face from one side to the other.

"Hiiiiiiii, Dad!" she called. The man gave a brief chuckle then, in a deep yet soothing voice, he replied,

"Hello Maria," he said. He seemed to be in a pleasant mood, despite his face being about as cheerful as a dark room seconds before, but then he could never be anything but happy with his own daughter, "and what, might I ask, is this call for?" he prompted.

"Dad, it's my turn to cook dinner tonight right?" the man nodded and made a noise

that indicate she was right, "So, um, why am I cooking for just one person?" The man smiled he knew what she was implying.

"Okay, I'll head home right now, see you soon hon."

"Okay, bye dad" and with that Maria hung up.

As the man headed to the elevator and proceeded to enter, push the button and ride down to the first floor he thought more about his daughter. For one thing she was one heck of a genius when came to computers - she did not just know the difference between a megabyte and a gigabyte, but she could explain it too, and she was always fascinated by powerful computers. The better the system, the more excited she was. The man wondered what it would have been like if she had ever seen *Ve-* no! He would not say it - to remember would only make his memories more painful than they already were. He missed them so much, he frowned and clenched his fist, "Twenty five years and it still hurts to think of them. Why?" he muttered to himself as he departed from the elevator and proceeded in the direction of his home.

* * *

It took him a good hour to reach his abode. It was nothing to boast about - your average house of the timeline. The man placed his hand on a small panel illuminating with red light next to the door. This, in fact, was a scanning device, which proceeded to scan the palm of his right hand, then the red light was replaced with a green one. At the same time a noise, which sounded like a high bell tone, emitted and the door slid open, behind it stood Maria, wearing a one piece black cat suit, a purple jacket which only reached to the bottom of her rib cage, a belt which looked one size too big and a pair of regular brown boots. Her hair was braided with a red hair band, her body was that of a typical sixteen year old female, beyond a young girl, but not quite a mature woman. She smiled.

"Hey dad, what's up?" she asked, the man stepped into his home, removed his coat, revealing quite an impressive physique, and

hung it on a coat hook near by, he then turned to his daughter.

"Not alot," he said replying to her question, he then exhaled deeply through his nose, "Somethin' sure smells good, what's cooking?"

Maria put her hand on her hip and tilted her head to one side "what's *cooked*, you mean," she said, the man chuckled,

"Am I late again?" he quizzed, Maria nodded her head twice.

"Not as much as the other times. You really gotta stop day dreamin' dad," the man scratched the back of his head, despite the fact that he did not have an itch just there.

"I guess I am making a habit of it," he said, Maria then began tugging at his arm.

"Come on, I made fish,"

"Oh, er, great." The man's enthusiasm seemed to have abandoned him as fish was the one meal that Maria could not cook. He was just at the point of beginning to move so that he could walk to his chair, sit down and eat the meal that his daughter had lovingly prepared. He would have done this had he not heard a sound - a sound that he had not heard in twenty five years; a sound that sent a chill down his entire spine.

It was a low drone humming sound, the man knew that there was only one thing that made that sound, he clenched his fist so tight that his knuckles cracked and a small trickle of blood dripped on the carpeted floor below as his nails punctured his palm, "No, why," he said under his breath his voice in obvious panic, "of all the curses in the world, why?" he paused to swallow hard before completing his sentence, but the last word came out as if he were whispering with a sore throat, "*them*".

Maria was now officially scared, all her life her farther had been fearless, absolutely nothing scared him but now, now he was showing the symptoms of complete and utter terror, "Uum, dad, what's wrong?" she

managed to ask, the man turned around so that his back was facing Maria and he was facing the door.

"I-I have to see something," he replied before heading for the door, through, not curiosity but more, concern for her father, Maria followed close behind. The man stepped outside and looked up and what he saw caused his eyes to widen, his pupils to dilate and his lower lip to quiver, for flying high in the sky were a set of hover crafts with a blue and purple colour scheme, the design was slightly different, but the man knew exactly what they where. As much as he wished he was not seeing this, there he was, standing, staring in horror at The Sweeps and their sinister leader. "Scourge," the man said, though his eyes had the look of terror, his voice had the sound of hatred.

Maria stepped forward slowly, "Um, dad, what's going on?" she looked up and saw the intruders just becoming visible, (her father could see them clearly as his glasses had a built in scope). Maria's father looked back at her, and all he could think of was her safety.

"Maria, I want you to do something for me" he said, Maria nodded.

"Sure, what is it?" she said, unsure of what her father was about to ask her to do, but still willing to do it anyway. The man took a deep breath.

"Run" he said, "Run as fast and as far as you can" Maria was puzzled at her father's odd request.

"Why?" she quizzed, but before her father could answer, the Sweeps and Scourge opened fire on the unsuspecting public and in a matter of seconds the airborne terrors had succeeded in causing complete chaos and total destruction on the city below.

"That's why," the man said. Maria did not need a second convincing, she had already stared to back away. With a look of panic about her face she looked at her father. He looked back at her and gave a reassuring smile, "I'm right behind you," he said in his usual deep soothing voice, "Just keep

running, don't stop and don't look back."

This was all Maria needed to hear, she turned around and ran, she ran as fast as her legs would take her. All the time she could hear the screams coming from the victims of those... whatever they were... her father seemed to know. Suddenly her eyes widened and she inhaled sharply.

"Dad" she said. Maria was not the kind of girl to disobey orders or requests from anyone especially not her father, so what if he worked as an odd job - you break it he'll fix it - guy. He was her father and she greatly respected him, but she felt a strong urge that she could not resist, she stopped and turned around.

What she saw, she never expected to see in her entire life. Her father was still standing in the same place - he had not moved an inch - as laser beams as long as buildings and as thick as a person danced around him. He seemed completely devoid of fear. He gently reached his left arm up, touched the top left side of his glasses and a targeting cross appeared on the left lens, and then he spoke. He did not shout, but his voice did elevate and was full of what could only be described as pure hatred, "Come on then you metal scum, I've waited twenty five years for this."

Maria would have been shocked to stillness had she not been avoiding laser beams whilst watching, but what she had seen so far had indeed shocked her. She was witnessing a side of her father she had never seen and what was about to follow would mean that she would never look at her father in the same way again. He brushed his coat back but at the same time he reached into a secret compartment inside on the back and brought out two guns, but not just any old pair of hand guns - these were unique. For one thing they were huge. Forget fifty calibre these were more sixty calibre, and the design was like nothing ever seen. However, it was the odd out of place red face carved into them that got Maria puzzled, but that was of little concern to her right now. She was now starting to get very worried - she had never seen her father with an ordinary gun let alone these miniature cannons. He then rotated them rapidly simultaneously five times. Maria

was no idiot - she knew that just one of those guns had to weigh at least five pounds, maybe even more, and there was her father spinning them on his fingers.

He then gave a small smile but with only one side of his mouth and then spoke again, but it was not just what he said that frightened Maria, it was that and the tone of voice he said it in. "It's payback time," he said in a voice of what appeared to be total satisfaction. For a second or two he seemed to be moving his head around then he stopped and gave a half mouth smile, "There," he said to himself, then, in one fluid movement he turned ninety degrees to the left and raised his right arm in the direction he'd previously been facing, all the time keeping his head fixed in the same position. His arm was perfectly straight, it was not shaking at all and there was no hesitation when he pulled the trigger.

The last bullet was used in two thousand and twenty three and so had long since been forgotten to all but historians, so Maria was not surprised to see a white hot yellow laser beam emit from the barrel, but she was surprised at the sheer force just one of those guns produced. It should have been enough to knock a grown man at least ten feet back, but apart from the usual wrist jerking up due to the recoil, the man did not move an inch.

