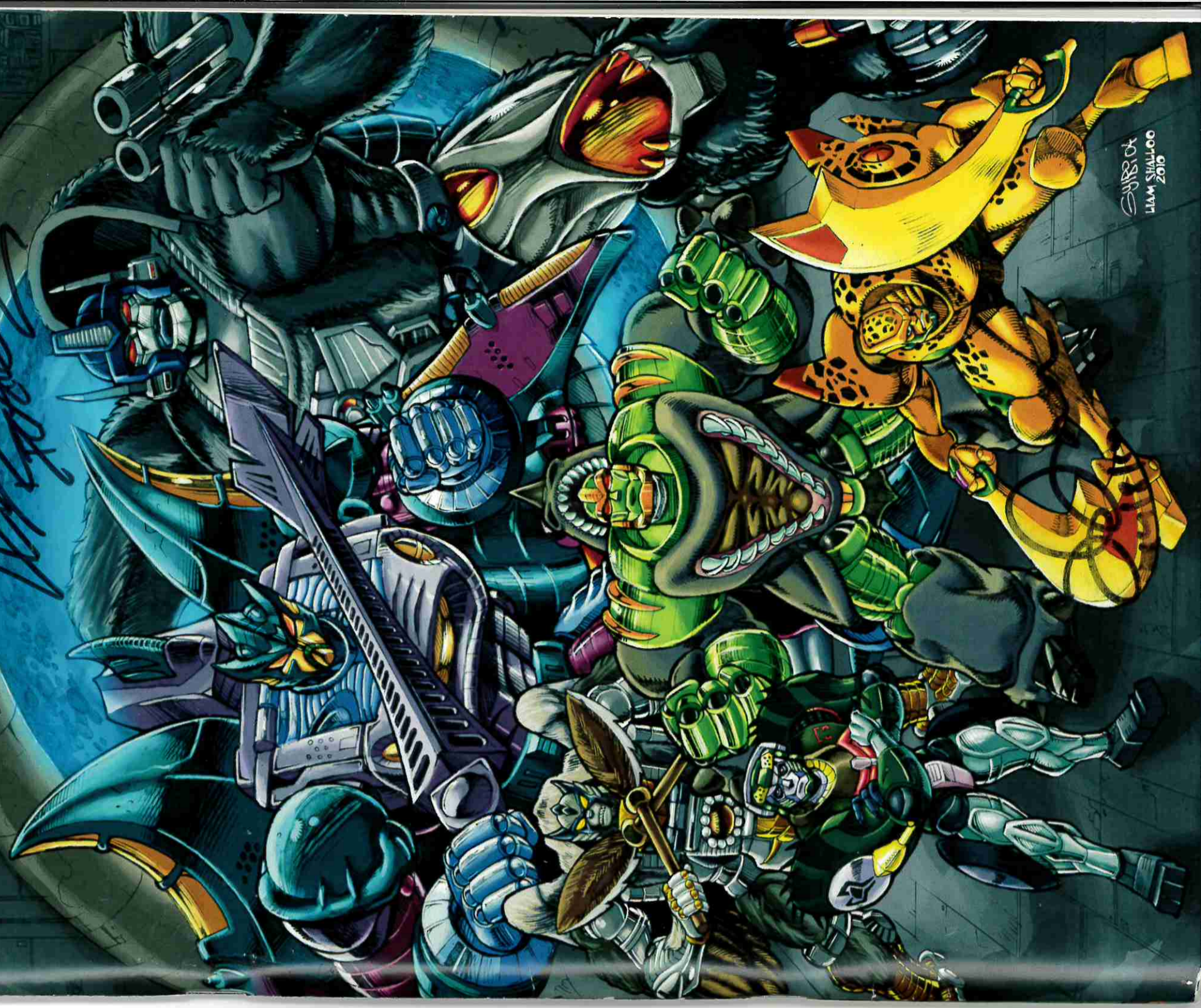


ISSUE 11 • £6.00 • AUGUST 2010 • AN INFINITE FRONTIERS PRODUCTION

THE CYBERTRONIAN TIMES

Jeff Grubb



SYRICK
Liam Stalioo
2010

GARRY CHALK



Garry Chalk moved at the age of six from Southampton, England to Vancouver. After being involved in a variety of careers including the army, the stock market and Social Services, Garry saw a production of "Of Mice and Men" that spurred him into acting.

Initially performing in theatres across Canada and being involved in comedy improv, he worked his way into national and local television commercials, video, and industrial films.

Over the last twenty years, Garry has worked virtually non-stop in television episodics and TV movies of the week, largely as the lead or guest star. These projects have included "Doorways to the Unknown," "Palace Guard," "Broken Badges," "Small Sacrifices," "MacGyver," and most recently "Highlander" and "Woman on the Ledge." Garry also had a featured role as the General in the "Watchmen" film.

Garry is also a regular in the voice production houses in Vancouver and his list of regional and national radio spots and campaigns is lengthy, including General Motors, Toyota, McDonalds, General Paint, GM Goodwrench and ABC Restaurants, as well as numerous corporate video voice-overs.

Garry's wide range of character voices have been part of such animation series as "T-Rex," "Dream Patrol," "Conan," "G.I. Joe," "King Arthur and the Knights of Justice," and "Transformers, Beast Machines," as well as many other animation features, including "The Fearless Four," "Rudolph," "Camelot," and the upcoming "Reboot, The Movie."

Garry had a recurring role on the series, "Cold Squad," as Inspector Pawlaczuk, for which he was a two time Gemini Award winner and one time Leo Award nominee for Best Supporting Actor in a Dramatic Series. He has also played the recurring role of Colonel Chekov on the television series "Stargate SG-1."

SCOTT MCNEIL



Scott McNeil was born in Canada before moving to Australia, where he spent his childhood before returning to Canada. A trip to Disneyland would be the first step in the path to voice acting. It was there he discovered that people were paid to do different voices.

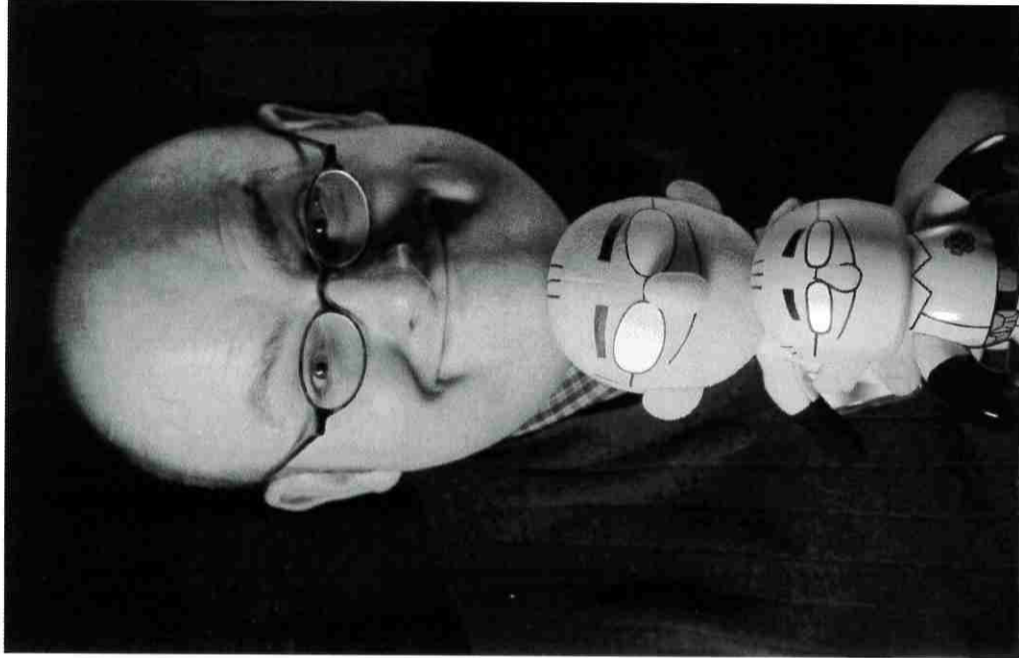
Scott studied at Studio 88, an theatre school in Vancouver.

We'd run out of space if we wanted to list the many series which Scott has been involved in. A man in demand, voicing three of the initial line-up of *Beast Wars* and quite possibly the three most popular characters - Megatron excepted in Rat-trap, Dinobot and Waspinator.

Outside of *Transformers* - he's voiced Wolverine, in "Wolverine & the X-Men", Duo Maxwell in "Gun-dam Wing", Cobra Commander in "GI Joe". Several characters in the 2002 "Masters of the Universe" cartoon. He's also lent his voice to several video games including the Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War games.

His live-action appearances run the range from Highlander: The Series to Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation

DERRICK J WYATT

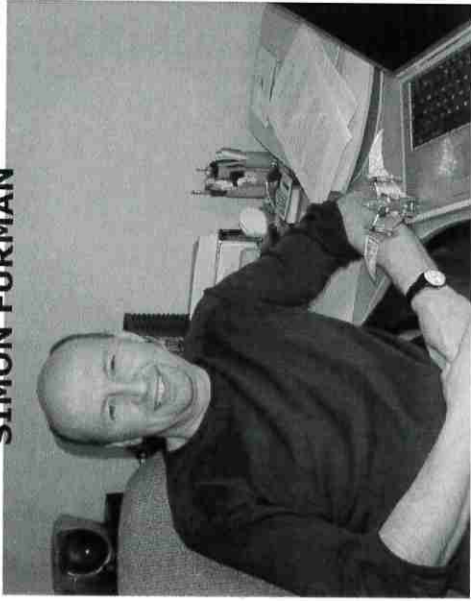


Derrick J Wyatt attended the Joe Kubert school of art in New Jersey, where one of his teachers was José Delbo. Another was Kim DeMulder! Later on, he received an internship at Spumco in California, which would graduate to full-time employment with the company. Derrick eventually left Spumco, subsequently getting a job at Warner Bros. Animation, where he worked on the comedy/wrestling series *Mucha Lucha* as a designer. Other opportunities opened up for him while at Warners, where he would join the staff of *Teen Titans* and *Legion of Super Heroes* as a full-time character designer.

He was the art director, lead character designer, and a color stylist on the Cartoon Network-produced *Transformers Animated*. As a longtime *Transformers* fan, this was a dream come true for him. (courtesy of TFWiki)

His take on the *Transformers* being wildly different than anything we'd seen before was a breath of fresh air to fans put off by the over-complicated designs from the live action film.

SIMON FURMAN



Simon Furman is a writer for comic books and TV animation, his name inextricably linked to *Transformers*, the 80s toy phenomenon. He has written literally hundreds of stories about the war-torn 'robots in disguise', for Marvel Comics (US and UK), Dreamwave IDW Publishing and most recently Titan Magazines for the latest UK *Transformers* comic. His other comic book credits include *Dragon's Claws*, *Death's Head*, *Alpha Flight*, *Turok*, *She-Hulk*, *Robocop* and *What If?*

In the TV animation field, Furman has written for shows such as *Beast Wars*, *Roswell Conspiracies*, *Dan Dare*, *X-Men: Evolution*, *Alien Races* and *A.T.O.M.*

Editorially, Furman oversees Titan Books' range of *Transformers* titles and their 'Comics Creators' series (which includes *Comics Creators on X-Men* and *Writers on Comics Scriptwriting 2*). Furman's other recent writing work includes *Ronan* and *Death's Head 3.0* (both for Marvel), *Power Rangers SPD*, *A.T.O.M* (the comic) and *Wallace & Gromit*.

He is also the author of *Transformers: The Ultimate Guide*, a lavish twentieth anniversary hardcover, and a *Dr. Who* audio adventure ('The Axis of Insanity'). Online creation *The Engine: Industrial Strength* can be viewed at www.wildfur.net or www.whorunstheengine.net

JIM SORENSON

"Jim is a super-secret spy, has a motorcycle, marooned in space, meets Hercules ... or not..."

He's been a long-time fan of science-fiction literature in general and *Transformers* in particular. His guidebooks are well regarded by the fan communities for their exhaustive attention to detail. Reports of his incarceration in another dimension should be dismissed as the unfounded rumours they are."



BILL FORSTER

My name is Bill Forster. I had an accident and woke up in 2010. Am I mad, in a coma, or back in time? Whatever's happened, it's like I've landed on a different planet. Now, maybe if I guest at Auto Assembly, I can get home...

I am responsible for the Transformers Ark character model books and am to blame for the AllSpark Almanacs. Is there anybody out there who can help me? I'm being hunted by an insane military commander, doing everything I can. I'm just looking for a way home.



JASON CARDY



Jason is a professional in the comic book industry, recently making the jump from colourist to artist. His drawn artwork has recently been seen on the occasional cover of the 'Transformers Universe' comic (from Titan), 'Terminator Salvation', 'Actionman ATOM' and Udon Comics new 'Darkstalkers' artwork. Primarily a colourist, he has worked on several TF-related projects including the UK TF Comic, G1 Standees, DVD art & Death's Head / Dragon's Claws trade paperbacks. He has worked on over 20 titles including several award winning books such as 'Spectacular Spiderman' and 'Frankenstein'. Aside from Transformers, Jason is currently working with Kat Nicholson in producing all the artwork for Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' for Classical Comics. He is also writing his own sci-fi comic strip that he plans to draw, colour and pitch to publishers next year, featuring (you guessed it) transforming robots! Find a selection of his work online at jasoncardy.deviantart.com

KAT NICHOLSON



Kat Nicholson is a comic artist who has worked primarily as a colorist to date. In the Transformers world she's perhaps best known for her bold and eye-catching colours that she's added to covers and strips of Titan's tragically short-lived TFA Magazine. She also coloured Beast Wars illustrations for IDW and has contributed artwork for a couple of Auto-Assembly shows.

Other than Transformers Kat loves to work on any product that's cartoony or fantastical, other titles she's coloured on include Spiderman, DreamWorks Tales, Action Man A.T.O.M, and illustrated a graphic novel of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" with her partner in crime, Jason Cardy.

SIMON WILLIAMS



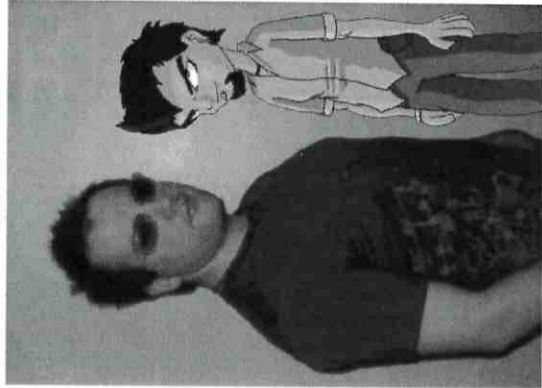
Simon Williams is not only a professional comic artist hailing from Wales, in the United Kingdom... but is also Wales ever lovin' idol of millions. Since breaking into the comics business in 2003, Simon has worked on various UK comic titles... including *Transformers Armada*, *Spectacular Spider-man Adventures*, and the *Incredible Hulk Annual*. He has also recently produced artwork for Panini Comics' recent *Death's Head* collections, IDW's *Transformers: Beast Wars Sourcebooks* and Titan's *Transformers UK* magazine.

He has also produced artwork for various other forms of Transformers-related media, such as DVDs, toys and collectable merchandise... including the official Optimus Prime and Megatron standees for *CardboardCutout.net*. He is currently working on Clearvision's new line of Marvel Comics DVDs.

LEE BRADLEY

Lee Bradley is a penciller / inker / colourist and sometime writer, as well as being a long term Transformers fan. Lee broke into the comics industry in 2007. Working as colourist on John McCrea's full run of Spider-Man Tower of Power, Lee moved forward into becoming a penciller and inker on this self same title. He began his relationship with Titan inking and colouring on their Turtles fast forward comic and moved on to creating the *How to Draw Transformers Guide* for them. As well as working on strips in the main Transformers comic he also worked on their Transformers Animated short lived comic book.

LIAM SHALLOO



A life long comic fan, Liam first discovered digital colouring and painting whilst studying for a degree in Digital Animation and Digital Arts. Just prior to his graduating he was offered his first professional work with IDW on Spotlight Hot Rod. Since then he has gone on to work on numerous Transformers books for both Titan and IDW, including *Revelation*, *Devastation*, *The Beast Wars Source book*, *Saga of the Allspark*, *Transformers Animated: The Arrival*, *Spotlight Grimlock*, *Blaster*, *Mirage* and has worked on a large bulk of *The Best of the UK Reprint covers*. Apart from Transformers he has also worked on *Snaked*, *GI Joe* and *Dr Who*. Currently Liam resides in London and works as member of the Singstar team for Sony Computer Entertainment.

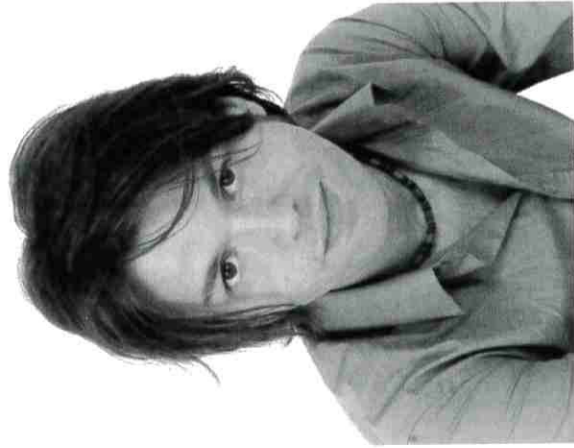
KRIS CARTER



Theorising one could get a design job after art college, Kris Carter stepped out of his graduation and vanished. He awoke to find himself trapped in a secured loan call centre, facing irate customers over a red hot phone, and driven by some unknown force to change his career for the better - by colouring comic books. And so Kris finds himself freelancing from job to job, striving to put colours on what's been drawn, and hoping each time that his next job, will be the job that allows him to quit working in that call centre.