Maria was now starting to get very puzzled and very worried. She knew her father was strong but by all rights of human physics he should not be that strong. The beam raced through the air at tremendous speed and struck dead on target, this being a scanning sensor situated on the top back half of one of the sweeps. The sensor was smashed into thousands of tiny fragments, a mixture of metal and glass, "Ahhhhh, my sensor! I can't see!" bellowed the Sweep.

"Pull up you fool!" Scourge bellowed down the intercom, but it was too late - his devoted follower slammed straight into the side of a near building. There was a split second of nothing before the Sweep exploded in a shower of metal, glass, wires and other mechanical assortments, his comrades were speechless, as was his commander. How

could a puny inadvanced flesh creature do such a thing, "Help mee-ahhhhh," another Sweep screamed as he met a similar fate. Scourge could not believe his optic sensors, his minions were dropping like Alderton Kamikaze flies, and what was worse - or maybe more humiliating - was that a flesh creature was responsible.

Just then Scourge heard a voice coming through on his built in communicator.

"Scourge!" the voice said sharply.

The maniacal hovercraft cringed, as he instantly recognised the voice that belonged to Cyclonus, "Yes," Scourge replied, hoping that his superior had not noticed the little problem he was having.

"You've been in the same area for five minutes and we're getting no reading from the Sweeps. What's the hold up?" had his face been visible Scourge would have scowled, he was going to have to tell him. Cyclonus would find out one way or another.

"I'm er, I'm having some trouble"

"What sort of trouble?" It was obvious from the tone of his voice that Cyclonus' extremely limited patience was wearing very thin.

"A flesh creature," Scourge grumbled.

"What?" Cyclonus chuckled, "You're having trouble with-" he stopped to snigger, "a flesh-creature?" Cyclonus belowed with laughter across the intercom. Scourge growled and his growl trailed into his next line.

"Cut that out!" he yelled. Cyclonus, who was still laughing, replied

"And just what makes this puny little flesh creature so different from the rest?" he inquired, waiting to see what pathetic line Scourge would spew out next.

"I'm not sure, but he's managed to take out my entire fleet of sweeps single handedly,"

"What!" Cyclonus had abruptly returned to his usual stern self, "How many did you take?"

"My full squad,"

"Ten Sweeps destroyed by a flesh creature," Cyclonus muttered to himself, "What's he doing now?" he asked his comrade.

"Nothing, he's just staring at me, waiting for me to make the first move," Scourge replied. Cyclonus pondered for a few seconds and then,

"Wait there, I must see this for myself," and with that the com link between the two was cut off.

The man stood stern and still, puzzled as to why Scourge was just hovering there, then he heard a high pitched humming sound coming from a north east direction. He looked that way and frowned, "Oh that's just great," he said with absolutely no enthusiasm in his voice, as Cyclonus made an appearance.

"The Sweeps were no problem and I know I can't beat Scourge on my own, but I could have at least slowed him down, but there's no way I'm stupid enough to fight Scourge and Cyclonus together. " he quickly aimed and pointed his guns up, one at Cyclonus, the other at Scourge, and fired a volley of shots, the left side of laser beams ripped through Cyclonus' right wing, while the right side shattered Scourge's left scanning sensor.

"What was that?" Cylonus yelled.

"The flesh creature I told you about," replied Scourge.

"Hmmm, those weapons seemed to rip straight through our hulls. Our lord would wish to acquire such technology," Cyclonus pondered to himself.

"Shall we take him?" questioned Scourge, breaking the, what he saw as, silence.

"No, we need to return to headquarters for repairs. Besides there's a team nearby who will do just fine," and with those words Scourge and Cyclonus departed from the battle zone.

The man was baffled, but he did not relax, resting his arms by his side he turned to face his daughter.

"Maria?" he said, a hint of anger in his voice, "What the heck are you still doing here? I thought I told you to run,".

Maria normally accepted a scolding when she had done something wrong, but today was anything but normal so she would not accept this scolding, "And you said you'd be right behind me," she said in an equally aggressive tone.

"It was the only way to-" he stopped and took a short breath, "You're just as bad as your mother was, come on," and before Maria knew what was happening, her father had picked her up with one hand, laid her stomach down across his shoulder and proceeded to run.

Maria had her eyes shut - she enjoyed high speeds as much as the next sixteen year old, but it felt like they were going as fast as a race car. She opened one eye and saw the building, or what was left of them, rushing past and then she realised, it felt like they were going as fast as a race car because they **were** going as fast as a race car. Her father was running at speeds other men could only achieve behind the wheel. The man was smart - he used the rubble that was once a city to shield himself and his daughter from any oncoming attack.

Just then a futuristic Ferrari 308 GTB and a Tyrell P 38 six-wheeled Formula 1 car crashed through the rubble from either side just behind him. He stopped and turned around. Maria, who was still over her father's shoulder, arched herself around to see what was happening. The man frowned, the designs were different but he knew Wildrider and Drag Strip when he saw them. The menacing cars seemed motionless to any outsider, but in fact they were communicating with one another via a com link.

"Is he the one?" Drag Strip asked.
"The one what?" Wildrider questioned.

"The flesh creature Cyclonus told us to get,"

"I don't know, let me see," There was a brief silence as Wildrider checked a video recording sent to him earlier by Cyclonus, "Yep, it's him alright."

"Good," and with that the two began to rev their engines and accelerated their rear tires, smoke bellowed from behind them.

The man's eyes widened, then he turned and began to run as the two crazed cars released their clutches, and they sped forward at tremendous speed. The man found it quite difficult to stay ahead of them, his arms and legs were pumping harder than before as the salty sweat ran from his brow and down his face before dripping off his chin. Maria was starting to get worried her father was starting to show real signs of strain, as they entered an ally way. It was quite large for an ally way as Drag Strip and Wildrider were still side by side as they entered.

Just then the already challenging situation got a lot worse when a futuristic Lamborghini Countach LP 500 S and Porsche 928 slammed through the side walls and swerved around so that they were in front of their target, and stopped. From behind, the man heard his adversaries had also stopped - they had them trapped. The man looked around, surveying his situation.

"Hmm, Wildrider, Drag Strip, Breakdown and Dead End," he muttered to himself, a stern look about his face, then his face expression changed to one that showed a combination of shock and realisation, "Uh oh," he said and then his realisation, was acknowledged, when he and Maria heard a rumbling sound coming from behind one of the walls like something was crashing right through the building. The man had to think fast he knew that his daughter's safety was more important than his own, but he also knew that if he met his end Maria would stand no chance. Then an idea struck him, but he did not like it as it involved exact timing, however there was no time to come up with an alternative. He took a deep breath and threw his daughter high into the air.

"WHAAAAAAA!" Maria screamed, as she had

no idea this was going to happen. Meanwhile on the ground, the man himself leapt into the air seconds before the futuristic cab lorry known as MotorMaster came crashing through the left wall right where the man had been standing. The man caught his daughter and landed on the left rooftop

"Hey, he can't do that," Wildrider exclaimed,

"Indeed, I say we show him whose in charge," agreed Dead End.

"Stunticons!" belowed MotorMaster, "atta-" his command was cut off when he received a call. "As you wish," he replied to the mysterious caller. "Stunticons, return to your previous mission," the leader ordered.

"But what about the flesh creature," questioned Breakdown.

"Leave him, we have more important tasks ahead" commanded MotorMaster, and with that the Stunticons pulled away and moved on.