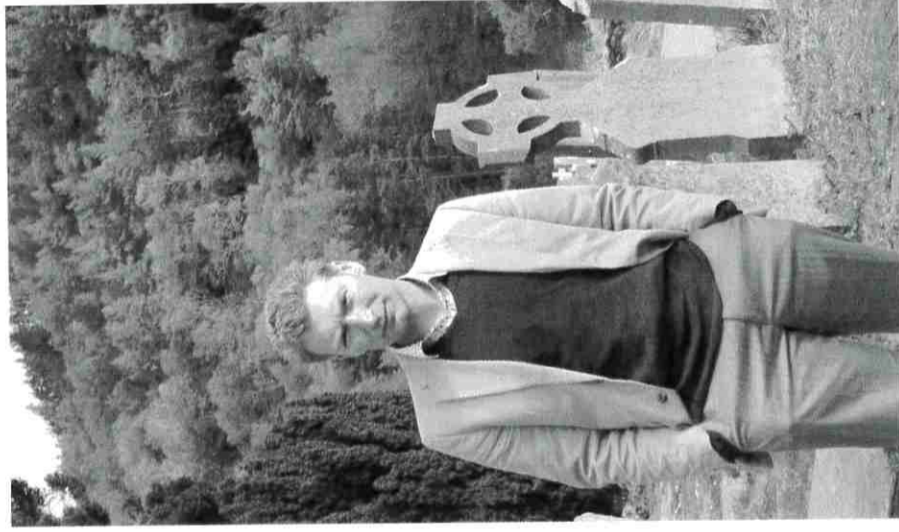
Based in Wales, Kris has coloured several Transformers comics for Titan and IDW, including Spotlights: Arcee, Cyclonus and Hardhead, the Revenge Of The Fallen movie comic, and All Hail Megatron #15.

NICK ROCHE



Like some sort of cut-price Triplechanger, Wexford-born Nick Roche changes from artist, to writer, to vaguely humanoid, and back again. (His instructions are hard to decipher, however.) A hardcore robo-fanboy, Nick really landed on his feet when he started work with IDW, churning out covers and kicking off their Spotlight series. Since then, he's worked with Titan Publishing on their *Transformers* and *TMNT* titles, as well as handling some *Doctor Who* for IDW. He wrote the Zombot-tastic *Spotlight: Kup*, handled art on the currently-available-as-trade paperback *Maximum Dinobots*, and has also written and drawn a strip for *All Hail Megatron #15*, again featuring ol' Kup. 2010 saw Nick write and draw the excellent 5-issue miniseries *The Last Stand Of The Wreckers*. In his spare time, Nick likes to hassle his beautiful girlfriend Anne-Marie via the gift of hair metal.

JAMES ROBERTS

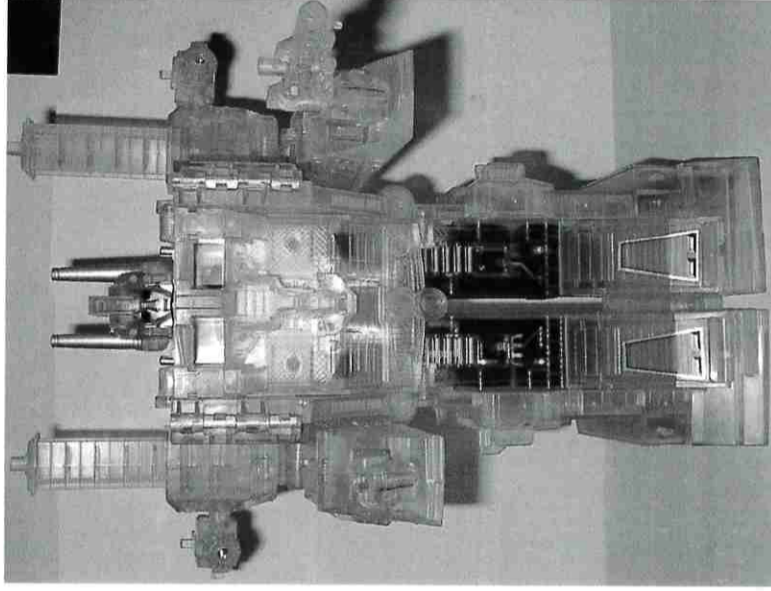


James Roberts has already had one brush with fame through fandom following his self-published Transformers novel - *Eugenesis* in 2001. Quite an achievement in itself, and the novel is one of the most gripping Transformers story you will read. In the last year he's been seen aiding and abetting Nick Roche - co-writing the *The Last Stand of The Wreckers*. Further collaborations between the two have not been ruled out...

THE PERFECT TEN

A decidedly unique trip through the last ten years of Transformers toys from Ralph Burns and Andy Turnbull as we see what stood out and caught our eye between 2001 and 2010 along with special guest contributor - Chris McFeeley.

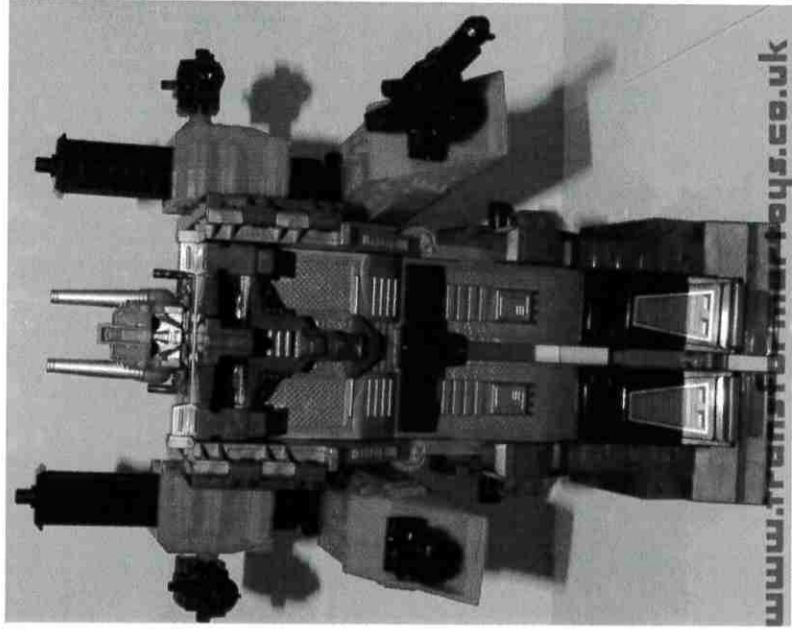
With the same terrible inevitability that means that jelly comes with cream, so must the end of the decade mark the strange and curious desire to have a look back and think: "Which plastic robot children's toys in the last ten years have given me the most joy?" in addition to: "Where has my hairline gone?" and "When is the MC Hammer comeback due to start?" So join us, dear reader, as we delve into just one of these mighty questions of mildly thrilling importance. And which toy will win the Slightly Fabulous Prize of being Top Banana?



Go! Hammer time!

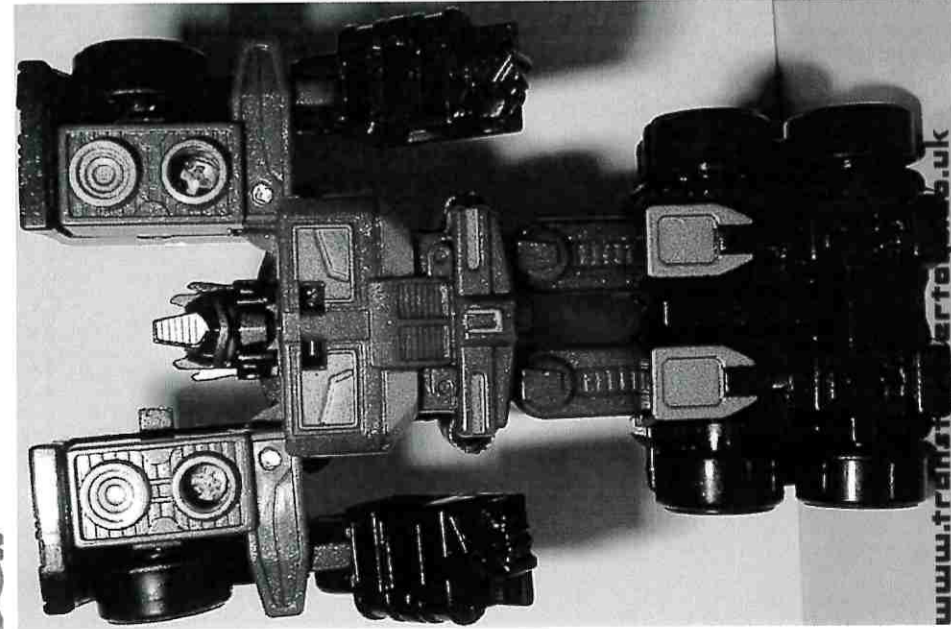
Space Year 2001: The Nightmare Begins

We begin with the grandparent's favourite, Ultra Magnus, for he was blessed with three releases this year. He's never been so prominent then or since. In 2001 we were treated to two repaints of his original release (one in the colours everyone wants ie *Diaaaacloooooooooooooooooooooone* and the other a rather strange translucent yellow which has a rather crude and unflattering name



amongst many fans) and a brand new toy as part of the then current *Robots in Disguise* line. The star of this motley line-up being the limited movie preview of him in his Diaclone Powered Convoy colours as seen in the animated movie preview footage. Whole imaginary continents have been sacked since by foaming fanboys in the endless quest to get their hands on one of these. It's amazing what a 'new' colour scheme can do for a toy but perhaps not so amazing how a Transformers fan-mind works. We do like our homages.

It's perhaps best not to delve to deeply into the *Robots in Disguise* incarnation, for it is against the laws of the universe for that toy to be transformed. So mind-boggling in the difficulty of making all of the blooming panels snap together in vehicle mode, it holds the distinction of surviving unscathed when launched from a window due to blood-red fury and mind-mangling rage. It can also survive being thrown at high speeds at fireplaces by frustrated fans. So at least it has decent build quality, even if it has ascended from the seventh level of Hell itself.



With the same terrible inevitability that means that jelly comes with cream, so must the end of the decade mark the strange and curious desire to have a look back and think: "Which plastic robot children's toys in the last ten years have given me the most joy?" In addition to: "Where has my hairline gone?" and "When is the MC Hammer comeback due to start?" So join us, dear reader, as we delve into just one of these mighty questions of mildly thrilling importance. And which toy will win the Slightly Fabulous Prize of being Top Banana?

Go! Hammer time!

Space Year 2001: The Nightmare Begins

We begin with the grandparent's favourite, Ultra Magnus, for he was blessed with three releases this year. He's never been so prominent then or since. In 2001 we were treated to two repaints of his original release (one in the colours everyone wants ie *Diaaaciooooooooooooooooooooooone* and the other a rather strange translucent yellow which has a rather crude and unflattering name amongst many fans) and a brand new toy as part of the then current *Robots in Disguise* line. The star of this motley line-up being the limited movie preview of him in his Diadone Powered

Convoy colours as seen in the animated movie preview footage. Whole imaginary continents have been sacked since by foaming fanboys in the endless quest to get their hands on one of these. It's amazing what a 'new' colour scheme can do for a toy but perhaps not so amazing how a *Transformers* fan-mind works. We do like our homages.

It's perhaps best not to delve to deeply into the *Robots in Disguise* incarnation, for it is against the laws of the universe for that toy to be transformed. So mind-boggling in the difficulty of making all of the blooming panels snap together in vehicle mode, it holds the distinction of surviving unscathed when launched from a window due to blood-red fury and mind-mangling rage. It can also survive being thrown at high speeds at fireplaces by frustrated fans. So at least it has decent build quality, even if it has ascended from the seventh level of Hell itself.

Space Year 2002: The Screaming Jungle

2002 was a busy year for *Transformers*, for once again it lurked silently on the comic shelves after some years away, waiting to jump into unsuspecting readers minds. Meanwhile, a few shelves away, the toyline got a bit of a revamping with the release of the *Armada* line and the launch of those pesky Minicons. These were smaller robots who could interact with their larger friends and unlock special features, often by plugging on to pegs. These were a progression from the Master era but sadly with less silly names but would go on to have a massive impact on the *Transformers* toys for years to come. However, the most notable toy from this year has nothing to do with any of that, being a hangover from 2001's *Robots in Disguise* toyline but a hangover in the pleasant sense of: 'That was a good night' rather than: 'I don't recognise the bed I am currently in'.

The runaway winner for this year is of course Spychanger Scourge. He's small and evil and...and...evil! Scientific studies and the application of copious amounts of beer have yet to ascertain exactly what it is about this toy that is so utterly evil. The answer remains maddeningly elusive. It's like trying to work out long division without a handy teacher nearby to do it for you.

Spychanger Scourge is a marvelous recreation of the Black Battle Convoy toy and stands at only a few inches high. We defy anyone who gets one not to be constantly fiddling with it, though they risk their mind being subsumed into total darkness with the resulting desire to listen to dreary music and dress like a prat. Perhaps his crowning feature is that given his scale he can sit

behind the green plastic door of Brave Maximus when he is in robot mode and command him to do his bidding. If you have these two toys you will probably have done this, and may already rule Luxembourg.

As noted earlier, 2002 saw the launch of the *Armada* line and with it the Minicon gimmick. One brickish toy managed above all others to unite almost all of The Fandom in their intense hatred and dislike of it - *Armada Scavenger*. However, one man stands alone in his love for this toy. His name...is Chris McFeely. Let's have a look at what he has to say:

I'm never very good at giving a definitive answer when it comes to picking favourites in *Transformers*. If you ask me what I *don't* like, then buster, you're gonna hear about it, but asking me to play favourites with twenty-five years of stuff that I - by and large - love is a trickier task. That's particularly true of toys, because there's so many ways to view them, dissect them, analyze them. Sculpt? Complexity? Innovativeness? Gimmicky? For me, it usually comes down to that most nebulous of qualities, "fun". Now, "fun" is a hugely subjective term. Some fans derive fun from puzzling through a transformation that would make me want to slam the toy off a wall. "Fun" does not *preclude* any of the previously mentioned qualities; it is in the eye of the beholder. But in the adult fandom, cries for articulation and complexity of transformation seem to often drown out what I would term "fun". Perhaps I'm a bit too child-like in my definition of it, but to me, a colourful toy that combines a clever but not-unintuitive transformation with unique, unusual play features and yes, *gimmicks* (oooh, dirty word) is going to win me over long before, say, an *Alternator* does. This was an outlook that the *Animated* line in particular stood up for, creating bright, colourful geometric toys with fantastic characterisation evident in their very scripts, with unique accessories and play features, while refraining from throwing up a middle finger to the adult desire for transformations that did new and exciting things, but which were never frustrating to accomplish, and which still provided loads of articulation. Contrast that with the bulk of the movie lines, which often feature stunningly complex transformations (to the point that I'm often left wondering how a little kid can even transform the things) but are rarely able to get a lot of personality across in their scripts and don't usually have anything more exciting in the way of special features that a firing missile.

So, to answer this question, I thought about what *Transformers* toys I think are the most "fun" - the ones that have the most unusual and unique features and which provide me with enjoyment that goes beyond simply transforming them. And my conclusion is a controversial one to be sure. After all that bigging up of *Animated* I just did, my answer

actually involves turning the clock back a bit, to the last line before it that really accomplished the same things it did - bright, geometric figures with a lot of character and unique play features - but which did admittedly put articulation and complexity on the back burner. Yep, I'm talking about *Armada* - perhaps because you'll never see me hesitate if you ask me what my favourite toy from that line is. It is that most bemoaned of 'bots, SCAVENGER.

And what a wonderful, bizarre big chunk of fluorescent green plastic he is. A fantastically unusual transformation of a like we'll never see again, I'm sure. A totally unique means of interacting with his Mini-Con - I adore that little engine-start-up noise you get from placing him in side the cockpit! Real rubber treads, that *work*, with that wonderfully simple hinge joint that allowed them to become his arms without flopping everywhere! That missile launcher, so craftily hidden! When I first held the toy, and went to insert his missile, I said aloud: "Wait, that's not going to fit in there. His body's not that wide!" only to realize that the missile slotted through the body, and poked out the other side, yet remained hidden within his smokestack! Genius! And the integration of electronic sounds - smashing arm effects and firing missile noises! The engine ignition! The trundling engine noise... nothing special, okay, but the way the entire mechanism is flipped in robot mode to unlock a new sound, working in tandem with a brilliant gear mechanism to give a STOMPING power! And such a fantastic idea for a gimmick! Nothing has ever stomped before or after! It *characterises* this toy! Sounds and actions together in wonderful synchronicity in a manner of execution that I'm hard-pressed to find an equal for in all the toys that have come since. It was like *Revenge of the Fallen's* Mech-Alive features... only good! And that's without even touching on the fact that this pulse-pouduin' purple-and-green pugilist was the first of the now-predictable (nay, tired) Constructicon homages!

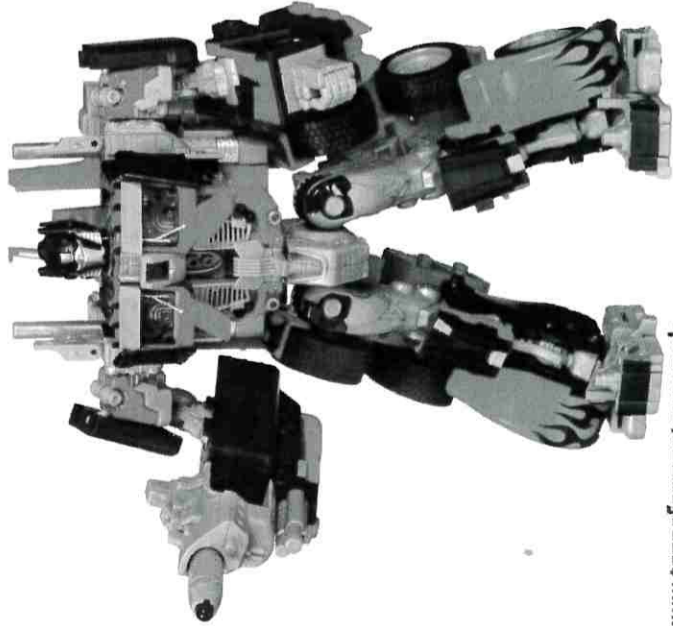
I love Scavenger. Scavenger is a whole school of design unto himself. And I know most people are happy about that. And yeah, I wouldn't want every *Transformers* toy to be a Scavenger. For all the good stuff he has going on - he don't got no legs. He's a strange chunk of fun in a line that was already about letting go and just having fun. He's the toy about which they must have said "Let's totally go for broke with this guy" - and this was a toyline that included a figure that transformed itself by remote control! Is Scavenger absolutely and without argument my unquestionable favourite toy of the decade? That... is a less certain conclusion. Without even having to stop to think about it, I could name you loads of other toys which floored me by doing something special in the area of transformation, gimmick integration, accessories or uniqueness. Many of them, to a greater degree in

would have to be Starscream the Air Commander. Citizens of The Fandom rejoiced and drank the Screamer kool-aid and generally all was well with the world. *Sausages* Starscream looked properly like him and had wings and everything and people got very, very excited about it and would gather in fan circles to tell each other just how much they liked that toy. Naturally, the mould was subsequently recycled several times. It became Skywarp, Thundercracker, Dirge, Thrust, Ramjet and Smelly Bob. It's best not to mention the Terrible Botcon Rage of 2007 though (when some recolors were available exclusively in a big hall full of Other Fans). In a corner, some people are still weeping and waving their 'That suxx0r5' banners.

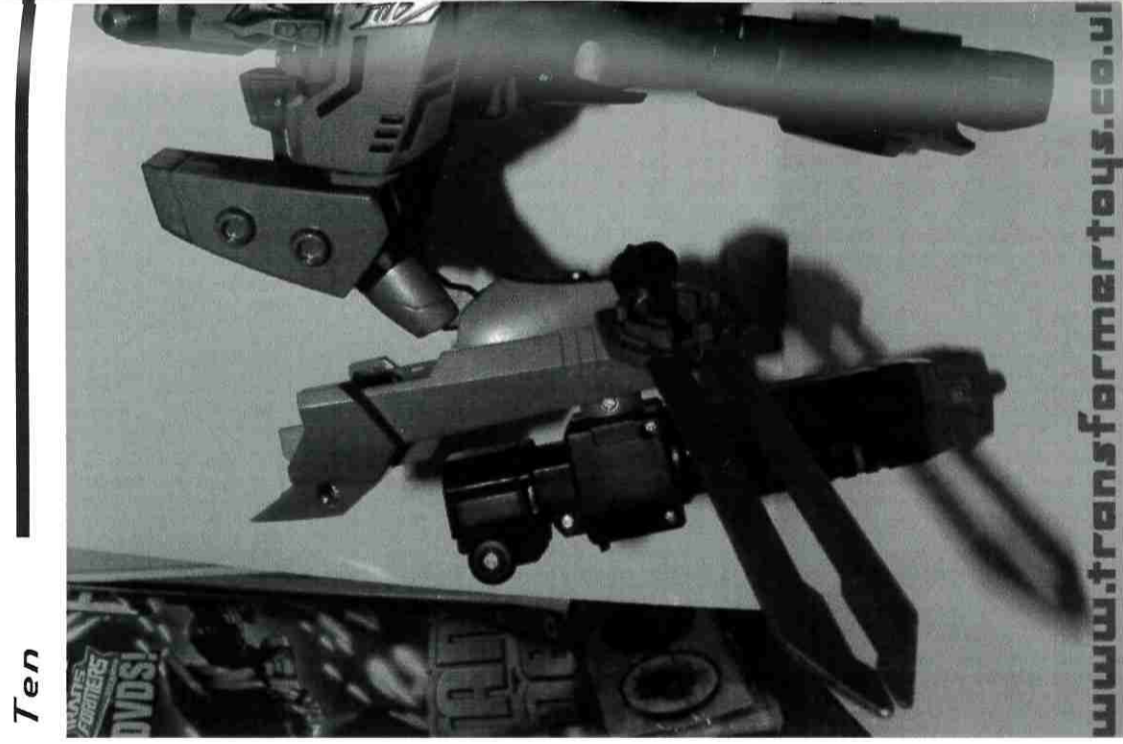
Space Year 2007: Trap of Steel

Apparently, some movie was out this year. *Harry Potter* and the *Something of Something* wasn't too bad but the bit with the bird thing was rubbish. Meanwhile, some minor robot movie was doing the rounds though the Rock Lords were sadly absent from this cinematic slice of Bayhem. You may have seen it. Personally, the toys that went with it had the kinds of faces only a mother could love and were far more complicated than transforming rocks would have been.

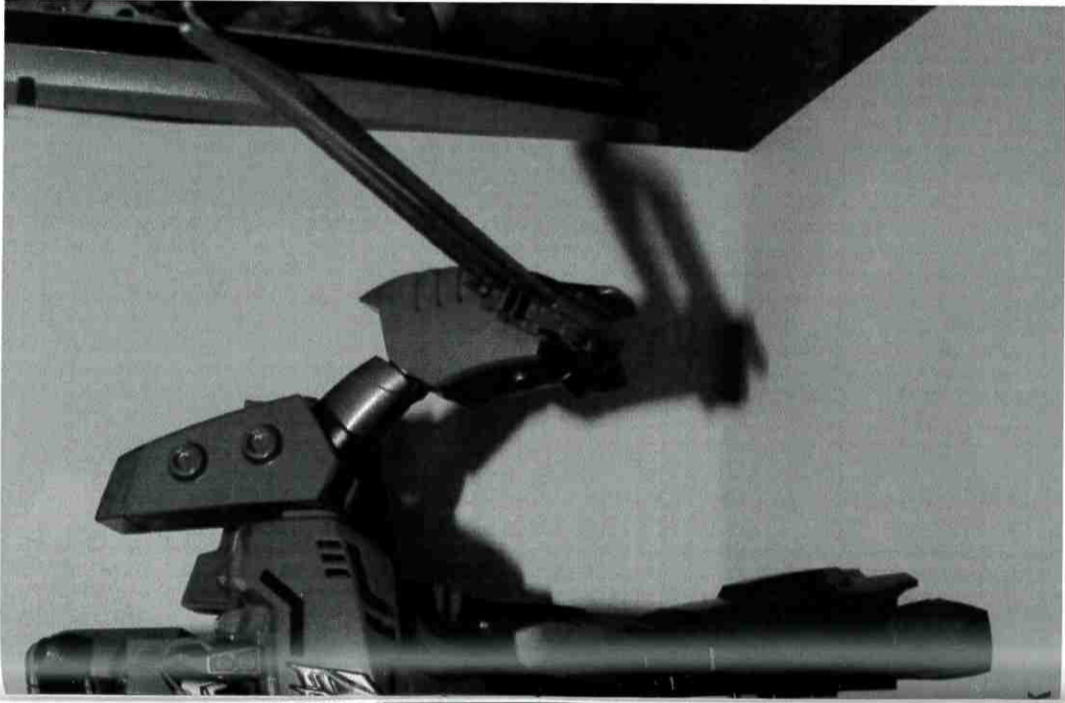
However, a nod does have to go to Leader Class Optimus Prime. Big! Chunky! A button that made a 'beep beep' noise! It also had a good heft to it, and was ideal for swinging at the average burgler. It also turned into a most satisfying truck of the kind that makes even the most mature person want to make 'vroom vroom' noises. It was



www.transformertoys.co.uk



www.transformertoys.co.uk



however, two standouts amongst this mighty line of champions. The first was Ultra Magnus (not being content with ruling the space year 2001), but he was somewhat hard to come by in the UK no matter how many Hasbro UK executives were kidnapped and held to ransom in wild bear compounds. It wasn't until the following year that the UK would see him get a wide release...but as the mustard coloured Roadbuster Ultra Magnus. It was like tuning in for an episode of *The Real Ghostbusters* but getting *Extreme Ghostbusters* instead (ask your dads).

However, by asking a passing cow (they know more than they let on) we have randomly decided that instead the toy of the year was Leader Class Megatron. A large intimidating and fun toy, with more than a passing nod to Super Megatron, which was a character design only seen in the various TF manga material accompanying the Battlestars era in Japan back in the early 90's. But more importantly, it had two swords you could stab people with and steal their money. Or use to make your very own kebabs.

Space Year 2009: The Waking Ally

The vast majority of the toys were pretty darn engaging and just plain fun. There were,



www.transformertoys.co.uk

Once, long ago, there was a little Transformer called Cyclonus. "Please sir," asked the chirpy little intergalactic starfighter, "Can I have a little man who turns into my gun?"

"Why is that, little fellow?" asked Takara Man, stroking a passing white Persian cat.

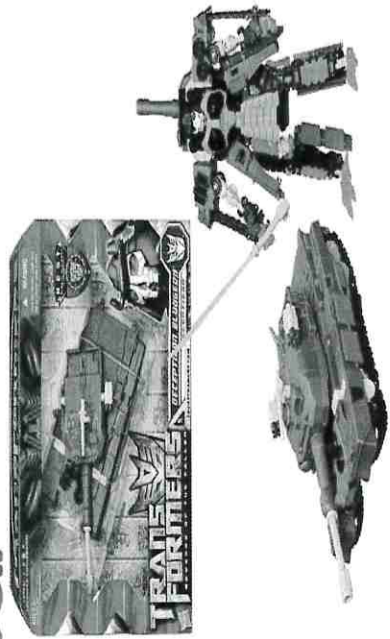
Cyclonus furrowed his brow furiously. "I want to be a badass like my friend Scourge. He's got a special little man and all of the other Decepticons laugh at me and say I'm not as cool as him." He kicked a puddle and hunched his shoulders.

Takara Man patted a passing Dalmation dog. "Ho ho ho! Oh all right then, impetuous one. I shall make one for you and from then on I shall call you... TARGETMASTER CYCLONUS! Now get to school before you're late, you scamp!"

Little Cyclonus was ever so proud and took his ickle Targetmaster gun man with him everywhere and made sure he was fed and watered at all times, as well as toilet trained. There had been a few embarrassing accidents until that had been sorted out!

But from that day forward he was the coolest Cyclonus of all and soon his cousins, Strafe Dave and Shattered Iron Bru Cyclonus got in on the act and procured their own little men too! Many happy days were spent in the local park shooting sinister trees and bushes from beyond time with their little men.

And so the heavens rejoiced!



Space Year 2010: Escape to Danger

2010 may not be over yet but as it's the year we make contact with that pesky space monolith again we may as well make a few comments before Jupiter implodes and ruins everyone's day. The Power Core Combiners are slowly creeping on to a supermarket shelf near you, lurking near the beans but being rather more awesome as well as causing significantly less gastro-intestinal trauma. But let's talk about Bludgeon. The new version with the evil head skull of evil. A popular comic character in the Marvel era, he's also popped up in the IDW comics and generally been a bad evil robot man. With his funky new toy incarnation, we get a rather impressive tank mode with lots of 'boom boom' potential and a fetching shade of Safety Orange (all Masters of Metallikato like to obey the Green Cross Code). The robot mode looks as much like his pretender shell from his original toy incarnation as anyone could reasonably ask for. He even has a nifty katana blade for chopping up salad leaves with! What more could anyone ask for? Other than Vector Sigman on a stick.

And so, to conclude. Just who of all these featured toys of the last decade has won the Slightly Fabulous Prize of 'best toy'?

Grandus. He's just come through a space warp from 1991 and he won't give me my ball back unless I give him a prize. Which is perhaps unfair but then, at the end of the day, this is all just a pinprick on the bum of time.

But before we go, we hand you over to Simon Plumbe to share a toy from his Perfect 10.

The Perfect 10

"What's New Pussycat...?"
by Simon Plumbe

My Transformers collection has undergone dramatic

changes over the years. For a while I went through a phase of impulse buying so I'd get a toy every week. No matter whether it was something I really liked or not, I still had to buy **something**...

Over the last couple of years I've streamlined and got rid of a lot of the... dare I say junk that I've acquired that I really didn't like in the first place and focused on building a collection that I'm proud of. Now, I stick to a few specific ranges, general toys I **really** like and building collections for two main characters - Sideburn and the main star of my collection, Cheetor.

If you ask any collector, they all have a "holy grail" that they strive to own in their collection. While my personal favourite of all of the Cheetor toys and moulds would have to be the Transmetal Cheetor (although the X-9 Ravage repaint / remould does come close), the one I have wanted to have in my collection for as long as I could remember was the Perfect Choice Lucky Draw Cheetas...

Regular Auto Assembly attendees can't have failed to have seen the Lucky Draw toy displays put on by Steve and David Mapes from Transformers@TheMoon and could only dream of owning these ultra-rare toys. Most are produced in frighteningly small numbers and even those that do have larger production runs (or at least by Lucky Draw standards) seldom come up for sale and when they do, they command astronomical prices.

So, when I found out about this toy, I resigned myself to the fact that it would never find a place in my collection. Limited to a run of only 60, it was produced for retailer Perfect Choice Digital Orders in 2004 and is a black / dark green and silver chrome repaint of Beast Machines Cheetor. Hardly the most inspiring of toys and certainly my least favourite Cheetor released to-date, but it was still a toy I was desperate to own.

I scoured ebay for years and even though I saw them listed every now and then, spending \$300 on a single toy was a borderline marriage wrecker so I thought better of it... until last year. When we confirmed Ian James Corlett as one of our guests for Auto Assembly 2009, I wanted to make the toy display special and expand my Cheetor collection as much as possible and this was going to be the icing on the cake and managed to get my hands on one. I still can't stand the toy, but it's still the pride of my collection!

And now, my daughter has followed my lead in collecting Cheetors and after a year of searching, she is now the proud owner of one as well. Who would have thought it?!

ROOK'S BLOG!

Rook's Blog entry #1984.2010

Good news everyone! **THE WAR IS OVER**

Before I go on, I have to apologize for the lack of visual in this Cyber-Net Blog, my servers have been playing up lately

Megatron has been badly injured, so say my sources, in fact so injured that he's had to vacate the planet he was on at the time(Earth). Reports have shown that OPTIMUS PRIME himself was the one who did him in, but some others say a second party dealt the final blow.

Loyal downloaders will remember me reporting that Optimus had been killed about 2 Stellar Cycles ago, well sorry about that, guess my Autobot sources were a bit wrong there. So really it's not my fault

Oddly, shortly after the defeat of Megatron, all Autobot security systems began to reactivate again, and the 'Cons can't hack them any more. No one knows why, or they just aren't speaking.

This of course means that all Autobots are free to come out of hiding, after all this time, we can be free again, sure there might be a few wandering Decepticons out there still, but with Big Megs out of the picture, I'd say we were safe to come out.

So naturally I'm starting to get reports from hideouts all over the Quadrant

From Earth I'm getting reports that the Wreckers, or a group who looks and acts a whole lot like them are back in action after a recent hiatus. Some strange choices in the line up though, as it appears there was a Decepticon in their midst, and Perceptor, the noted Autobot scientist

The Throttlebots have mentioned that Sixshot was seen well and alive after his reported death during the Expansion incident, and were even attacked by him, where they met METROPLEX! That's right Metroplex! The legendary Autobot. Apparently he's hiding something, and won't let anyone know what it is.

Our man on the inside, whose name I obviously can't give for security reasons, but rest assured, he is always real nearby, has reported that the long thought lost Garrus-9 is even lost to the Decepticons, they sent a team there, and no-one's been seen alive from there since. One message that managed to escape however mentioned something about Overload (isn't he an Autobot?)

Something strange has happened to Cybertron as well, suddenly the surface of the planet is a lot more hospitable, as in the planet isn't trying to kill us any more. So whatever has happened to the planet, this might mean we can all return to our long abandoned home world sooner than ever expected (for more information on Cybertron's current state see following articles: **Thunderwing's assault on Cybertron**, **Cybertron to be evacuated** **ordered by Prime**)

A question that has to be asked however is "Where is the Magnificence?" the ancient artefact that Hot Rod managed to find, which can answer all questions. Why wasn't this used to our advantage, and where is it? I'll try to get an interview with Hot Rod himself before I even begin to speculate, my thoughts however, are that this is a major faux pas on Hot Rod's side, maybe he hid it again, and just forgot where it was? Who knows, submit questions to me if you want to ask him anything.

Anyway 'bots, I'm heading to Earth, its a little planet in the Sol System (Sol 3) which has plenty of room for all of us, and I'm sure the Earthlings won't mind our presence there, they'd probably be happy even. It's very unlikely that they would see Autobots as being as bad as Decepticons, attack us, and capture us in security facilities, so we can't harm their planet any more. Very unlikely what-so-ever. Just remember to scan a new Alt-Mode from the available databases and say "Hi" to the locals when you get there

Rook Out!

SHOOT, JUMP & RUN.. AND TRANSFORM

A celebration of 25 Years of Transformers computer games by Auto Assembly's head honchor - Simon Plumble

I've mentioned elsewhere that this year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of Auto Assembly and it's hard to believe that we've reached this milestone, but we're not the only ones associated with Transformers to be doing something similar this year... Activision have recently released the latest in their seemingly never-ending range of Transformers games onto an unsuspecting public, War For Cybertron, on almost every current games console on the market which charts the origins of the Transformers and the war between the Autobots and the Decepticons. It marks the latest instalment in a long history of Transformers video games that dates back a staggering 25 years spanning almost every major computer and games console format...

Everything started back in 1985 when the British software company, Ocean, released a rather bland platform game for the Commodore 64 and Spectrum. Developed by Denton Designs, who were better known for their adventure games, it focused on the Autobots and you took control of one of a choice of Autobots and had to explore the maze of platforms collecting four pieces of an Energon Cube returning them to the Autobot Centre one by one. Obviously you were under fire from all manner of Decepticons so you either had to attack or evade them but that was about it. Once you did that, the game was complete but with no proper ending and you just had to go through it all again. With just four Autobots at your disposal and a choice of vehicle or robot mode, the game became pretty repetitive. It was so short that good players could complete it within a couple of minutes!

Activision followed that with their first game, Transformers: Battle To Save The Earth in 1986 on the Commodore 64 developed in America which mixed strategy and arcade action although this too failed to excite gamers. The only other G1 games that were released for the 8-bit market were for the Japanese market and were Mystery Of Convoy on the Famicom (Nintendo NES) released in 1986 and a game based on Headmasters on the Famicom Disk System (the disk version of the NES) which I believe was released in 1987 or 1988. Again, both of these were regarded as fairly sub-standard games and are only worth getting from a collectors point of view.