* * *

Meanwhile the man, who had not stayed around to see all of this, was jumping from rooftop to rooftop, still carrying his daughter. Maria finally opened her eyes and looked around.

"Dad, I think they've stopped chasing us now," she said.

"I know, I just want to get out of the city," her father replied as he leapt to the ground and continued running, all the time laser beams danced around him.

After a while, Maria noticed that things seemed a lot quieter. She opened her eyes and looked around.

"Dad," she said, "Dad... hey... whoa... stop!" Her father complied.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Put me down first."

"Oh, sorry," The man gently placed his

daughter down, "So what's wrong?" he asked again.

"Far from wrong," she said. Her father looked puzzled, Maria gave a short sigh and moved her eyes upwards for a split second, "We're about ten miles away from the city," she said. The man looked around, and indeed they were standing in a grassy meadow, with a few rocks here and there.

"Oh I err, guess we are." he said. Maria sighed and shook her head, then she stopped and her facial expression changed from one of content to one of mild anger.

"Okay, what in the world is going on and why are those... those vehicles attacking the city?" she demanded, her father sighed heavily.

"Did you see the emblem on them? It look a little like a purple face," the man asked.

"Yeah, but what's that got to do with anything?"

"And do you remember the stories I used to tell you when you where a little girl... about the Transformers?"

"Err, yeah, about the Autobots and Decepticons, but I still don't see-," Maria cut herself off, her jaw dropped and her eyes widened as she finally realised what her father was implying. Her voice changed to one of disbelief, "You didn't make them up did you? They really happened," Her father nodded. "But if they're the Decepticons, then where are the Autobots, and didn't you tell me they all died in two thousand nineteen? So how can the Decepticons be here?"

"The answer to your second question, I don't know, but the answer to your first, I have a strong feeling I do,"

"Well where are they?"

"Still dead" Maria looked puzzled at her father's reply. "Whoever, or whatever reactivated the Decepticons must have had a reason, so they wouldn't have reactivated the Autobots otherwise the whole thing would've

been seriously screwed"

"So what are we gonna do?" Maria asked with little enthusiasm. The man spoke with as much enthusiasm in his voice.

"I don't know-" then his tone abruptly changed. "Wait, yes that's it! It's a long shot but it just might work" Maria looked even more puzzled than before.

"What are you talking about dad?" she quizzed.

"You'll see" her father replied, then he reached down his shirt and when he brought it out he was holding a small pendant. Maria had seen this once or twice before, but she could never figure out why her father never ever took it off. However she had a feeling that now, at this very moment, she was about to discover why.

The man opened the pendant up and a small but strong blue light emitted from it. Maria gazed on in amazement as her father lifted what could only be described as a small blue crystal, or rather a tiny part of a much larger crystal. Maria's mouth moved as if talking normally but only a whisper came out, "What is that?" she questioned, still in awe.

The man gripped the fragment tightly, dimming the strong blue glow that still emitted from it which still seeped through his fingers. "The last piece of the most complicated puzzle in the universe, and the first piece of hope" the man said replying to his daughter's question. "Thanks Rodimus" he whispered to himself.

Maria was too fixed on the glowing crystal to worry who Rodimus was, though it did puzzle her. Then, before she knew what was going on she heard her father yell out.

"HHHUUUURRRRAAAAAAAA!!!!!" he yelled as he brought his arm back, to Maria's surprise. He thrust his arm forward and let go of the blue crystal fragment. It left his hand and shot far into the night sky at tremendous speed where it seemed to disappear into. Maria did not want to believe it, but it appeared as if it had gone into outer space.

She swallowed hard. "Wow, dad, I knew you should have been a baseball player" she said still unable to believe what she had just seen. She then turned to look at her father, "So, what do we do now?" she asked. The man looked down at her.

"We go in there" he said pointing with his thumb at a cave facing his back.

Maria looked puzzled. "And do what?" she enquired.

"Sleep" her father replied as he walked towards the cave.

"But I don't think I'll be able to sleep after all that's happened today" Maria said as she hurried after him.

"Try" he said. He then looked at a particular spot on his daughter's head. "I like it" he said.

Maria had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. "Huh?" was all she could muster. The man chuckled, and pointed at her head.

"Your hair," he replied. Maria felt her head and noticed the pony tail that had been protruding from the top left side of her head had disappeared, it must have been blasted off by a laser beam back in the city. She was puzzled at herself for not noticing it herself. She then swallowed hard as she realised how close that was to her head.

"Come on," her father said. The two of them then stepped inside, found suitably comfortable spots and lay down. Maria turned her head to the left in order to look at her father, who already had his eyes closed.

"You seem very confident dad," she said. Without opening his eyes her father answered the question she never verbally asked.

"I have faith" Maria knew what he meant and decided that she would say no more. She would follow her father's lead. Besides, she was getting tired.

To be continued...

DVD Reviews

Transformers G1, Season One Box Set by Simon Plumble

Fans have been screaming for the release of G1 on DVD in the UK following the box sets released elsewhere in the world. Now, the first season is available as a four-disc set containing the entire first season from 1984...

I can remember seeing the G1 series when it first aired in the UK back on TVAM in the 80s. Nothing to do in the mornings during the school holidays, but I always used to make sure I was up for things like Batman and Transformers.

If you talk to most dedicated fans, the original series isn't looked upon too fondly. Most fans seem to prefer the comics over the series in almost every respect - storytelling, continuity... pretty much everything.

When it came to watching this set, I hadn't really seen any G1 for the best part of two decades apart from the occasional episode in the background whenever I visit Sven, so I was a little apprehensive going by the

reputation the series had.

The DVD contains all sixteen episodes of the first season, and unusually for an animated series back then, there are two multi-part stories, something that other animated shows weren't really brave enough to attempt until the 90s when they realised that viewers had



greater attention spans than they gave them credit for.

When I watched these episodes, I didn't think that they were as bad as many fans made them out to be. The stories were generally well written and seemed to be more mature than other shows of the era. The animation was also impressive for its time, especially the character transformations. It's better than

most other animated shows of the time, and I did enjoy watching them all.

One thing I was impressed with was the inclusion of Chip. It has taken television a long time to accept the fact that disabled people can make a valuable contribution to society, yet an animated series from the 80s manages to demonstrate this perfectly. It's something the producers should be proud of.



The series isn't perfect though. All too often, there were moments that made me cringe in front of the television. Whenever the Autobots defeated Megatron, they were seen standing around cheering and it really cheapened the climax of the episodes.

Also, episodes did tend to get repetitive with some of the characters dialogue. In pretty much every episode you can guarantee that Optimus will shout, "Autobots, roll out" while Megatron seems to have a penchant for crying, "Decepticons, retreat!".

Another thing that bugged me throughout the set was the way other characters referred to Optimus. Some of the other Autobots always called him Optimus Prime which felt really forced and unnatural. I know it seems trivial, but it really began to grate after a while.

In addition to the first season, the set also contains two bonus episodes, although they aren't up to the standard of the first season, especially the revamped "electronic" main theme. Also, both of the bonus episodes were the first parts of multi-part stories and it left me wondering why they had been included.

The main thing that will attract fans are the extras, and there's plenty to get your teeth into. There are character profiles, a superb fan art gallery, scripts to some of the

episodes, trailers and toy adverts, plus a quiz.

If you manage to complete the quiz successfully (which isn't too difficult), you will be rewarded with access to a hidden menu giving you access to three more videos - a couple of short character promos, plus something rather special, that's almost worth buying the set for on its own! All I will say is that when fans first saw this, it convinced people that a live action Transformers movie was quite possibly to bring to the big screen!