Transformers itself entered a relatively quiet phase at this point when the G1 range started



to die out and G2 was introduced. No new video games were released and Transformers completely by-passed the 16-bit era with nothing released for the SNES, Megadrive, Amiga or Atari ST.

The arrival of Beast Wars in 1996 kicked-started the video games market again. 1997 saw the start of this with the release of the first of not one but THREE Beast Wars games that was to come over the next couple of years. The first was a 3D arcade adventure by Hasbro Interactive released for the Playstation in 1997 and 1998 for the PC (a Mac version was developed by never released). Sadly for gamers, this game took some liberties with the characters, featured dull backgrounds and graphics and had a PC version that was virtually unplayable because of poor programming.

It was developed in a time when quality 3D gaming was dependent on dedicated graphics hardware but with so many competing formats, the game only offered two options to the player - to use a 3D card with the voodoo chipset or software based 3D. As not everyone had a voodoo 3D card, many were restricted to the software option and the speed of this was limited and was never able to take advantage of the host PC's real performance.

The next Beast Wars game to see the light of day was on the Gameboy Color and was a fairly simple beat-em-up which was released in 1998 and features a mix of characters from Beast Wars and Beast Wars II including Lio Convoy, Cheetor, and Megatron. Reasonably good fun but very hard to find these days - took me several years to track

down my copy!

The final Beast Wars title and second Playstation game was MUCH better. This was a 3D beat-em-up developed by Bam! Entertainment in 2000 but this was only released in America and Japan and is based on the later Transmetal versions of the characters. It features original video footage produced for the game, several game modes including a story mode, and voices from the original cast including Garry Chalk, David Kaye, Scott McNeil and Ian James Corlett! It's a great fun game and captures the spirit of the series wonderfully.

The game was also released for the Nintendo 64 (its only Transformers game) in Japan and America and the N64 version features a slightly different character line-up, but the US release was a rental exclusive title for Blockbuster video. Because stores had no need for the packaging, most of their titles had the boxes and manuals thrown away, finding a boxed copy of this game is very difficult and they fetch incredibly high prices on the collectors market!

Next stop on the Transformers game history is the Playstation 2 and back to where it all began with G1. Yet another Japan only title with the game often mistakenly referred to as Transformers: Takara by some fans, this is a 3D action adventure game. Looks great and plays well, but never released outside of Japan so sadly not received the exposure it deserved.

The next internationally-released game was again a Playstation 2 only title and hit the streets in 2004 from Atari. Based on Armada and originally titled Transformers Armada: Battle For Energon, the title was shortened to Transformers for its final release. Another 3D arcade adventure putting you in charge of several of the lead Autobots



from the series over a series of missions inspired by the series. Plenty of plus points - voices from the original cast, strong gameplay and no kids! A limited edition was also produced that shipped with a Simon Furman penned comic!

Mainstream Transformers gaming seemed to go quiet at this point and the market certainly didn't seem interested in supporting the Xbox or Gamecube at this time and there was a lull until 2007 and the live action movies and then the world woke up once more...

2007 saw a blitz of games from Activision (who reclaimed the Transformers licence) based on the first live action film on almost ever major format - PC, Playstation 3, Playstation 2, Xbox 360, PSP, Wii, and two different games for the Nintendo DS - Autobot and Decepticons. While many of the games were identical, there were some completely different titles for selected formats depending on the system's capabilities and target audiences.

All of the games featured scenes influenced by the movie, and had some of the cast returning to play their original roles including Peter Cullen as Prime and even the DS version had video footage and voice overs. The PC version was notorious for having a control system that took what felt like an eternity to configure before play could start if you wanted to use a joystick, but once you could get started, gameplay was easier to control and get into compared with the PS2 or PS3 versions.

Fans who attended Auto Assembly 2008 were given a glimpse of a short video... the first video trailer showing gameplay footage from Activision's only Transformers game release of 2008 and their first Nintendo DS only title... the game based on Transformers Animated. Taking control of three of the lead characters in turn - Prime, Bumblebee, and Bulkhead, the game was split between puzzle-based platform action and driving sections. The game has great cartoon-style 3D graphics, plenty of animation from the series and features all the main cast from the show, making for a great use of the licence.

Moving onto 2009 and Revenge Of The Fallen. Sticking with the same formula as the 2007 movie, Activision released games across most formats again and a dual release for the DS. More mission based and a slightly more forgiving control system and difficulty levels make it a more enjoyable game than the previous one. However, the controls on the Wii let the game down as it attempts to make the game dependent on the Wii's motion sensor technology rather than concentrating on making it fun to play so it became more frustrating than anything else while you struggle to get the game to do what you want it to.



This brings us up to 2010 and War For Cybertron. This is something rather unique in gaming terms as Activision have been given a completely blank canvas to work with instead of having to deal with the constraints of an existing chapter of the Transformers universe. War For Cybertron is set, as the title suggests, on Cybertron BEFORE the Great War and charts the conflict between the Autobots and Decepticons there and gives us the chance to see all the familiar characters we have come to know and love as we have never seen them before.

Different formats - as always - have different versions of the game best suited to the machine's capabilities and with online multiplayer and additional downloadable content, it's already developing something of a community spirit amongst players. However, it was marred by a disastrous launch with insufficient quantities of the game being shipped to retailers who were barely able to meet pre-orders. When copies did reach stores they were snapped up immediately but were limited to the PS3 and Xbox 360 in the first instance and most people had more luck getting the game from supermarkets than game stores!

More frustratingly for gamers is that there was an incredible amount of confusion surrounding the release. Retailers were getting mixed messages about the game and some who hadn't released any stocks at all were informing customers that the game had been cancelled. The reality was that insufficient games had been produced to satisfy demand for the launch date - commercial suicide in the games industry. To give them credit, Activision got the game into its second production run and finally got copies back onto the shelves within a week or so, but by then the damage had been done.

It does have a lot of potential, and the fact that the storyline has been officially accepted

as part of Transformers canon by Hasbro is encouraging, and there is an exciting new range of toys to accompany the game, so let's hope that it can overcome its early shortcomings...

But that's not the end of the story... there have been a few games for mobile phones released by Glu Mobile including G1 Awakenings, and a platform game based on Revenge Of The Fallen and there are a couple of other games worth a mention...

While they were originally a completely separate brand released by Bandai, Takara / Hasbro did buy out the Go-Bots range so the Challenge Of The Go-Bots game released for the Commodore 64 1987 by Ariolasoft deserves a mention for that reason alone! An arcade shoot-em-up with variable difficulty settings, written by Tony Crowther who was well-respected for writing action games back in the 80s. It even came complete with an audio tape!

Next up on the odd list is Dream Mix TV World Fighters - a Japan only game for the Gamecube and Playstation 2 released in 2003 by Hudson. Best described as a clone of Super Smash Bros. it features characters taken from a range of games from Konami and Hudson as well as some of Takara's characters... namely Optimus Prime and Ultra Magnus, with others as unlockables. Surreal!

To wrap things up, we have Guitar Hero World Tour. While not a direct Transformers game or featuring Transformers characters, Activision released The Touch last year as an extra song as free downloadable content so fans all over the world have been trying to see if they can sing or play as well as Stan Bush!

We wanted to take the opportunity this year with Auto Assembly to celebrate 25 years of Transformers gaming and give all of you the chance to play virtually all of these at the convention over the weekend. We know that, while many of you will have played and will own most of the contemporary releases, most of you will be too young to remember the earlier 8-bit games or may not have seen the titles released outside of Europe. We hope you all enjoy playing these games and we are sure that there will be something on offer to appeal to everyone - hardcore and casual gamers alike and if this is the variety that we have had in the last 25 years, who can only imagine what the future will hold...



Neither AUTOBOT nor DECEPTICON, he only looks out for Number One.

A true mech-of-all-trades, he's been a miner, a demolitions expert and a professional thief for hire. Trusted by no-one and trusting others even less, his entire existence has been all about one thing: survival in a world which couldn't care less about his kind, a world now on the brink of war. Sarcastic, rude and unhygienic, you'll never meet another scoundrel quite like him. His name?

RATTRAP.



THE TRANSFORMERS: RATTRAP

STORY AND ART BY: **EO PIRRIE**

COLOURS BY: **LIAM SHALLOO**

LETTERS BY: **ANDY TURNBULL**

COLOUR ASSISTS BY: **JADE COLLWING**

DEAN CURRIE

KIM ROBERTS

Inspirations and dedications:

Andy Wildman

Ben Pirrie

Bob Budiansky

Bob Forward

E.J. Su

Garry Chalk

Geoff Senior

James Roberts

Larry D'Ilillo

Scott McNeil

Simon Furman

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams

Simon Williams



Special thanks to Simon Plumbe for allowing us to take up a not inconsiderable portion of his page count, and to Graham Thomson, Nick Roche and Kat Nicholson for all of their wonderful support.

To see more from these artists, please visit here:

ANDYTURNBULL.DEVIANTART.COM

KINGGOJI.DEVIANTART.COM

LIMABEAN01.DEVIANTART.COM

THE TRANSFORMERS: RATTRAP: AUGUST 2010. FIRST PRINTING. This story is not officially recognised by either IDW or HASBRO. It is a purely non-profit fan work created by folks who love the Transformers. No characters used within the following fanwork are owned by us, but we didn't get permission to use them either (cuz we so bad). In fact, we might use something else we don't have permission to use in this little copyright to do as well. How about some "Weird Al" Yankovic lyrics? "Settle down, raise a family, join the PTA / Buy some sensible shoes and a Chevrolet / And party 'til you're broke and they drag you away / It's OK, you can drive to be stupid. See? We didn't get permission to use that material either. But does it matter? We're fans, after all, and we're using it because we love it and we won't be making a penny from it. Nyah, I mean, do you care? Heck, you'll probably never even read this. What a waste of our time.

And all the guys at TMUK, even that Ralph Baines chap

HobbyLink
Japan

“High quality
Transformers
Animated
collectables and more,
direct from Japan”



Check us out at
www.hlj.com

THE PLANET CYBERTRON,
THE OUTSKIRTS OF POLYHEX,
APPROXIMATELY 650,000
YEARS AGO.

“SECTIONS OF THE OUTER AND INNER HULL ARE MISSING,
ALONG WITH SECTIONS OF FRAMEWORK. BUT ASIDE
FROM IMPACT DAMAGE THE REST OF THE VESSEL IS
SURPRISINGLY INTACT.

WHICH MEANS IT WASN'T SHOT DOWN,
AT LEAST. WHAT OF THE CREW?

NOT A TRACE. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO PULL THE FLIGHT RECORDER.

THE SHIP'S THE ACLUMEN, A RESEARCH
SHIP LAUNCHED DURING THE NOVA PERIOD.

THAT'S A LONG TIME AGO.

EXTENDED EXCURSIONS WERE PRETTY COMMON
BACK WHEN JHIAXLIS RAN THE SCIENCE DIVISION.
HE DIDN'T LIKE FAILURE.

ANYWAY, IT SEEMS
THAT THE FRUITS
OF THE CREW'S
LABOURS WERE
FIXED AROUND THIS.

ACCORDING TO THE RECORDER, THEY HAD THIRTY OF
THESE SAMPLES. AND THEY SHOULDN'T BE THIS BIG.

THE REST OF THE DATA
WOULD'VE BEEN LOGGED IN THE
PROJECT RECORDS, IRRETRIEV-
ABLE AFTER THE CRASH.

I'LL HAVE TO RUN A FEW TESTS MYSELF
BEFORE I CAN GIVE YOU ANY ANSWERS.



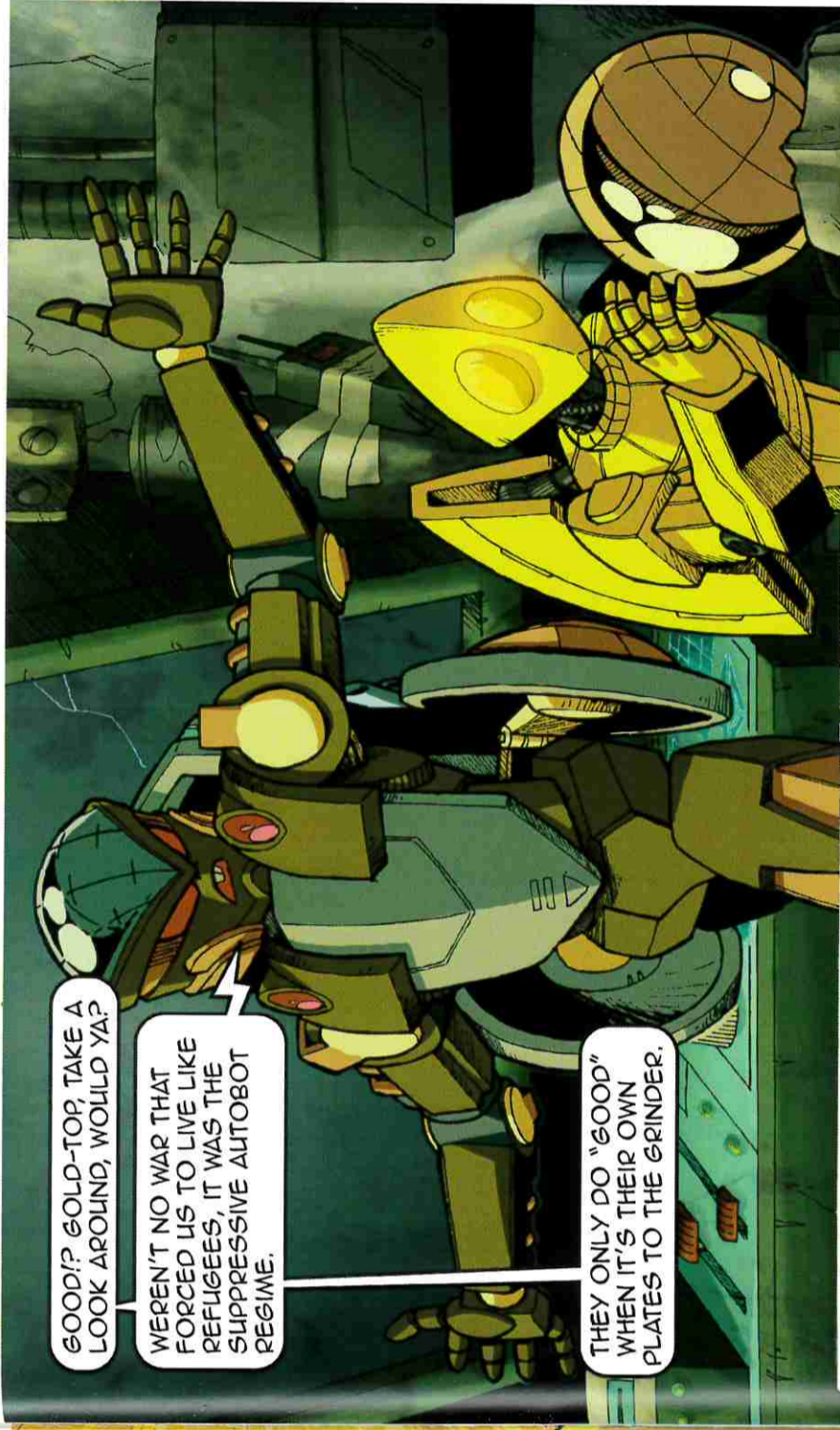
DUNNO.

AND THAT IS?

DO IT. MEANTIME, WARPATH, LONGTOOTH,
SURESHOT AND I WILL GATHER UP THE REST
FROM AROUND THE CRASH SITE.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO
THIS SHIP AND IT'S CREW,
THESE THINGS ARE INVOLVED...



GOOD? GOLD-TOP, TAKE A LOOK AROUND, WOULD YA?

WEREN'T NO WAR THAT FORCED US TO LIVE LIKE REFUGEES, IT WAS THE SUPPRESSIVE AUTOBOT REGIME.

THEY ONLY DO "GOOD" WHEN IT'S THEIR OWN PLATES TO THE GRINDER.



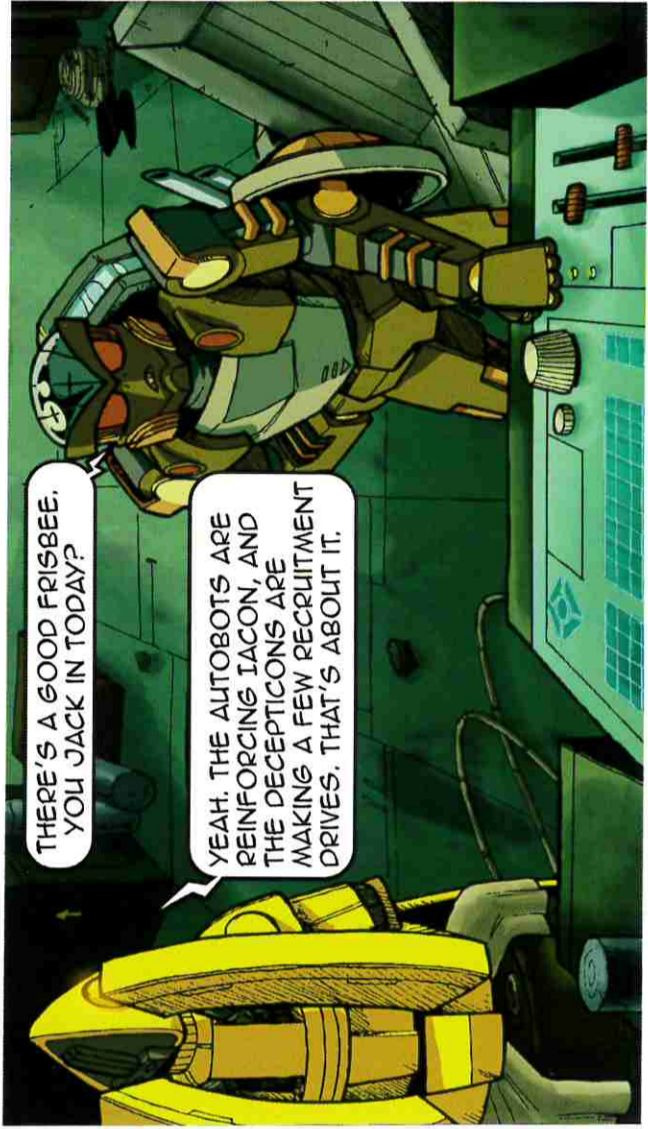
OKAY?

OKAY.



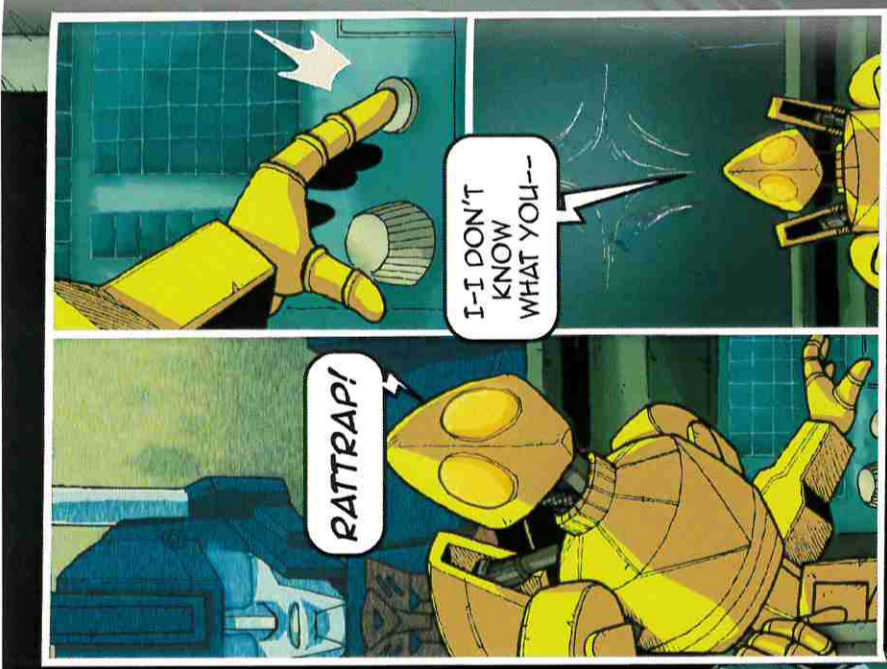
KID, YER THE BEST HACKER THIS SIDE O' STANIX, BUT SOMETIMES YER SO NAIVE IT MAKES ME WANNA SCREAM!

AUTOBOTS AND DECEPTIONS ONLY LOOK OUT FER THEMSELVES, AND SO SHOULD WE.



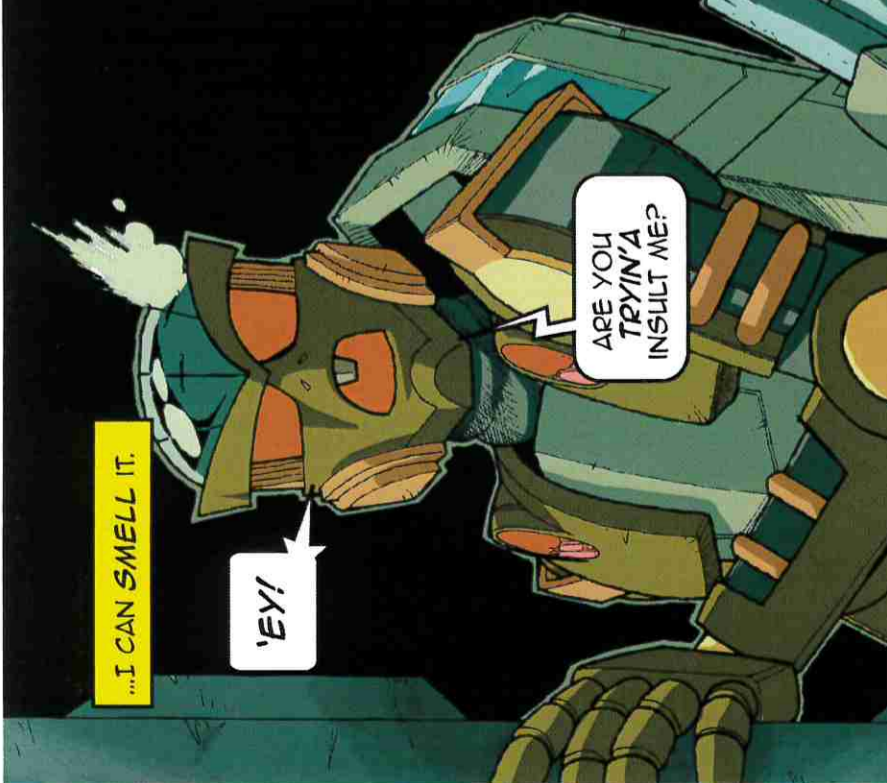
THERE'S A GOOD FRISBEE, YOU JACK IN TODAY?

YEAH. THE AUTOBOTS ARE REINFORCING IACON, AND THE DECEPTIONS ARE MAKING A FEW RECRUITMENT DRIVES. THAT'S ABOUT IT.



I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU--

RATTRAP!



...I CAN SMELL IT.

'EY!

ARE YOU TRYIN' A TRYIN' A INSULT ME?



NO! I...

DON'T PLAY THE GINK WITH ME, KID!

YOU WAS WATCHIN' THEM AUTOBOT RECRUITMENT VIDS AGAIN, WEREN' CHAP?



SIGH

I JUST THINK THEY DO A LOT OF GOOD IS ALL.



YEAH?

IN OTHER WORDS, NEITHER SIDE IS DOIN' ANYTHING, THE OTHER WILL BE INTERESTED IN. NO INFO TO SELL.

HUH, JOY. LOOKS LIKE WE'RE BACK ON THE EMISSION RECYCLE TONIGHT.

WHAT IS THIS, SOME KINDA HOLO-SPHERE?
IT'S MY COOL THING.

WHERE'D YA GET IT?

THE DEAD END.

KID, WE LIVE IN THE DEAD END.

AND I'LL PAWN THAT ONE, TOO.

BUT, KID, IF YOU ARE GOIN' ON ANOTHER ONE O' YER LITTLE SCAVENGER HUNTS AGAIN, DO ME A FAVOUR FOR ONCE...

SO, WHACHA GOT THERE, ROLLIE?

NOTHING.

TAKES LIP AN AWFUL LOTTA SPACE FER NOTHIN'. GIVE IT HERE.

AH, NEVER MIND. MAYBE I CAN FLOG IT TO OLD-MECH PIPES. HE LOVES USELESS JUNK.

BUT IT'S MY COOL THING!

IF IT HELPS SCORE US A DREG OR TWO O' PURE ENERSON FER ONCE, I'LL BE INCLINED TO AGREE WIT'YA.

YOU TAKE THIS, I'LL JUST GO FIND ANOTHER!

...BRING ME BACK SOMETHING' USEFUL.

OKAY, SO MAYBE I WAS A LITTLE HARD ON THE KID. BUT HE NEEDS TO BE KEPT IN LINE.

SEE, I WAS TELLING' THE TRUTH EARLIER. ABOUT HIM BEIN' NAIVE AN' ALL.

IF HE WASN'T, HE'D REALISE I'M JUST USIN' HIM.

FOR AS LONG AS I REMEMBER, I LIVED HERE IN THE DEAD END. MY OWN LITTLE CORNER O' PARADRON. AND IT'S ALWAYS BEEN TOUGH, STRUGGLING' TO EXIST AMONGST THE EMPTIES AN' THE OBSOLETE, LOOKED DOWN ON BY THE GUZZLERS IN VOS OR TARN OR TACON WHO DON'T GIVE A SCRAP ABOUT THE LITTLE BOT.

SO, YOU DO WHAT YOU HAFTA TO SURVIVE.

THEY DECIDED HE WAS AN OBSOLETE JUST BECAUSE HIS ALT MODE IS A WHEEL, OF ALL THINGS.

BUT WHEN IT CAME TO COMPUTERS, THE KID HAD THE GOLDEN TOUCH. LITERALLY.

THEN I MET SCROUNGE.

HE COULD USE HIS FINGERS TO JACK INTO THE HUB AN' WANDER THE MAINFRAME AT WILL, INVISIBLE TO FIREWALLS AN' SECURITY.

HEH. TIME WAS, I HAD THE REP FOR SLIPPIN' PAST SECURITY.

ANYHOO, THE KID WAS SO GOOD HE COULD EVEN ACCESS THE AUTOBOT AND DECEPTION DEFENCE NETWORKS. THAT WAS WHEN I HIT ON THE SCHEME O' PLAYIN' BOTH SIDES OFFA EACH OTHER BY SELLIN' INFO THEY OTHERWISE HAD NO WAY O' KNOWIN'. AFTER ALL, WHAT HAD THEY EVER DONE FER ME?

BUT IF THE KID SIGNS UP WITH THE AUTOBOT'S, AN I'M THINKING' HE WILL, THEN MY LUCRATIVE LI'L SCAM IS KAPUT. I GUESS THEN IT'S BACK TO BEIN' A THIEF FOR HIRE FER ME.

LEAST I KEPT MY TOOLS O' THE TRADE.

PAR FER THE COURSE LATELY, EVEN PIPES DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS THING IS. HE'S ONLY INNERESTED IN JUNK THAT CAN BE IDENTIFIED.

TYPICAL.

MAY AS WELL HEAD BACK TO SCROUNGE, THOUGH IT'D BE JUST MY BAD LUCK IF THE KID'S ALREADY AT AUTOBOOT CAMP.

CUZ, CLEARLY, IF THERE'S ONE THING I GOT OODLES OF...

WELL, LOOKY WHAT WE HAVE HERE...

AN OBSOLETE WHO KNOWS AN OBSSO-LOT!

...IT'S BAD LUCK.

OH, FER BOOTIN' UP COLD...

I'M IMPRESSED, SKYFALL...

...THIS CONTAINMENT UNIT YOU JURY-RIGGED OUT OF THE WRECK IS OPERATING FLAWLESSLY.

AS LONG AS THE POWER CELL I TOOK FROM THE SHIP'S SCOUT DRONE DOESN'T DRY UP WE'LL BE FINE. HOW GOES THE SEARCH?

TWENTY-EIGHT OF THIRTY ACCOUNTED FOR. THE OTHERS ARE STILL MISSING.

WELL, WE BETTER FIND THEM, STREETWISE, AND FAST.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE?

I KNOW ENOUGH TO KNOW THEY'RE BIG TROUBLE.

WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A SENTIENT LIFE-FORM, A SELF-REPLICATING TECHNO ORGANIC CREATURE.

I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT IN YOUR EARLIER ASSESSMENT; THESE THINGS DID BRING THE SHIP DOWN.

HOW DO Y'FIGGER?

REMEMBER HOW THE FLIGHT RECORDER INDICATED THAT THESE THINGS SHOULD BE SMALLER? WELL, FROM MY ANALYSIS I'VE FOUND POSITIVE TRACES OF CYBERTONIUM, ALONG WITH OTHER NATIVE ALLOYS.

WHICH MEANS?

WHICH MEANS, LONGTOOTH, THAT THESE THINGS ASSIMILATE METALLIC SUBSTANCES. THE ACUMEN'S HULL, EVEN HER CREW, WERE PROBABLY SWARMED AND... DEVoured.

SO IF EVEN ONE OF THEM IS LOOSE ON A MECHANICAL PLANET... BY THE CELESTIAL SPIRES!

WAIT, HOLD ON... IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN WHY ARE WE ONLY FINDING THESE HARMLESS ORBS?

DUNNO.

BEST GUESS, IT'S A DORMANT STATE BROUGHT ON BY THE CRASH. NO TELLING HOW LONG IT'LL LAST.

FAN OUT, EVERYBODY! WE NEED THOSE LAST TWO CREATURES FOUND!

HEY--- WHAT'S THAT!?



CAN WE PLEASE HURRY THIS UP?

I FEEL LIKE I'M GONNA CONTRACT COSMIC RUST JUST STANDIN' HERE.

IF WE KNEW WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR...

HELD HOSTAGE IN MY OWN HOME BY A BUNCH O' STREET THUGS LIKE THE VELOCITRON GANG.

I'LL NEVER LIVE IT DOWN.

LUCKY FER ME, THESE GUYS ARE TOO STUPID TO SEE THE TREASURE IN FRONT O' THEIR FACE PLATES.

LOOK, V-TRON... IF THAT WERE TRUE, Y'THINK I'D BE LIVIN' LIKE THIS?

YEAH, SORRY 'BOUT THAT. THE 'CLEANIN' DROID'S OFF WORKIN' FER SOMEONE WHO CAN, Y'KNOW... PAY HER.

SMART-AFT, HUH? WELL, YOU AIN'T FOOLIN' ME!

YOU GOT A REP FOR BEING A MECH WHO KNOWS STUFF -- WORD IS YOU EVEN BEEN SELLING THE AUTOBOTS TO THE DECEPTONS!

HE HAS A POINT, BOSS. THIS REALLY AIN'T THE DIGS OF A BOT WITH A LUCRATIVE VENTURE GOING ON.

IF HE MOVED SOMEWHERE BETTER HE'D BE CONFIRMING THE RUMOURS AND THE AUTOBOTS WOULD BE ALL OVER HIM.

NO, THERE'S SOMETHING OF VALUE HERE, WE JUST NEED TO FIND IT!

AAAAA!

CAREFUL, YOU STUPID GLITCH HEAD!



AAAGH!

EASY, LIL' FELLA!

LEMME GO IT WASN'T MY FAULT I DIDN'T KNOW!

YOU GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO TELL US?

FASCINATING!

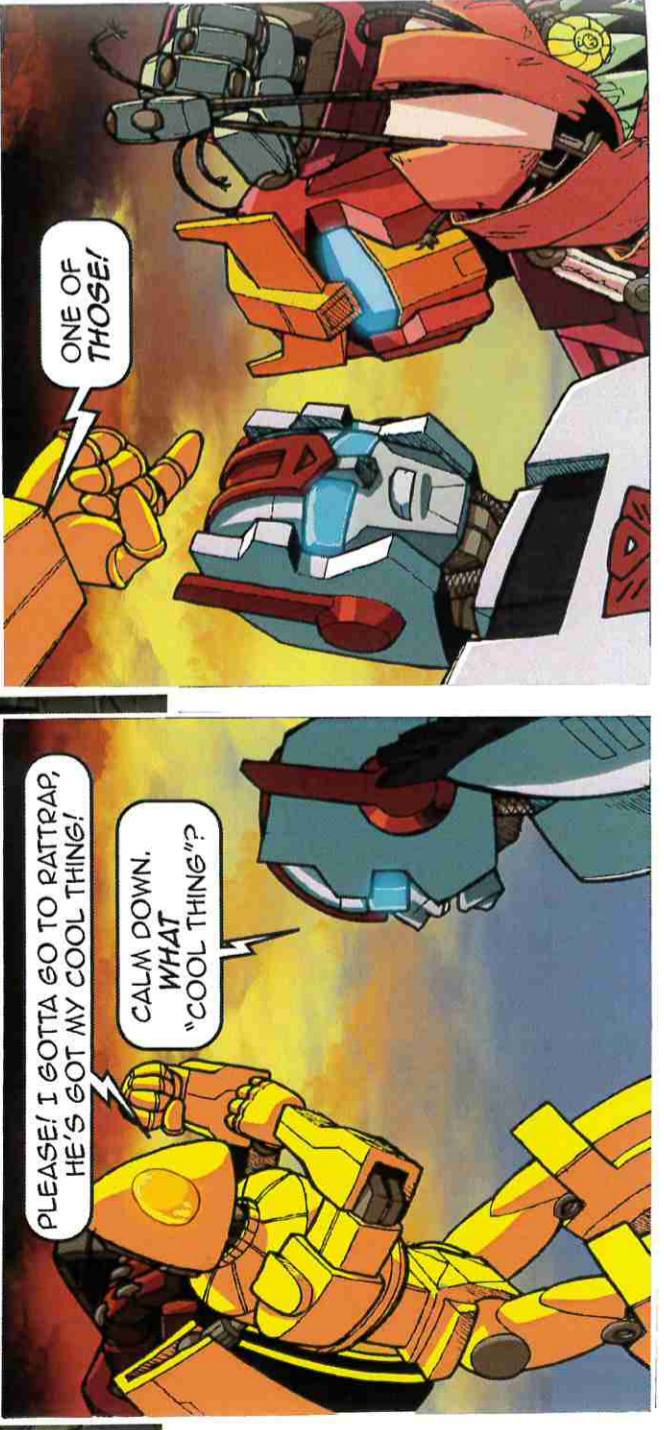
NICE SHOOTING.