The series isn't without its faults - there are technical problems with the animation throughout, for example characters changing colours (such as an all-blue Optimus!), or several of the same character being on screen at once etc.

Technically, the package isn't the best it could have been. It doesn't appear as if any of the episodes in the set have been remastered and the DVD transfer seems grainy at times. Also, and I suspect that this is connected with the quality of the source tapes, the sound level dips throughout the episodes and at times, the stereo channels don't seem to be particularly well balanced.

Overall, despite the flaws, this is still a fantastic package and is well worth buying. No matter what you may think of the series,

this should be an essential part of every fans collection, and the extras alone make this a package that no self-respecting fan should be without.



Transformers: Armada Vol. 1 by Simon Plumbe

The first two volumes of Armada have been released on DVD for the Region 2 market, but are they worth buying...?



Armada is the latest spin on the Transformers franchise and once again, it takes on its own angle on TF continuity. I won't go into it here, as others could explain it better. However, by starting at the beginning with each new series, it does make things more accessible for the casual fan and TV viewer.

On this first DVD, there are the first three episodes of Armada - Encounter, Metamorphosis and Base. The stories still revolve around the Autobots and Decepticons, with Optimus Prime and Megatron leading their respective sides, but this time, a third group are involved - the Mini-cons. The Mini-cons are another race of smaller robots which have immense power. When they combine with other robots, they act as power boosters offering incredibly increases in strength and destructive capability.

They escape Cybertron where they were being persecuted and used by both the Autobots and Decepticons, and crash land on Earth. A few million years later and the Mini-cons are awakened by a trio of school children, and once he

becomes aware of their existence, Megatron races to take control of the Mini-cons and their power...

The stories are generally well written and it's good to see that the episodes weren't rushed in anyway. The story arc on this DVD really sets the scene and introduces the main characters, and doesn't seem to be too bogged down with the children in the story. Naturally, it was included to help the series appeal to a younger audience, but it's not done too badly.

The extras are fairly limited. Two of the extras are little more than collected clips from the episodes on the disc. The quiz is more impressive however, and once you successfully complete it, you are given an access code to download a

screensaver from the official website.

Despite the limited content, it's still a fairly good disc. Picture and sound quality is superb, as is the presentation with some wonderfully animated menus. My only gripe is that it could have benefited from more episodes, especially considering the number that were on the UK Beast Wars DVD.

Still, it's an essential buy for any Armada fan, and it's pretty entertaining stuff no matter what TF era you prefer.



Transformers Collecting: A Beginners Guide To Robots In Disguise and Armada by Sven Harvey

Another turning point in the 2 decades of the Transformers came in Y2K - the 15th anniversary of the line under the Transformers banner in Japan. Takara decided against doing their own version of Beast Machines opting to have the USA packaged toys on sale in Japan for a short while with no Japanese version of the TV show... They had far better ideas.

Transformers: Car Robots

In an interesting twist Car Robots initially pitted the vehicular Cybertrons (Autobots) against the bestial Destrongers (Predacons). The initial Autobot line up consisted of 6 repaints of the Generation 2 Gobot toys which never ended up with a Japanese

release to my knowledge beforehand, three brand new "deluxe" sized cars and a new Fire Truck version of Convoy. Fire Convoy as he was called is arguably one of the best Transformers ever made.

Fire Convoy's fire truck mode splits into two - the cab transforms into a robot who though different from the Prime of old, is very reminiscent of the original Autobot leader. The rear section converts to a battle platform. The robot is quite poseable, but nothing compared to what happens when you combine it with the battle platform to form a "super" robot. The larger Super Fire Convoy is very poseable with more points of articulation than even Laser Rod Optimus Prime.

Along with Super Fire Convoy, the three "Car Brothers" - Wildride, Mach Alert and Speedbreaker hark back to the era of the original Autobot cars, though don't have metal parts.



The Destrongers were led by Gigatron, a six mode character whose main modes were dragon and jet as well as robot, who led 4 Transmetals 2 re-colours - Gelshark (great white Shark), Gaskunk (skunk), Guildo (flying squirrel) and Gusher (frog).



Later on the range was expanded with vehicular Destrans, whose faction logo was an upside down G2 Autobot symbol plus Cybertron J-trains, Build Team, God Magnus and re-colours from Machine Wars. The vehicular Destrans were re-colours of Laser Rod G2 Prime as Dark Convoy (the new black and chrome colour scheme really did the mould justice, even with the electronics from Laser Rod Prime missing) and re-colours of the G1 "Special Team" Combacticons. The J-Trains were simply numbered but combined into JRX as well as having individual robot modes, as did the build team - Build Cyclone, Build Boy, Build Typhoon and Build Hurricane which formed Build King. God Magnus was another new mould, a rather leggy robot mode to boot, but a good all round toy whose face did bear a resemblance to Ultra Magnus from the 1986/7 G1 line. He too transformed into a car transporter, but God Magnus also combined with Fire Convoy to form God Fire Convoy which unleashed yet more sound effects!

Gigatron was later re-tooled slightly and re-coloured to produce Devil Gigatron with 10 modes thanks to a couple of extra pegs on the mould and imagination... Though a lot of imagination was needed to resolve the mess that each of the new modes was into a recognisable form... Why did he want to turn into an elephant anyway? The final toy in the line was Brave Maximus - a re-coloured primarily black and red Fortress Maximus minus his weaponry.

Transformers: Robots In Disguise

After the disappointing sales of Beast Machines and the sales bias towards the vehicular toys, the line was cancelled early and Hasbro drafted Takaras Carobots range to create Transformers: Robots In Disguise.

Fire Convoy was renamed Optimus Prime, whilst the Car Brothers became X-Brawn, Prowl and Sideburn, Gigatron became Megatron whilst the other Predacons became Skybyte, Gas Skunk, Dark Scream, and Slapper. One major mistake came to the fore from Optimus Primes voice box - the sound effects were changed to vocalise in English and the toy proclaimed "Optimus Prime... MAXIMISE". Someone wasn't paying attention at Hasbro....



In fact the entire Car Robots range was released bar Brave Maximus, who was in the USA dubbed version of the TV show being named Fortress Maximus, but the toy didn't stand up to USA toy standards any longer. The trains were released as Mega Sized toys and formed Rail Racer in their combined form

whilst the Build Team became Wedge, Grimlock (!), Hightower and Heavy Load and combined to form Landfill. Unsurprisingly God Magnus became Ultra Magnus and the combined form with Prime was named Omega Prime.

In the story-line Megatron was almost destroyed and in a manner that seems to be becoming common, was rebuilt as Galvatron (Devil Gigatron) with extra powers and modes.

The range wasn't big enough for Hasbro though so extra repaints were added to bulk out the range, including re-colours of the Machine Wars jets to go with the Machine Wars cars in Carobots to form versus 2 packs at the Deluxe price point.

In fact Hasbro drew from not only that but also G2 to re-colour the Lasercycles and even Beast Machines toys, the most interesting of which was Jetstorm repainted as Jetfire... until Hasbro realised they had not got the name rights at the time and renamed the toy Storm Jet (it must be noted that they got the name back now though!) Also included in the RiD range were carry overs from Beast Machines in the form of an awful Predacon 3 headed dog called Bruticus, a cool little Megatron, Megabolt Megatron, then turned into the flying head from season 2 of Beast Machines and could also lock onto a Fortress Maximus as its head and Air Attack Optimus Primal who I went on and on about earlier...