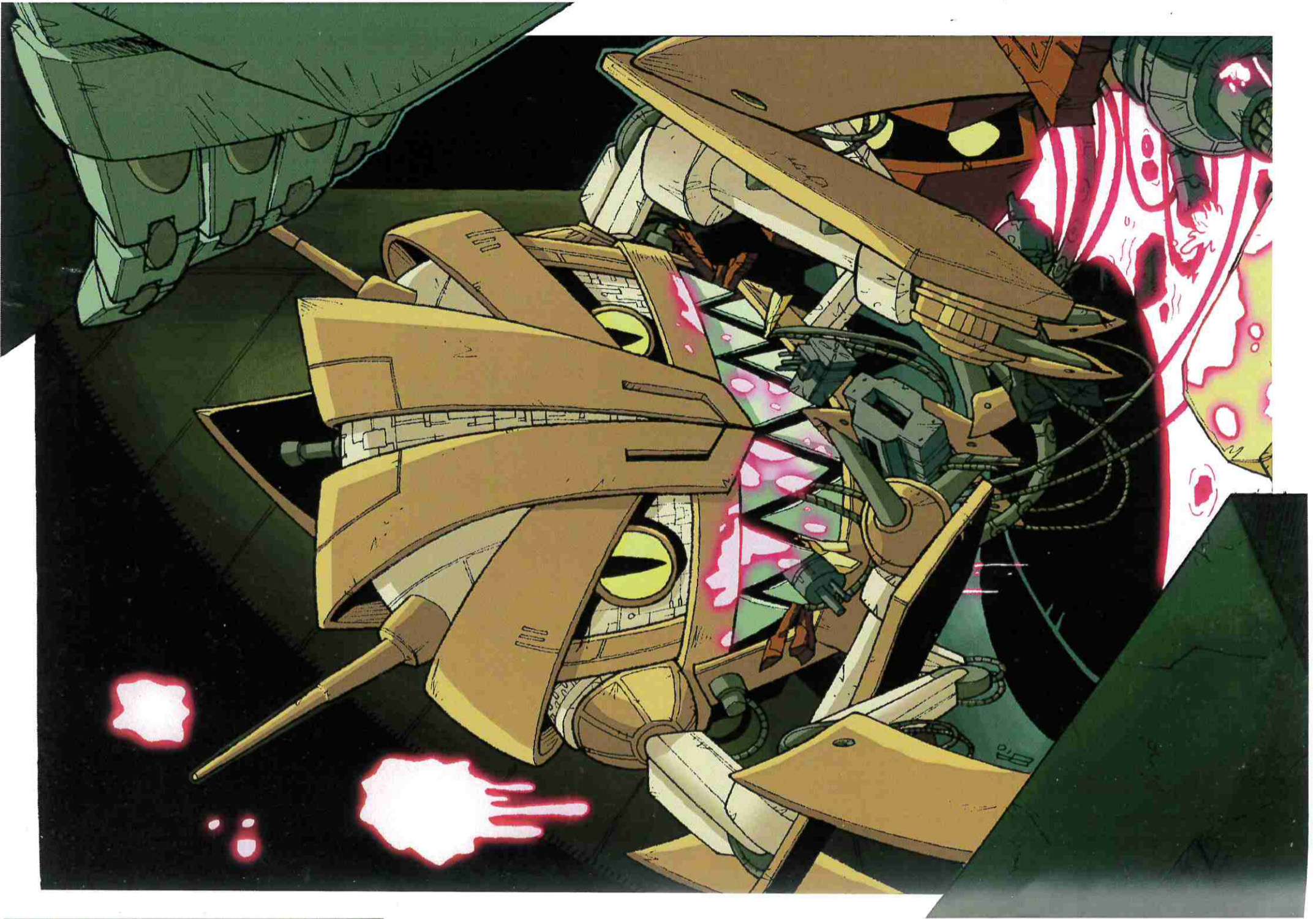
YOU EXPECTED LESS?

PLEASE! I GOTTA GO TO RATRAP, HE'S GOT MY COOL THING!

CALM DOWN, WHAT "COOL THING"?

ONE OF THOSE!

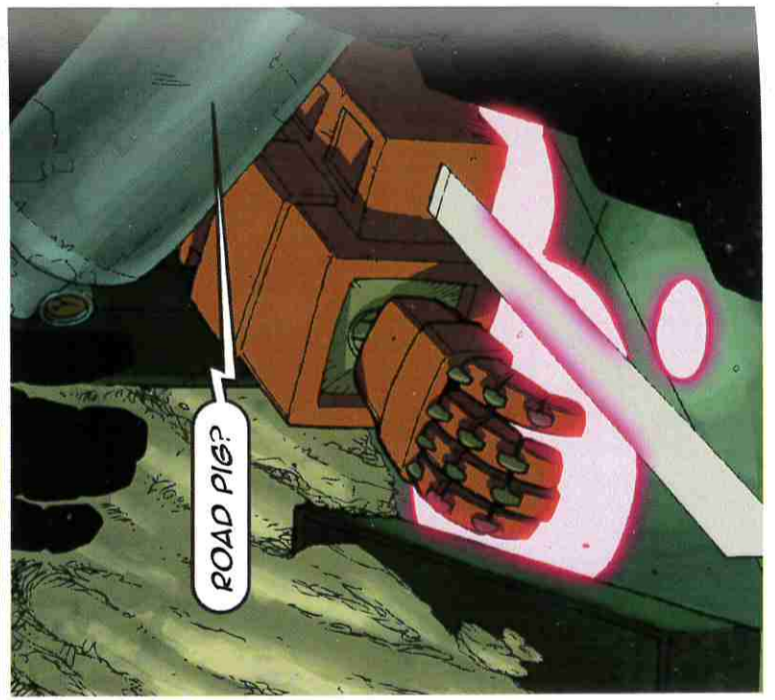




I SWEAR, IF YOU BRING SOMEONE OUT HERE WITH THAT RACKET--



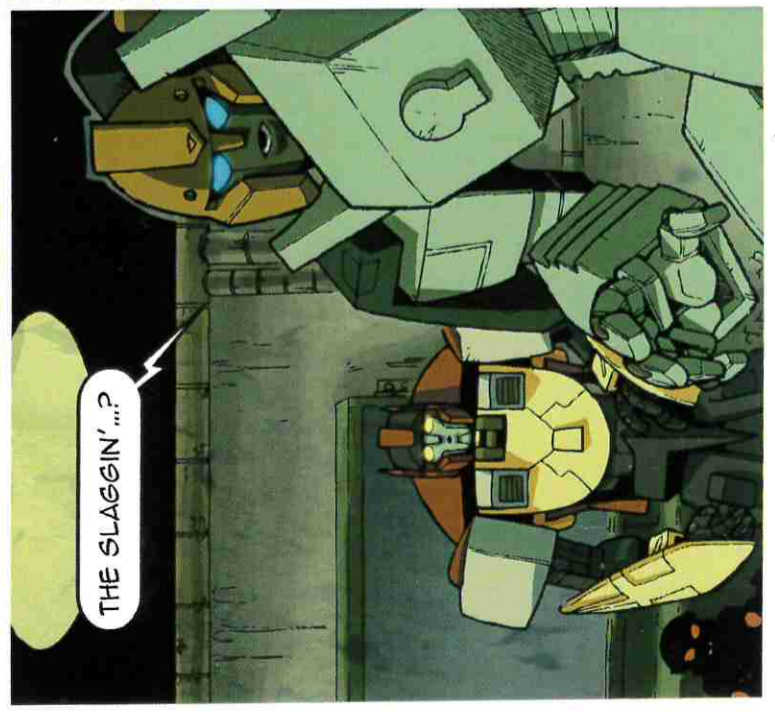
EEYAAARGH!!



ROAD PIG?



NLH.



THE SLAGGIN' ...?



WHAT THE FRAG IS THAT?
WHAT THE FRAG IS THAT?!

HOW IN THE HECK
SHOULD I KNOW?

HELP! NO!

BULLETRIKE!



OH, MAN... WE'RE
ALL GONNA DIE.



SO, WHAT DO
YOU THINK,
RATTRAP?

WELL, STRIP
MY GEARS..!

I BRING YOU SOMETHING
USEFUL THIS TIME?

BAD ENOUGH YER LIL "COOL
THING" TURNS INTO SOME KINDA
NUTTY MECHANIBAL, BUT NOW
YOU BRING AUTOBOTS INTO
MY HOME?!

YOLI!
YOLI!

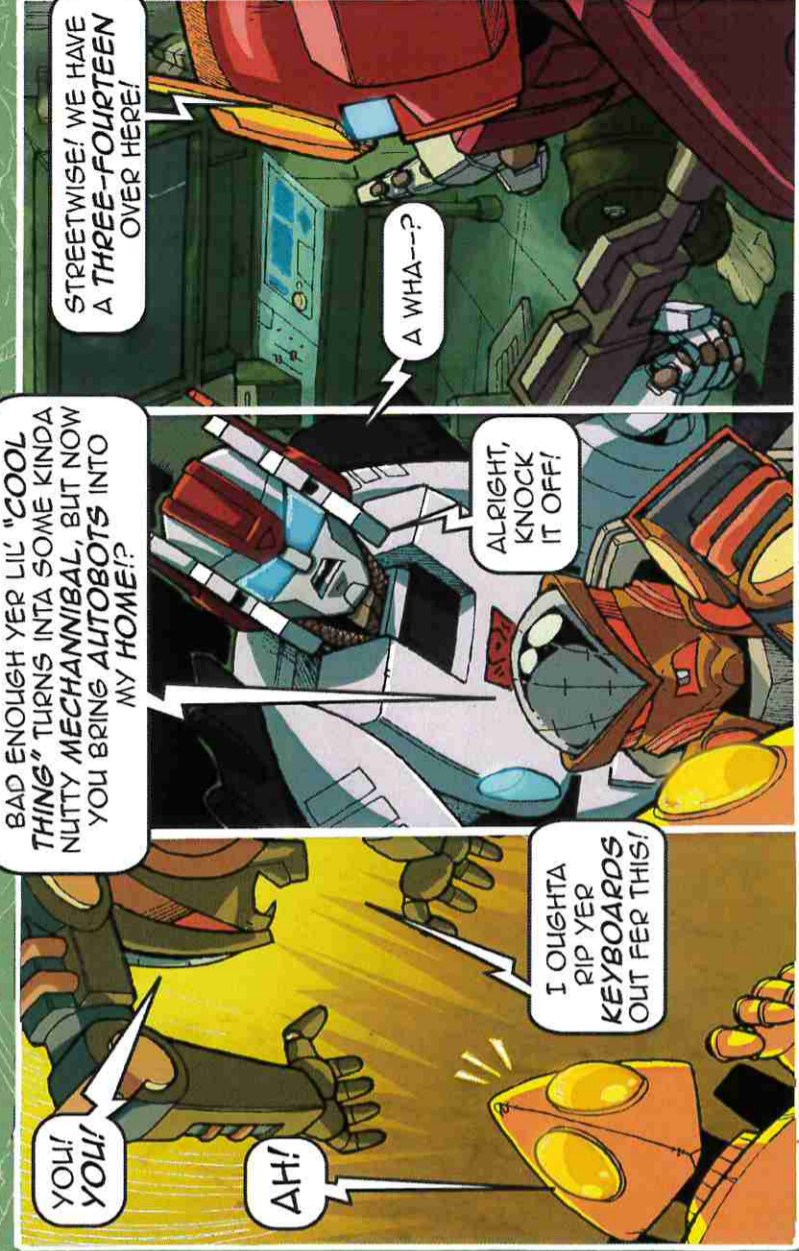
AH!

I OUGHTA
RIP YER
KEYBOARDS
OUT FER THIS!

ALRIGHT,
KNOCK
IT OFF!

A WHA--?

STREETWISE! WE HAVE
A THREE-FOURTEEN
OVER HERE!





IT ATE MAH BARREL!



HEY!

MAH BARREL!



KA-BLAMMO!

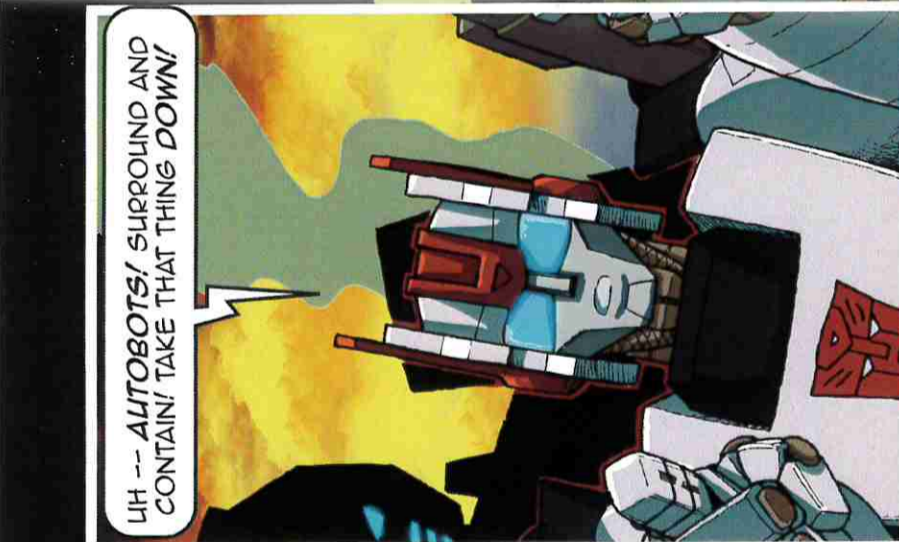


BAM POW.

FOR FLUX SAKE, WARPATH!

THERE GOES OUR EVIDENCE FOR THE THREE-FOURTEEN, TOO!

JUST... GET THOSE TWO OUT OF HERE! THEY'RE UNDER ARREST!



UH -- ALIBOTS! SURROUND AND CONTAIN! TAKE THAT THING DOWN!



HEEEEEEEEEEELP!

IS THAT ONE OF THOSE LITTLE THINGS?

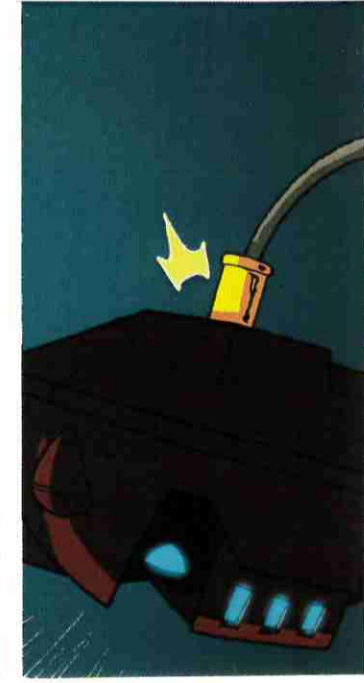
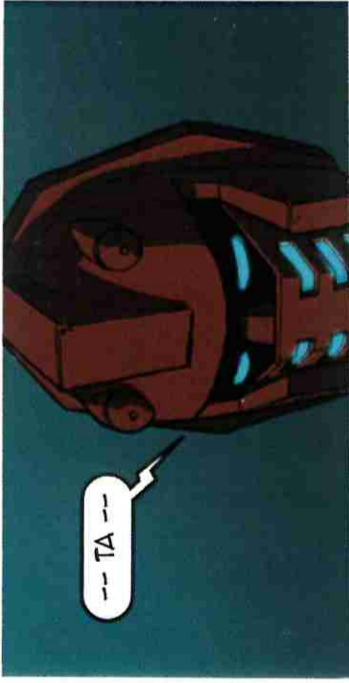
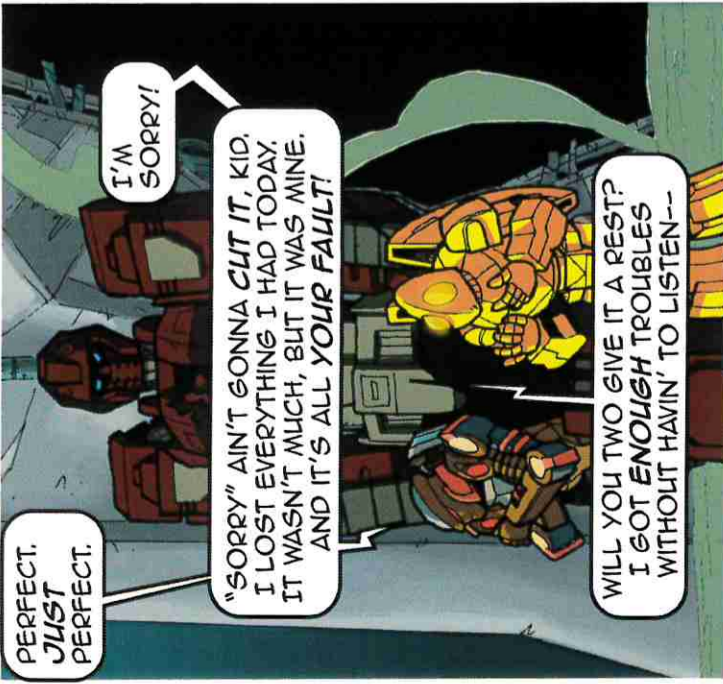
PRIMUS! SKYFALL WAS RIGHT; THEY GROW AS THEY CONSUME!



NO GOOD! IT'S AS DENSE AS THE ACIMEN'S HULL, WE CAN'T HURT IT!

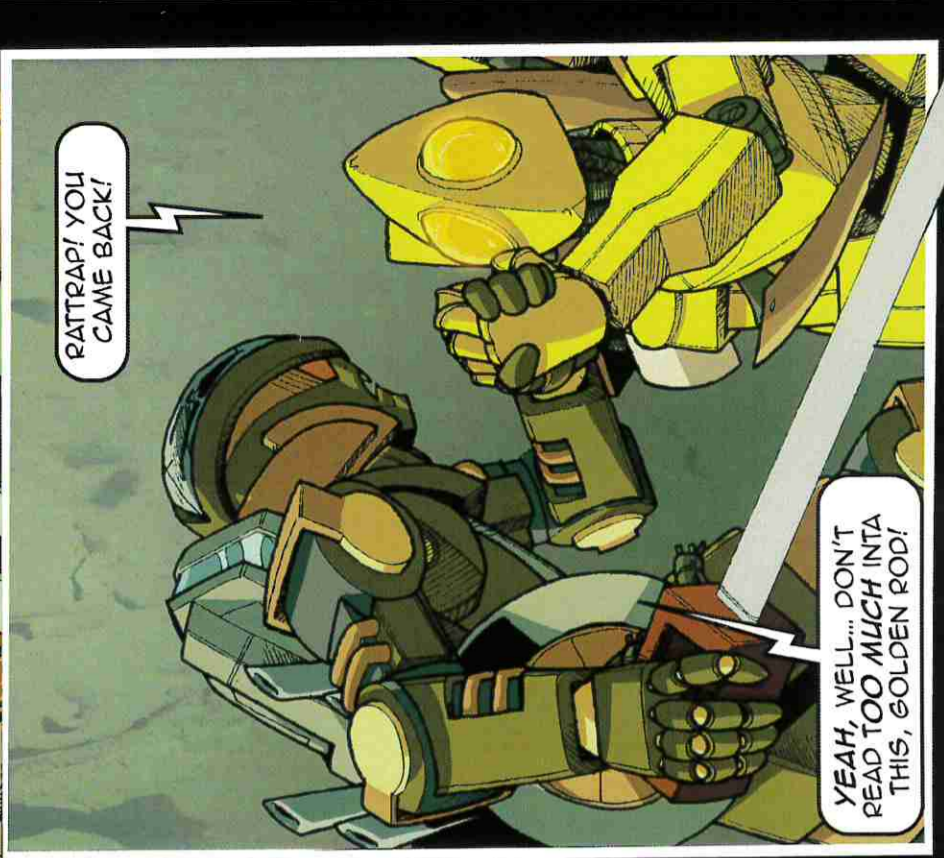
LONGTOOTH, YOU PLANNING ON HELPING?

WARPATH, GET BACK! I CAN'T GET A CLEAN --



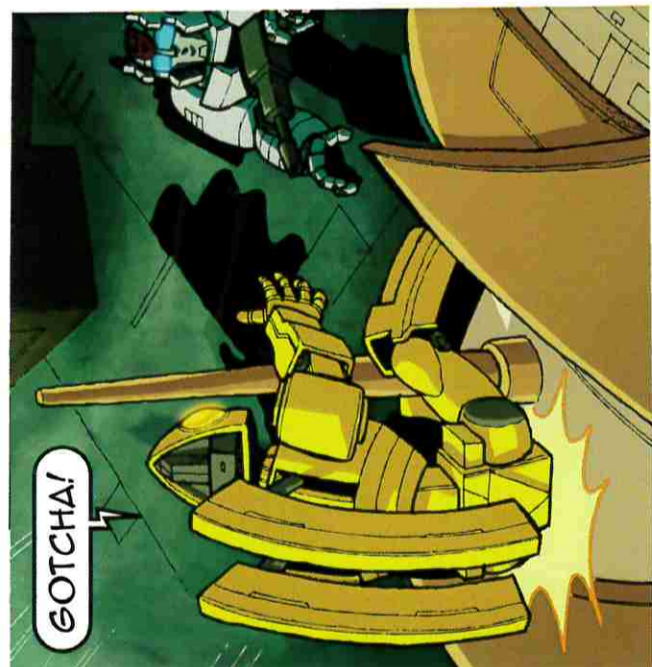
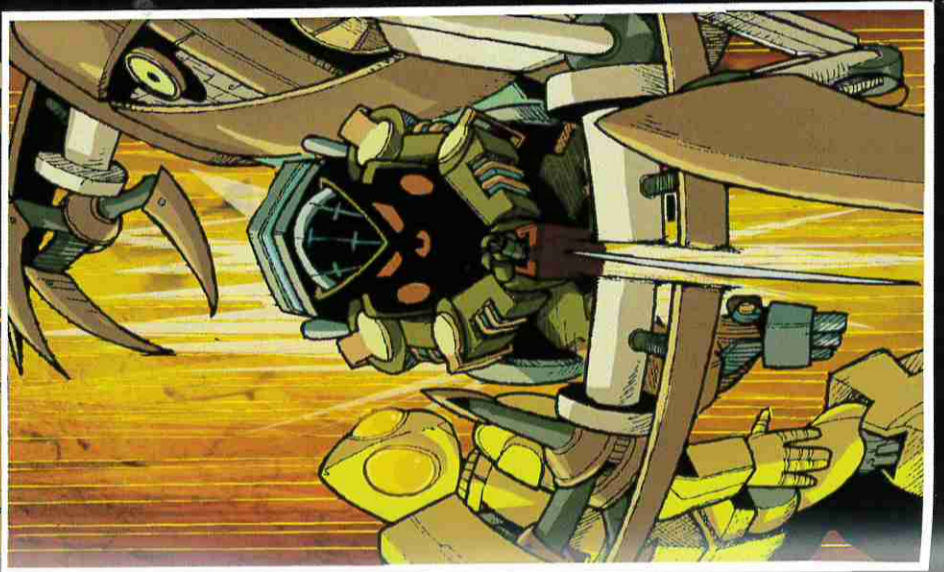


HEAD'S UP!

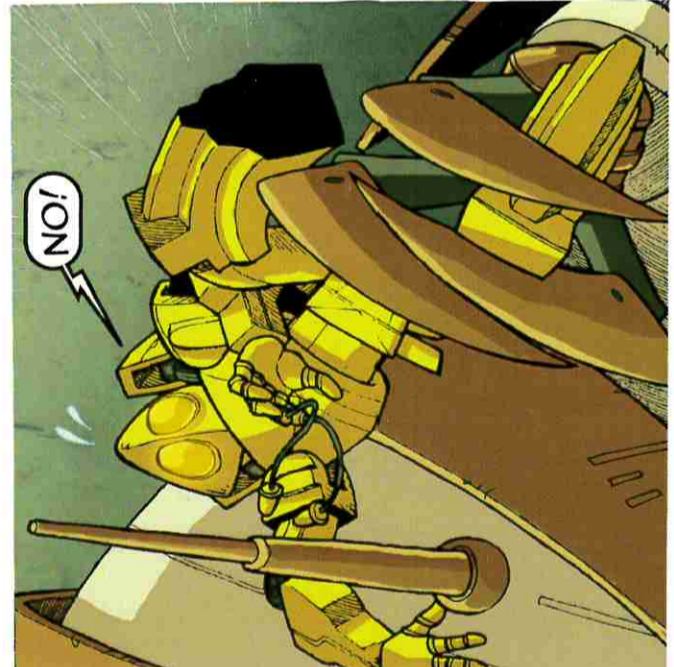


RAITRAP! YOU CAME BACK!

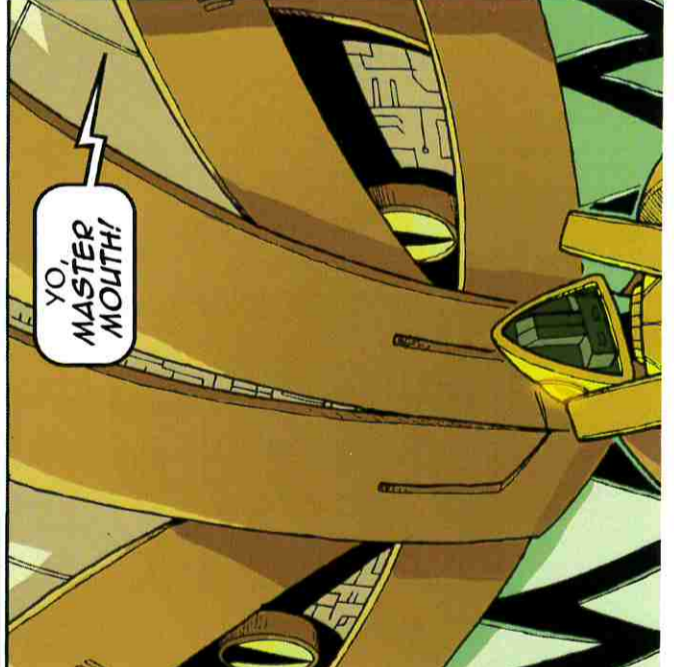
YEAH, WELL... DON'T READ TOO MUCH INTO THIS, GOLDEN ROD!



GOTCHA!



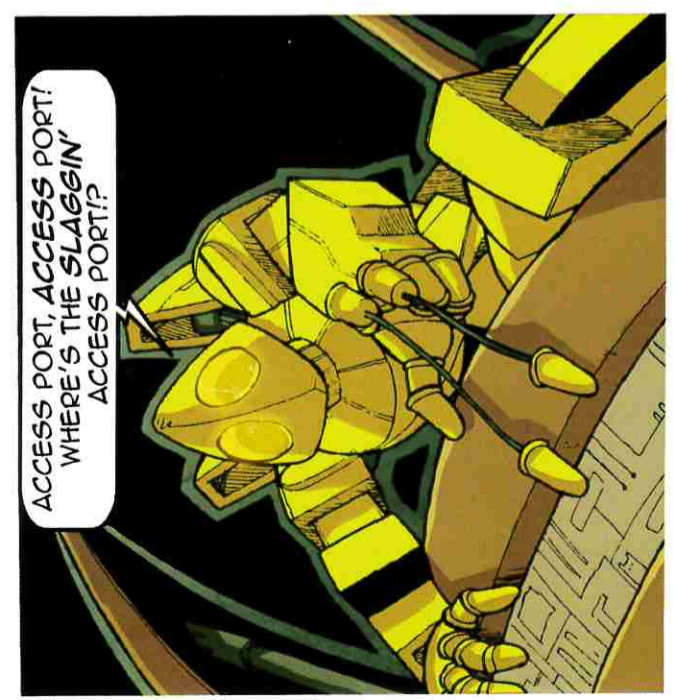
NO!



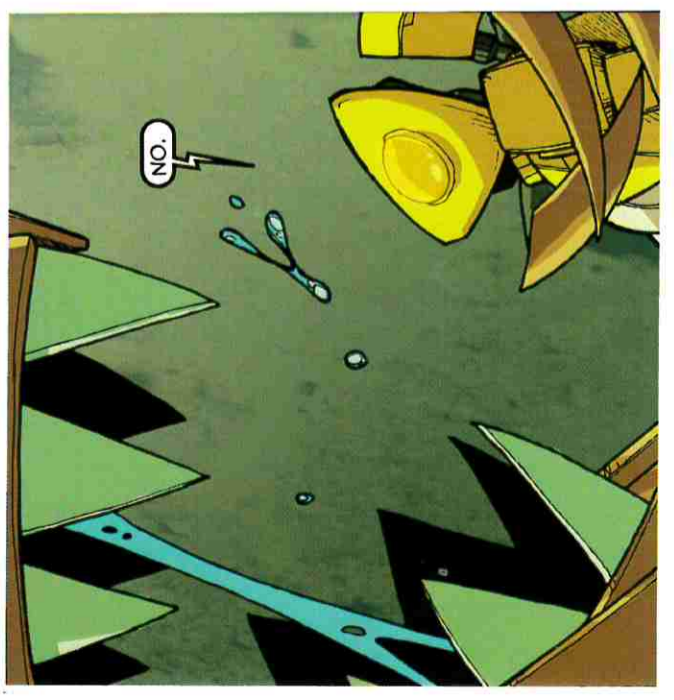
YO, MASTER MOUTH!



COME ON, COME ON...



ACCESS PORT, ACCESS PORT! WHERE'S THE SLAGGIN' ACCESS PORT!?



NO.



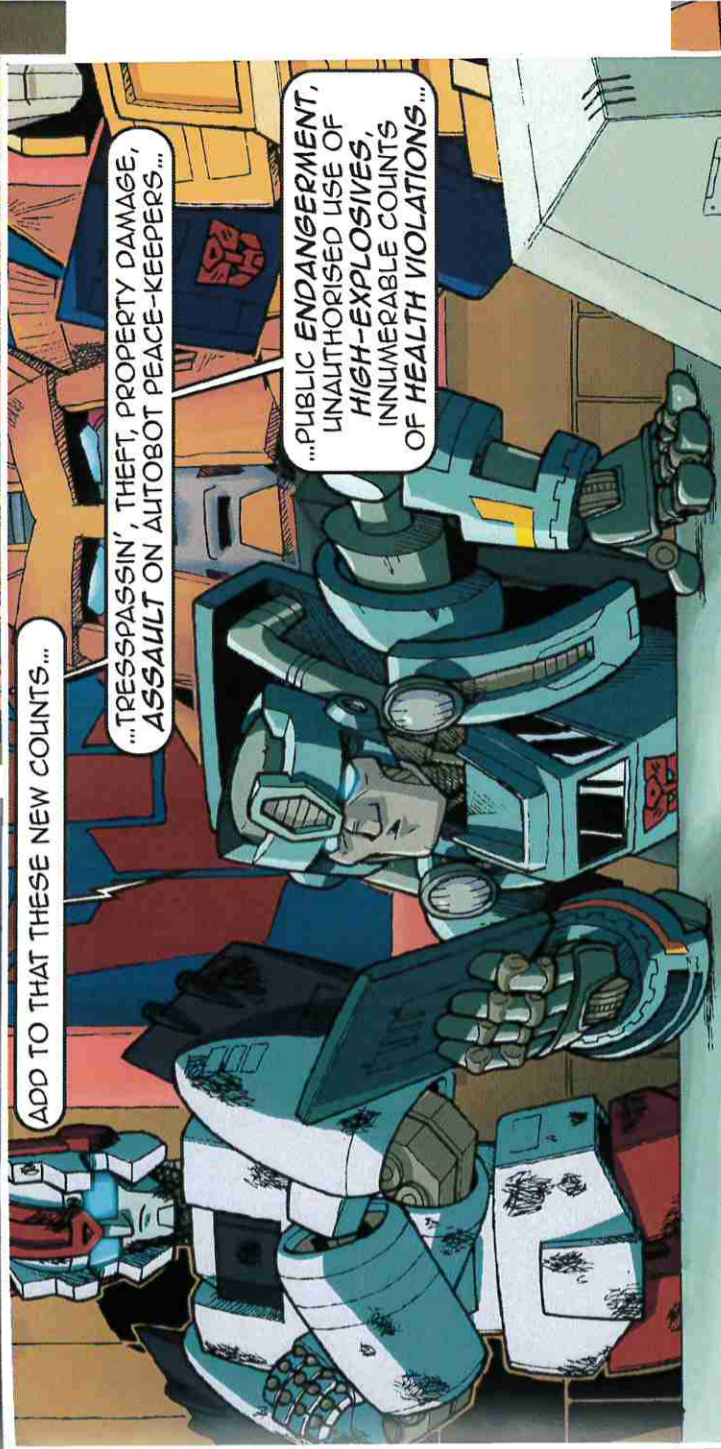
WE'VE KNOWN ALL ABOUT YER INFO-TRADIN' SCAM, BUT HIGH COMMAND DECIDED IT WAS IN OUR BEST INTERESTS TO LEAVE YOU TO IT, AND PLAY YOU OURSELVES NOW AND THEN.

BUT THAT DON'T MAKE WHAT YOU WERE DOIN' ANY LESS AN ACT OF TREASON.



BELIEVE IT OR NOT, WE'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU.

OH, YEAH, YOU GOT A FILE.



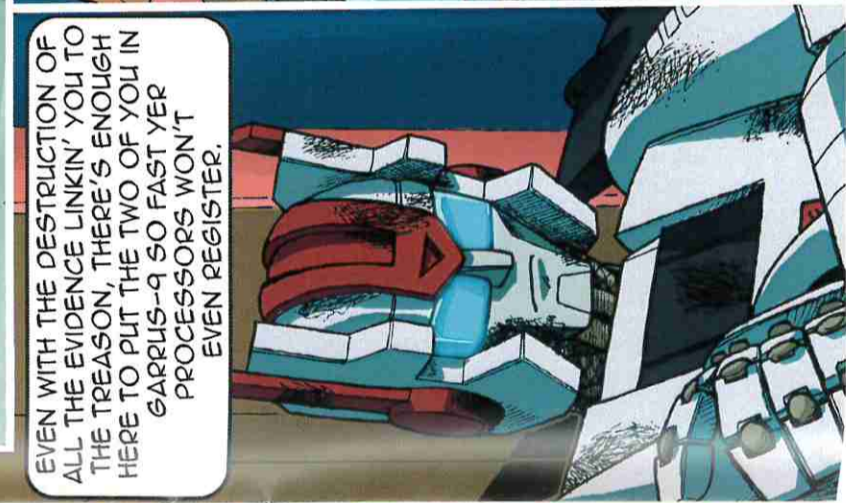
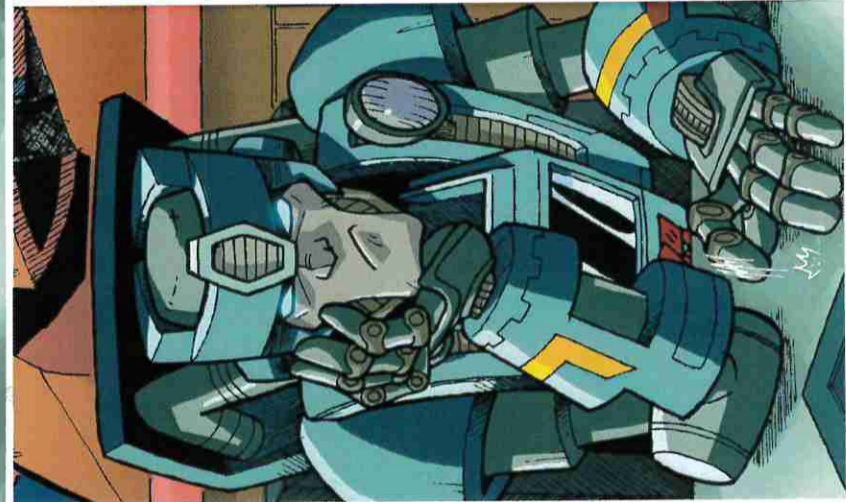
ADD TO THAT THESE NEW COUNTS...

...TRESSPASSIN', THEFT, PROPERTY DAMAGE, ASSAULT ON AUTOBOT PEACE-KEEPERS...

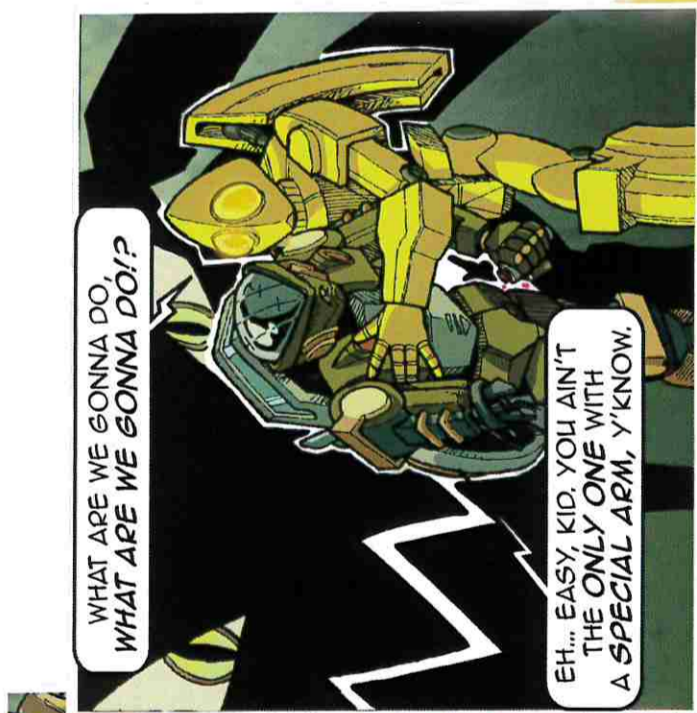
...PUBLIC ENDANGERMENT, UNAUTHORISED USE OF HIGH-EXPLOSIVES, INNUMERABLE COUNTS OF HEALTH VIOLATIONS...