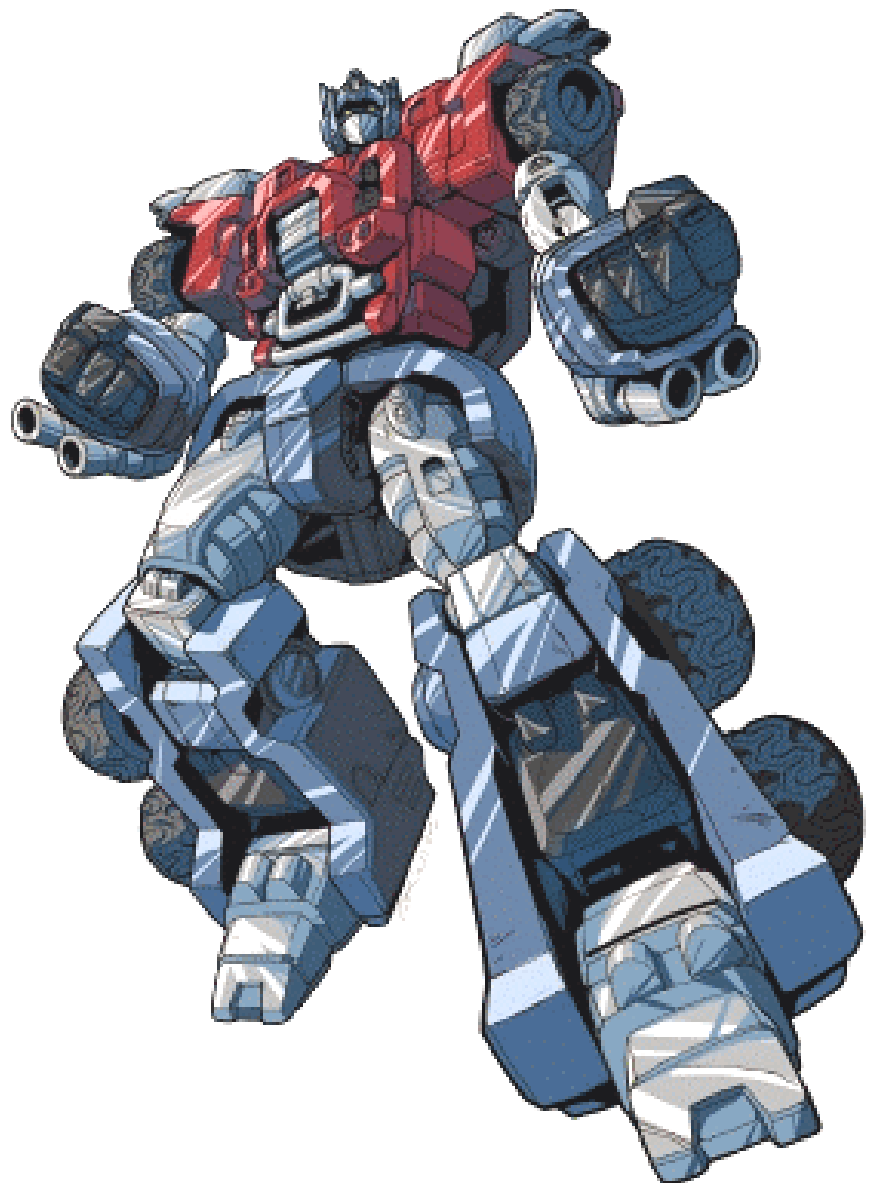
Transformers Armada

Transformers: Robots In Disguise was essentially a filler line, as Hasbro really had lost their way and were unsure how to follow Beast

Machines properly. In association with Takara they came up with Transformers: Armada.

Hasbro have at this point made it clear that each time they do a Transformers line that they will "reset" the story line and though there will always be an Optimus Prime and a Megatron (who always seems destined to get destroyed and rebuilt as Galvatron) the rest of the story line will be a new different spin on the original concept.

In the case of Armada it is an Ark full of MiniCons that have crashed to Earth millions of years ago rather than the Autobots and Decepticons. A couple of kids accidentally wake up a MiniCon and a signal is sent to Cybertron which summons Optimus Prime, Megatron and some of their troops to Earth to start the "age old battle between Autobot and Decepticon".



TRANSFORMERS ARMADA

The crux of the new toy line is that the Autobots and Decepticons still transform as normal but come with mini Transformers in their own faction - the MiniCons. Resembling Micromasters though a little bigger and certainly more complex, these smaller figure fit onto the larger toys using circular powerlink connectors which can activate special features in the toys.

There are several MiniCon sets, each with 3 figures included, some of which can combine with each other. For instance the Air Defence team - 3 jets, can combine to form a sword called Star Saber for the larger toys. The Street Action team combine in to a single robot - Perceptor.

Yes there is the name reusing again... Get used to it. Hasbro have to reuse the names to keep the copyrights. The yellow Autobot Hot Shot for instance obviously should be called Hot Rod (in fact he is accidentally in the TV show thanks to dialogue errors). Megatron's MiniCon partner is called Leader-1 (a bit of a come down for the good-guy Gobots leader now Hasbro own the Gobots too!) and Optimus Prime's Bumblebee look-a-like MiniCon is called Sparkplug, which was the name of one of the humans in the original storyline ("Sparkplug" Witwickey's sons were Buster and Spike). Other characters include Cyclonus who has gone from being a sleek jet to a fat helicopter, Red Alert who has become a 4WD rescue vehicle (he used to be a fire chiefs Lamborghini Countach MkII) and Starscream who has gone from being a grey and red F-15 jet to

being a red and grey, um,... jet. Even Laserbeak is back and is still a spy bird, but has changed sides having got a huge Autobot logo on his bum, and lost his voice (well compared with his comic representation anyway)...

The toys feature electronics at lower price points than before with the mid-level Maxcons having lights and/or sound effects and some interesting gimmicks. Optimus Prime has an infra red feature that orders the trailer to transform automatically when you convert the cab to robot mode and then to the form of the



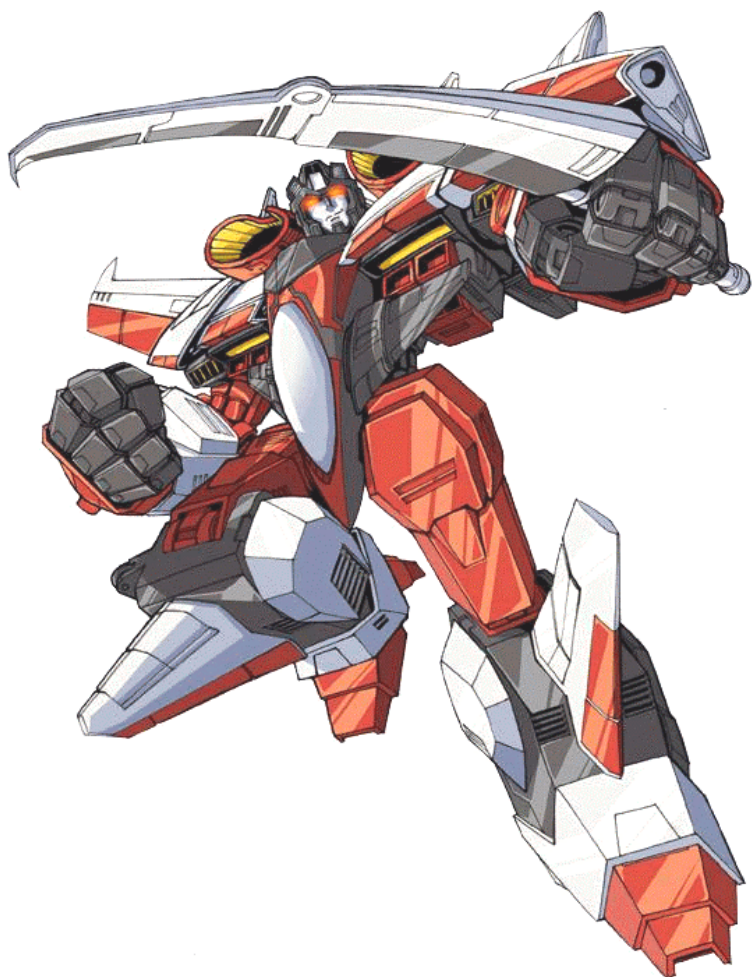
upper part of the larger version of the robot mode as the trailer converts to base and then, well, to legs.

Some of the toys are very well done, especially Megatron, Red Alert and Starscream. Optimus Prime's cab and small robot mode are also very well done but his larger mode, Hot Shot and many of the toys suffer from a lack of articulation, which more than suggests that Hasbro US had a lot to do with their development unlike the new moulds used for Carobots/RiD. Prime's gimmick is cool, but leaves the toy lacking some depth. RiD Optimus Prime and Laser Rod Prime are far better toys in my opinion. Hasbro US should let Takara do the toy development whilst they concentrate on the story lines and characters development. After all its that combination that made the early years of Transformers so successful! Least we forget that these new gimmicks always pale in comparison to the best gimmick of all... A robot that can transform into an everyday

object or vehicle!

The Packaging is good for Armada, though unfortunately lacks the tech specs and bio-profiles found on all toys in the USA previously, including the tri-lingual RiD packaging (well at least most of them). It is a shame then that the included "collectable" stickers were not replaced with collectors cards similar to those in the Japanese toys over the last 17 years and Hasbro's own Heroes Of Cybertron featuring character artwork on one side and the tech specs and bio-profiles on the other. Its especially annoying as each toy comes with the SAME comic/catalogue... Could these have not been done one for each character explaining the characters back ground and giving their details in some form? Having said that these details are available.... but only from Hasbro's US website.

The future looks bright also. Armada is due to carry on in the USA until the end of 2003 (repaints of Megatron as Galvatron and Starscream as Thundercracker have already been released). And hopefully by the time you read this, Unicron will have been released (but there should be more about the current stuff elsewhere in this issue!



In the UK Armada is likely to last for just the 2003 period. Why? 2004 is the 20th anniversary year of the Transformers in the UK and USA. Hasbro at least in the USA have opted to have 4 (!) toy lines for 2004 - Transformers: Energon for the kids, Transformers: Universe which is a line of recolours from previous lines, which is designed to allow the current kids getting into Transformers to enjoy the toys from the past, and a further line designed, with brand new moulds, specifically at the adult collectors market (a name has not been announced but G1 styling is very likely) and finally the Toys R Us commemorative series of G1 reissues!

Toy Reviews

Beast Wars: Fuzors - Silverbolt by Simon Plumbe

I'm not what you would consider to be a typical Transformers fan or collector. At the moment, I have a fairly limited collection of merchandise. This comprises of just five toys, a handful of comics and fanzines and just two DVDs. Don't get me wrong, I love watching Beast Wars though (although I'm not too mad on Beast Machines), and Sven has been trying to brainwash me for sometime into appreciating all eras of Transformers!

As I said, while I'm not a major collector, I have got a couple of figures of some of my favourite characters from the shows, and I started off my collection with one of my favourite Beast Wars characters, Silverbolt...

One thing that struck me straight away with Silverbolt figure is the amount of detail on the toy. Whether it is the small detail on the face, or the shading on the wings, an incredible amount of care and attention to detail has been paid to make this toy look as good as possible. The face is a superb rendition of the show's character,

The toy is also incredibly durable. Even though it's moulded out of plastic, it didn't feel fragile while being transformed and it felt as if it would hold up to most punishment that was put its way (a bit like the character, really!).

Transforming Silverbolt is straightforward enough, and once transformed, it's going to stay in the form you put it into no matter what happens unlike some of the toys I've seen. It is also one of those toys that looks equally good in robot mode or beast mode, something that a lot of the Beast Wars range failed to achieve. Some tended to look too bulky and distorted in their robot modes, and the same applies to many of the Robots In Disguise and other ranges, but that certainly can't be said about Silverbolt.

One thing to look out for when buying this toy is that there are two slight variations available of the standard issue. While you can't tell

from the photos here, when the toy is in beast mode, you can see a lot of detailed shading on the face. On some of the Silverbolts in circulation, this shading is missing or is not as pronounced and it certainly doesn't look anywhere near as good. It's only a minor thing, but this is one of those toy variants that actually does make a difference to how it looks on display.



Overall, I must say that this is a great toy, and is one I can recommend heartily to any Beast Wars or Transformers fan and it will look great on display as part of any fan's collection.

Beast Wars - Optimal Optimus by Simon Plumbe

This is the latest addition to my rather limited toy collection that currently only consists of seven figures. This is one that I found a bit daunting at first - I had never owned a Transformer that was this big before...!

Introduced in the third season of Beast Wars, Optimal Optimus is the result of the changes that took place to Transmetal Optimus when he became the temporary custodian of Optimus Prime's spark. To say that his body became unstable would be a gross understatement and as well as doubling in size (as you can see from the episode still here), he changed into a new armour plated look with several new modes at his disposal.



range and when it's on display it towers above everything else in the range. It's approximately double the height of toys like Cheetor and Rattrap.

It's a great toy and despite being constructed from plastic, it's incredibly durable. It's not the easiest of toys to transform and it can prove to be frustrating at first, but you'll soon get the hang of it. Also, I did have some reservations about the safety of the toy - it was all too easy for the missiles to be launched and if it

wasn't for the fact that I wear glasses, I would have had two missiles fly into my face directly at my eyes.

As well as the standard Beast mode and Robot mode, Optimal Optimus also has a flight mode and ground assault mode. As you can imagine, with this many modes of transformation, you'd expect the modes to be fairly bland and unimaginative, but nothing could be further from the truth.

This toy looks absolutely stunning, no matter what mode it is in. Compared to the TV series, the toy is near-perfect, and the sheer size and power of the character is conveyed wonderfully.

The colouring is wonderful, and the metallic paintwork is nothing short of remarkable. While there are figures with better painting, or with more detail on the toy itself, I don't think there are many that offer such an impressive all-round package.

It's part of the electronic range of Beast Wars toys, and the missile launchers light up when fired. Obviously, you don't need the missiles in when you use the lights, and if you're looking directly at the toy, that's probably a good idea...!

The toy is in scale with the other Beast Wars



Still, despite the odd gripe, it's definitely worth of a place in everyone's collection and is superb value for money for such a mammoth toy.

Homecoming by Simon Plumbe

Auto Assembly 2003 is a special event for us here at Infinite Frontiers. We've been planning this for over 12 months, and as well as our website, it's one of the projects we run that we are the most proud of, but why is this year's event so special to us?

Infinite Frontiers has been around since 1989, first as a small local sci-fi club with monthly meetings (and we were lucky if we managed to get about 10-15 people each month!). After about a year, we abandoned our event-based activities and moved into fan publishing producing a wide range of fanzines, mainly being innovators in the field of electronic publishing.

We didn't really get into running events on a large scale until 1996. In August of that year, we ran our first (and only) Star Trek convention, Delta Quadrant. Despite numerous problems and difficulties that we encountered (that we think may have been caused by other local groups at the time), it was an event well worth doing, and one that heralded a number of firsts and landmark achievements for us.

It was during the weekend that we had the world premiere of an episode of Star Trek: Voyager, some six weeks before it aired in the US (with thanks to Viacom!), plus it saw the launch of our Star Trek club, Alpha Quadrant. The hotel seemed to be a good central venue and was well suited to our needs for the convention.

After the end of the convention, Alpha Quadrant had started to grow and within a month we had our first meeting. Things seemed to do well, growing steadily in terms of numbers attending and members, but Star Trek fandom started to change, and fans were less interested in meeting other fans ... modern Trek fans seemed more interested in attending just to meet actors and watch new episodes. We changed venues a few times, trying to find more accessible (and in some cases friendly) venues, before settling on what could almost have been thought of as Alpha Quadrant's final resting place...

This last venue was where the change in fandom was the most apparent, and we found that numbers were dwindling. Despite our best efforts, Star Trek fans just weren't interested in monthly or even bi-monthly meetings so in early 2002, we brought the meetings to an end while still keeping in touch with our members electronically.

What does this have to do with Auto Assembly? Well, the venue for both the Star Trek convention and the final venue for Alpha Quadrant was none other than the Britannia Hotel in New Street, Birmingham - the home of Auto Assembly 2003!

Bearing in mind that both Delta Quadrant and the final run of Alpha Quadrant meetings were held at the Britannia, it feels like a homecoming for us. Our main fandom activities really started at this hotel and it's good to come back to where it all began.

One thing that is really strange about this year's event is that we have quite a few members of our Star Trek club in attendance. We haven't run a club meeting for well over a year, and it's going to be great to see so many familiar faces. It's been far too long for us to arrange a member gathering, and hopefully they'll all go away converted TF fans as well!

It's sad that the only way to get a reunion of Star Trek fans is at a Transformers event, but it just shows how strong and vibrant the Transformers fan community is, and as long as that community is thriving, I believe that we'll be running Auto Assembly events for a long time to come...



The Road To Auto Assembly 2004 by Sven Harvey

As I write its just over a week to go before Auto Assembly 2003 takes place (where its likely you picked up this issue of CT), we have had well over 130 pre-bookings and its looks as if we are on course to have over 200 attendees, a bit of a jump from Auto Assembly 2's attendance of less than 70.

So it looks like there is a damn good argument for doing another event. But do I want to do another one? Well yes, and I can say that with all my heart but there are some concerns. As I discovered at the last Auto Assembly, people tend to turn up specifically for guests, which is worrying as, like any convention, we only get guests on the basis of "subject to work commitments" which literally could mean that the night before the event we could receive a phone call with a guest pulling out, and then we would have the situation where attendees would be disappointed. This is why the presence of Simon Furman and Andrew Wildman at this years event wasn't pushed particularly by myself and we tended to veer away from more than a passing mention as I don't want to disappoint people if something went wrong.

Also our budget was tight. Originally the event was due to take place in March to avoid the prospective Transforce 2003 and BotCon Europe 2003. We were originally aiming for Auto Assembly 2003 to be a Transformer Collectors Fair, hence the low registration and entrance cost, but as it was revealed that there would be no Transforce this year, plus following the BotCon/OTFCC situation in the USA, we were unsure of the status of a BotCon/OTFCC Europe convention this year, we had to change our plans (also my normal day job threw up some issues in March so AA 2003 was moved to August. Obviously with AA2003 basically looking like being the only TF event this year, we needed to add to it, and I hope that it's turned out to be fun for everyone who has attended.

For the record it would appear that a European OTFCC may well take place in the Autumn courtesy of Showmasters and 3H,

but I have heard nothing really about it as yet...

Fast forward to next year, 2004. It is of course the 20th Anniversary of the release of the original Transformers range here in the UK, and I think it's important that there is an Auto Assembly 2004.

But it's got to be good, and this is what worries me. For a long time I have wanted to get an exclusive toy, but even with semi-regular contact with Hasbro UK this simply didn't happen for AA2003, though we intend to re-double our efforts for our 2004 event. Fortunately we have built up good relations with Simon Furman, Andrew Wildman, Jane Lawson from Metrodome, who we will be asking back for next years event, but hopefully we would also like to get the likes of Atari, Lee Sullivan, Lew Stringer, Panini Comics and Hasbro UK themselves along to next years event.

At the moment we are looking at the first weekend in April for the 2004 event, and we would like to come back to the Britannia, Birmingham for the event, subject to access for the disabled. A few questions remain however - do you want the event to take place on Saturday 3rd April, Sunday 4th April (04/04/04!) or maybe all weekend? It is the biggie afterall. We are currently looking at costings around £7.50-£10 for an adult attendee based on a single day (probably double that, maybe a little less for a two-day affair) - if the event was to run over both days of the weekend we would try and get good room rates and possibly have a disco/party on the Saturday night. Essentially we would probably look at it more like a sci-fi convention such as our own Delta Quadrant Star Trek convention, but it would need support from Hasbro UK and the Transformers license holders.

One big change would be the involvement of core Transfans. We would need a select group of people nuts enough to give us a hand over the event with things like security duties and the like.

So from this point its over to you, dear reader. We need feedback from you. We need to

know - do you want an event next year, and if so, Saturday, Sunday or both? And finally would you be willing to help out at the event, to help the growth of Transfandom in general? We may well be taking deposits against tickets for next years event as well as details of those interested, so please make your views known and we hope to see you in April (assuming there is going to be a Transforce and we don't change the date again!)

developing in Pagestream on my AmigaOne and the replacement for my knackered old printer. Hopefully there will be a bit more emphasis on the stories and reviews next time, and for anyone interested in writing stories in CTs Transformers Unlimited continuity, the writing bible should be available early in the new year, earlier if I can...



The Future of The Cybertronian Times

My thanks to Simon for taking the main duties over for this issue whilst I had tech and other issues to deal with, and with a bit of luck normal service will return next issue, in time for Auto Assembly 2004.

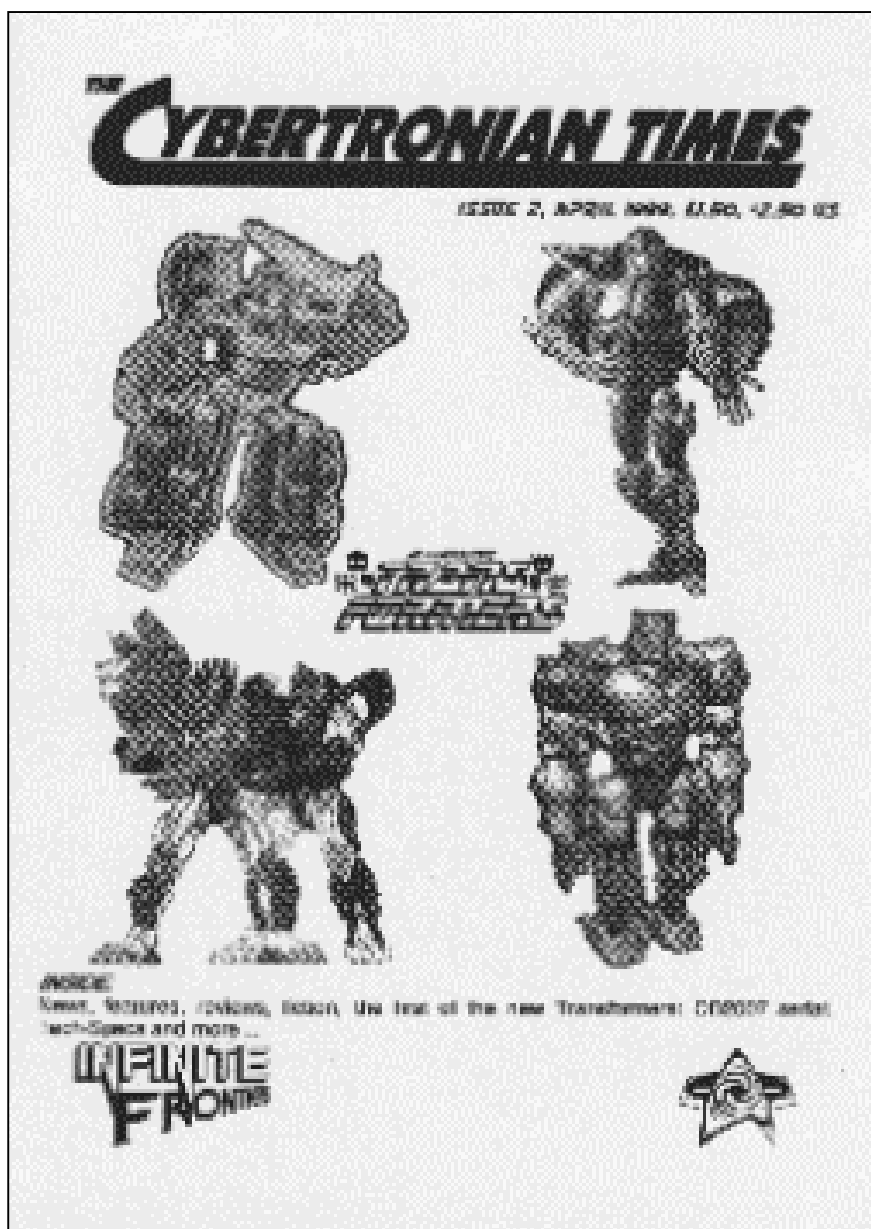
Sven Harvey

In the last issue of CT we suggested that this issue may well end up on CD-ROM in a HTML form for use in computers. Those with observational powers will have notice however that this issue has been traditionally produced on paper. We did receive quite a lot of feedback about the idea, and many people were quite intrigued but equally many were concerned that they wouldn't be able to read CT were ever they like, which from my point of view was quite a concern...

In the future technology will be available to allow CT to be read on a PDA like electronic book delivery system, but this is still a way off and to enable people to read CT at an Auto Assembly, say, a paper based 'zine is essential.

However old out of print CTs are due to be converted into PDF (Adobe Acrobat) files for download from the website and we may well collect a few issues together on a CD-ROM along with some extras.

Issue 6 of CT will be produced on paper but with a new layout and general design which I will be



Auto Assembly 2003 - Thanks

We'd like to extend our special thanks to everyone who pre-registered for Auto Assembly 2003 and helped make it our biggest Transformers event to-date:

Paul Anderson, Carol Ann Barnaby, Robin Barnard, Stephen Bates, Hardial Bhogal, Kulwant Bhogal, Rashpal Bhogal, David Blackman, Evan Blades, Richard Blades, Graham Boydon, Ceri Brimfield, Melanie Briney, C Burbage, P Burbage, Noel Butterworth, Tom Castle, Edmund Chalmers, Kevin Clarke, Veronica Clarke, Keith Cooper, Anne-Marie Corcoran, Celine Corcoran, Declan Corcoran, Paul Cross, Philip Cuthbertson, Sallyann Daly, Andy Darduca, Geoff De'Arth, Ben Deegan, Christopher Devonport, Ryan Downie, Alexander Dunar, Caroline Eldridge, Christopher Eldridge, John Eldridge, Samantha Eldridge, Mark Farndale, Jo Ford, Paul Fox, Emily Gibson, John Goodall, Joss Goodall, David Grainger, S Haines, Rasmus Hardiker, Ann Harvey, Claire Harvey, Daniel Harvey, Sophie Harvey, Stefan Harvey, Sven Harvey, Tony Harvey, William Harvey, Steve Herbert, Joanne Higgs, William Hildreth, Paul Hitchens, Peter Hodgson, Jonathan Hope, Michael Hope, David Hughes, Simon Hughes, Ben Jackson, Matt Jackson, Craig James, Liz James, Paul James, Andrew Johnson, Devin Jones, Peter Jones, Richard Kershaw, Peter Langford, Julian Lemel, Phil Longworth, Ben Loom, Nigel Mabley, Roger Mabley, Andrew Mahoney, Christopher Mead, Ricky Monaghan, Clare Mouncy, Matt Oliver, Matthew Parkes, Jason Parry, Guy Patey, Adam Perry, Gary Philp, Cher Plumbe, Simon Plumbe, Colin Pringle, Simon Prior, Thomas Prior, Anthony Pudney, Chris Pudney, Andy Quadling, Chris Quadling, Jillian Rann, Tracy Reading, Neil Richardson, Philip Richardson, Sharon Richardson, Claire Roberts, Nouri Sardar, Mark Scanlon, Maggie Seddon, Simon Slade, Tim Smith, Andrew Sparks, Rob Srncz, Mark Stevenson, Alexis Taylor, Robin Tipler, Alex Turner, David Wallace,

Adam Walters, Maylan Webb, Michael Webb, Stuart Webb, John Webster, Elliot Weller, Nick Westwood, Robert Wheeler, Denam Whitehead, Sasha Whitehead, Matthew Whitelock, Paul Williams, S Wood, Stephanie Wood, Stephen Wood, Joanne Wright, Tom Wright

And to our special guests:

Simon Furman, Jane Lawson,
Andrew Wildman

Finally, the dealers who had pre-booked at the time this fanzine went to press:-

Epic Heroes
Infinite Frontiers
Nigel Mably
Plasmabath
SKRV
Space Bridge
T-4-E
The Transformer Shop

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped out with Auto Assembly 2003 and the writing of this 'zine.

A big thanks to Nostalgia & Comics, Forbidden Planet (Birmingham), Toys R Us (Birmingham Dale End), The Britannia Hotel (Birmingham), and The Andromeda Bookshop (Birmingham) for their help and support in the run up to Auto Assembly.

I must also express my thanks to Red Bird Publishing, Panini Comics UK, Metrodome Group and Trinity Publications (Model & Collectors Mart) for the extras we have been able to give away at Auto Assembly or for their generous support, and I hope we see them at the next Auto Assembly!

INFINITE FRONTIERS

Infinite Frontiers Online

Infinite Frontiers Online is the home to all of the online activities for Infinite Frontiers, organisers of Auto Assembly 2003.

We have an extensive website that caters for all tastes. With 18 main sections, we're sure you'll find something of interest.

There is an extensive sci-fi section, plus areas dedicated to Transformers, Star Trek, Computing, Music, Wrestling and more, each containing articles, features, reviews, interviews and a whole lot more besides as well as several art galleries.

For computer game fans, we have a massive downloads section where you can download over 200 commercial games across a range of formats, absolutely FREE! These are online legally and with the full support of the copyright owners!!



Finally, we have a FREE discussion forum. You'll find plenty of lively debate and chat on a range of subjects, including topics that the site caters for and more.

Why not pay us a visit next time you are online!

Web:

www.infinitefrontiers.org

Forum:

<http://ifonline.proboards4.com>

“Soundwave”, Artwork (c) Sean Bastick



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8th - 9th May 2004, Britannia Hotel, Birmingham