YOU WANNA SIGN UPP?



EVEN WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL THE EVIDENCE LINKIN' YOU TO THE TREASON, THERE'S ENOUGH HERE TO PLIT THE TWO OF YOU IN GARBUS-9 SO FAST YER PROCESSORS WON'T EVEN REGISTER.



WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO, WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO!?

EH... EASY, KID, YOU AIN'T THE ONLY ONE WITH A SPECIAL ARM, Y'KNOW.



EEYIIIIII!

RATRAPP!

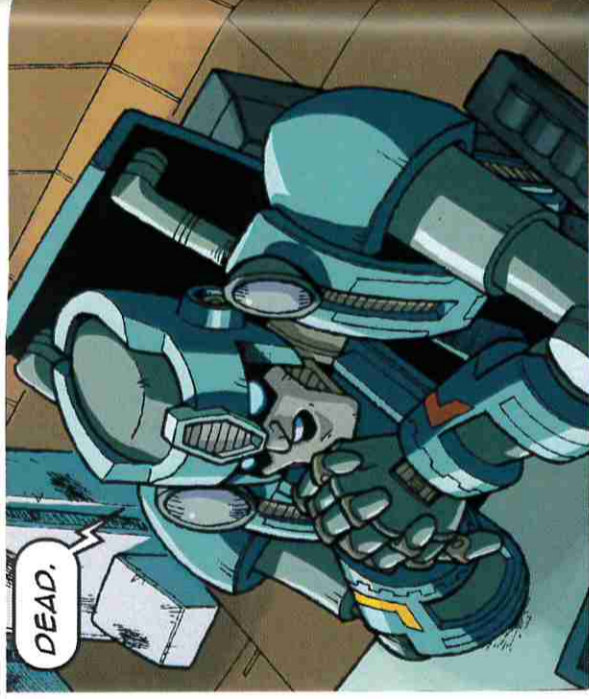


SCAN THIS ACTION!





ARE YOU SERIOUS?



DEAD.



WOW! THANK YOU, I'D LOVE TO!

OH, WOAH, WOAH!

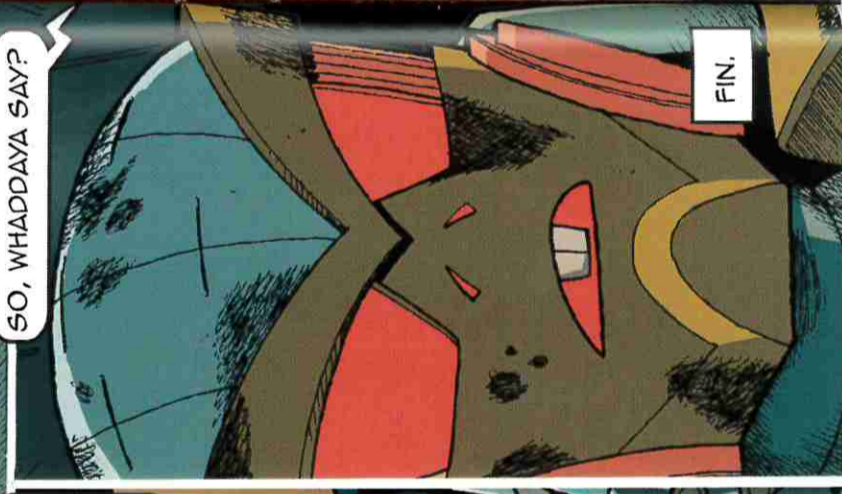
WERE YOU EVEN LISSENNIN' TO YERSELF JUST NOW, POPS?!

I AIN'T NO TEAM PLAYER, AND I AIN'T GOT NO INNEREST IN PLAYIN' GALACTIC DEFENDER! I ONLY LOOK OUT FER NUMERO UNO, ME!

TRUST ME, YOU DON'T WANT NO OBSOLETE LIKE ME SULLYIN' YER GOOD NAME.

SON, WE GOT SOME O' THE GRIMMEST, MOST REPUGNANT WARRIORS FROM THE PIT FIGHTIN' FOR US. IT AIN'T ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE LIKE, IT'S ABOUT WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN.

SO, WHADDAYA SAY?



FIN.

3 DARTHS COMICS

MARVEL, DC AND INDIE COMIC BOOK SPECIALIST

STOCKING A WIDE RANGE OF TOYS AND COLLECTABLES FROM STAR WARS, TRANSFORMERS, GAMES WORKSHOP, HALO 3 AND BEARS OF WAR TO NAME JUST A FEW !!

AMAZON ID THREE DARTHS COLLECTABLES
EBAY ID THE3DARTHS

UNIT 62, HARVEY CENTRE,
HARLOW, ESSEX CM20 1XR
TEL 01279 419777

WWW.3DARTHS.CO.UK



ORDER HOTLINE
01503 660092

12-14 DAVEY PLACE, NORWICH, NR2 1PD
THE UK'S BIGGEST TRANSFORMERS RETAIL STORE



Hunt for Decepticons

Generations

Voyagers

Scouts

Leaders



Scout Powercore Combiners



Robot Heroes



Encore Reissues



Device Label



Games



Japanese Animated



Japanese Masterpiece



Alernity



Exclusive Comics 2 FLOORS OF TOYS, COMICS AND COLLECTABLES!

All our items are available off the shelf from our air conditioned retail stor or search for Transformers at www.toyzandgamez.co.uk



Exclusive Toys

**Beyond good. Beyond evil.
Beyond Season 3? Any chance? No? Okay!**



TRANSFORMERS
ANIMATED

Logical Alternatives
Excerpts From Shockwave's Personal Data Files

By
David W. Underwood

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This takes place between the end of the second season of the original Transformers cartoon and the beginning of Transformers: The Movie.

CLASSIFIED PERSONAL STATUS REPORT #7A-WF-83429
LOCATION: IACON, CYBERTRON
IDENTIFICATION: SHOCKWAVE
SECURITY LEVEL: OMEGA-01-ALPHA

As has been my continued duty for the past four million stellar cycles, I have overseen the continued operation of Cybertron and attempted, as much as has been possible, to ensure that the planet remains in the condition in which it was left by Megatron. This task has been made all the more troublesome of late since information regarding the reactivation of Optimus Prime and the crew of the Ark has begun to spread amongst the remaining pockets of Autobot resistance.

In previous reports I have detailed my activities prior to Megatron's reawakening on Earth. During this period I authorised two large-scale military actions against the Autobots still in operation on the planet. These efforts proved costly in terms of depleting my forces' Energon reserves by approximately thirteen percent overall and in causing the destruction of forty-two sentinel drone units. However, both operations were successful in bringing an end to the rising tensions and the Autobot insurgency.

However, since the reestablishment of contact between the Nemesis's crew and Cybertron - and the concurrent resumption of communications between the Autobot resistance groups and Optimus Prime - sixteen military actions have proven necessary. All but three of these actions have taken place within the last stellar cycle. In short, in the seventeen stellar cycles since the initiation of our campaigns on Earth, Autobot resistance to Decepticon operations on Cybertron has increased at

an exponential and unprecedented rate. All predictions based on typical models of Autobot behaviour failed to anticipate this rise in activity.

The Energon reserves, in spite of periodic resupplies resulting from successful harvesting of Earth-based sources, have decreased by an additional thirty-two percent. Three hundred and twenty-six sentinel drone units have been destroyed, a further two hundred and fifty-one have suffered moderate to severe damage leading to two or more orbital cycles in a repair facility.

It is only logical to conclude that the return of Optimus Prime to the field has reinvigorated the Sparks of the Cybertron-based Autobots. Furthermore, it is logical to assume that this situation will continue for as long as Optimus Prime continues to function. Therefore, the continued actions of Megatron on Earth are exacerbating the situation on Cybertron. Autobot victories there inspire the insurgents here.

Based upon projections of Autobot personnel numbers on Cybertron made from Soundwave's clandestine accesses to their DataNet prior to the launch of the Ark, I estimate that the military operations in recent stellar cycles have diminished the total number of Autobots to between one and two thousand. Decepticon forces currently stand as follows:

- GUARDIAN ROBOTS - 2
 - SENTIENT COMBAT-READY FORCES - 312
 - SENTINEL DRONE UNITS - 564
 - OTHERS (INCLUDING DAMAGED FORCES)
- 489

TOTAL - 1367

Considering these numbers of readily available forces and the potentiality for producing additional sentinel drone units to replace those destroyed with the next Energon shipment from Earth, I believe that the time is now right to begin a full-scale purge of the Cybertron-based Autobots. It may also be possible to enhance our numbers by transferring Megatron's Earth-based forces to Cybertron via the space bridge.

Removing the Autobot presence on Cybertron will yield clear positive results

for the Decepticon cause. Firstly, the Autobots based on Earth will be demoralised by the loss of their home planet. Secondly, what resources the Earth Autobots possess will be put under significant strain by the unanticipated addition of one to two thousand additional beings to their ranks. Thirdly, while psychology is not my area of expertise, I believe that the successful retaking of Cybertron will yield a psychological boost to Decepticon forces elsewhere. Fourthly, the removal of the Autobots from Cybertron will bring an end to the Energon expenditure generated by combating their insurgent activities. Fifthly, with the planet under complete Decepticon control, certain aspects of my forces can be re-tasked to Earth to assist where Megatron has failed and eliminate the Autobots there. Finally, Cybertron can be rebuilt according to the Decepticon design without fear of Autobot actions impeding this reconstruction.

In anticipation of Megatron's approval of this course of action, I have run test scenarios. Of the fifteen thousand iterations of the purge operation that have been processed by our computer network and my own cognitive array, we are successful in causing a complete evacuation or elimination of non-Decepticon forces eighty-seven percent of the time. This proposal, along with supporting data on predicted success rates has been sent to Megatron on Earth for his approval.

Logic dictates that the proposal be accepted. Megatron, however, is not always a logical being. Over the millennia of my service to the Decepticons, I have noted his occasional lapses into illogic and borderline megalomania. There have been instances in which he has become overly focussed on the elimination of Optimus Prime or the completion of other obviously trivial tasks. In such moments, he has no regard for the cost of his undertakings in terms of Energon expenditure and troop depletion. The Autobot leader is not our goal, Cybertron's return to greatness is. Deep within his Spark Megatron is aware of this.

One should not expect perfection to emanate from beings that are plagued with emotional considerations.

If illogic reigns within Megatron and he sees fit to disallow the purge of Autobot forces that I suggest, then logical alternatives must be considered. Foremost among these alternatives is the option of proceeding without Megatron approval or assistance. This could prove costly. My analyses suggest that our success rate will

be greatly enhanced by employing the Earth Decepticons in the purge. Additionally, should I proceed against Megatron's orders, there is the strong possibility that he could interpret this as a betrayal and order my immediate execution.

Alternatively then, logic would suggest that I seek to replace Megatron with an individual more suited to the correct undertaking of our conflict with the Autobots. The leading candidates to replace Megatron would be Soundwave, Starscream, and myself.

Soundwave is not trusted by the rank and file Decepticons. His position as Megatron's chief spy master has done little to encourage a rapport between Soundwave and the other members of our faction. It is well known that he has gathered information on Autobots and Decepticons alike. His sole support would come from his mini-con cassette minions; these scant few, while formidable are insufficient to sustain Soundwave's mastery over the Decepticons. Soundwave's personality - being as he is an individual devoid of charisma and charm - is also ultimately ill-suited to leadership.

Starscream, on the other hand, is a far more capable speaker and director of soldiers. He has long sought the position of Decepticon leader and would leap at the opportunity to replace Megatron. It is highly likely that the other Seekers would support one of their own in a bid for power. However, Starscream is both vain and egotistical. His abilities as both a warrior and a leader are far less than he believes them to be. Ultimately, Starscream's ego would lead to the destruction of the Decepticons.

Logically, the sole alternative to succeed Megatron as the leader of the Decepticons should he prove to be incapable of continuing in that position (which will be demonstrated by a refusal to initiate the purge of Cybertron's remaining Autobots) is me. My advanced computational abilities allow me to function as a combined battlefield computer and tactical commander. Coupled with the destructive potential inherent in my alternate form and my adherence to logical action above all else, it would appear that I am the sole viable - and, indeed, logical - alternative to Megatron.

In order to ensure a smooth transfer of power in the event of the necessity of Megatron's removal, it is logical that I prepare a plan of action. Key agents from Cybertron's Decepticon forces will be dispatched to Earth to provide assistance with the Autobot forces there while I begin to replace the damaged sentinel drone units

with new, updated models. Alterations to the weapons systems of the existing drones to allow them to better defend against and counter Megatron's fusion cannon have already begun.

I must now await Megatron's response before further actions can be taken.

CLASSIFIED PERSONAL STATUS REPORT #7A-WF-83432

LOCATION: IACON, CYBERTRON
IDENTIFICATION: SHOCKWAVE
SECURITY LEVEL: OMEGA-01-ALPHA

A communication has been received from Megatron on Earth. A recent success has led to the capture of a human Energon production facility and the generation of a large number of Energon Cubes. The entire shipment is being sent to Cybertron to allow the construction of additional sentinel drone units for use in the proposed purge operation. The shipment will be dispatched in three solar cycles.

While my concerns regarding Megatron's abilities to lead the Decepticons are not completely abated, he has approved the purge operation on the grounds that our victory will be severely demoralising to the Autobots. He will be leading an assault force through the space bridge that will arrive in two orbital cycles. This force will be made up of the majority of our Earth-based warriors, including the three gestalt teams⁵.

With my continuing concerns regarding Megatron's propensity towards illogical actions and decisions, I have resolved to maintain my contingency plan for his smooth removal. A series of sentinel drone units will be removed from the production manifests and sequestered in a secure location awaiting the moment when they may prove necessary for the purpose of installing myself as Decepticon leader. It is only logical that I continue to stockpile these forces and the Energon necessary for their operation for the duration of my concerns.

Should they prove ultimately unnecessary, a strategy to explain their existence must be devised. Consideration of this matter will be undertaken.

CLASSIFIED PERSONAL STATUS REPORT #7A-WF-83504

LOCATION: SIMFUR, CYBERTRON
IDENTIFICATION: SHOCKWAVE
SECURITY LEVEL: OMEGA-01-ALPHA

The final Autobot evacuation shuttle was allowed to leave the spaceport on the Hydrax Plateau and pass through our orbital defence perimeter sixteen megacycles ago. The population of Cybertron is now one hundred percent Decepticon. Soundwave's reports from Earth indicate that the Autobots have taken to calling the purge operation the Battle for Cybertron.

Additional details indicate that they are regrouping at the Ark. I believe a swift counterattack to be unlikely⁶.

Megatron has ordered that Decepticon forces will now use Cybertron as their primary base of operations, leaving Earth as a secondary outpost. With his presence on the planet now permanent, my position has been downgraded to Military Operations Advisor and Scientific Liaison. For four million stellar cycles I had undisputed control over Cybertron, its resources, and its industries. Now I am required to submit constant requests for materiel and assistants to those who were previously my inferiors.

An illogical situation.

I have begun to contemplate logical alternatives. These include the activation of my contingency plans for Megatron's removal. However, additional drone units will now prove necessary due to Megatron's command over the control systems of all but my personal supply of sentinels. Logically, then, I will require allies to assist in his removal from power. However, such allies are liable to be untrustworthy and prone to the placing of their own goals above the good of all Decepticons (which will be served by my installation as leader in Megatron's place).

A method of introducing the loyalty control mechanism that was to be used on the agents sent to Earth to these new "allies" will be necessary.

(Footnotes)

- ¹ Equating to 5.4 million astrolitres.
- ² Most notably his failure to terminate Optimus Prime and the reactivated Ark crew.
- ³ Note that testing is still ongoing and that these results may change. Considering the sheer number of scenarios tested, however, this would seem to be somewhat unlikely.
- ⁴ An accurate and effective method of ensuring the continued loyalty of these agents while they are stationed on Earth and subject to outside influences is being devised. Refer to Classified Personal Status Report #6D-XF-74656.

Optimus Prime is Welsh

By Nigel Mabry

While the combination process results in a less intelligent overall robot (the united forms of the Constructicons and the Combaticons are not noted for their intellectual prowess, while the Stunticons' united form appears to be borderline psychotic), the inherent strength of Devastator, Bruticus, and Menasor will prove useful.

Using models generated from Optimus Prime's previous behaviour following severe defeats, I estimate only a six percent chance that he will authorise retaliatory action.

Various countries are closely associated with the Transformers brand. The contributions of the USA and Japan are immeasurable and need no expounding. Canada was the home of the Beast Wars and Beast Machines cartoons and of the Dreamwave comics. The UK is best known for its copious, high quality Transformers comic strips and, by extension, some of the brand's most popular artists and that most prolific of Transformers writers, Simon Furman, whose personal contributions became deeply embedded in Transformers lore, such as Primus, Wreckers, Maccadam's and The Fallen.

But what of those countries that comprise the United Kingdom? What about Wales, for instance? Wales has a population of just three million people; by way of comparison, first week DVD sales of *Revenge of the Fallen* in the USA alone reached seven and a half million units. What could a small country like Wales have contributed to one of the world's biggest toy brands?

I first started thinking about Wales' contribution in 2003, after visiting Chicago's Official Transformers Collectors Convention (as Botcon was temporarily known in that and the following year). Feeling a responsibility to show that I was representing Welsh and British fandom, I was wearing a shirt modeled on Y Ddraig Goch. Crossing the hotel's atrium, I was engaged in conversation: "Is that the Welsh flag?" I talked with this unknown man about Wales and about the man's family, who had emigrated from there across the Atlantic; as with many New Worlders, this man was clearly proud of his ancestral heritage. After our brief conversation, the man said his farewells as he had to go to "this thing". He and his companion, who had remained silent throughout, disappeared downstairs. I set off for the stairs myself and onwards to the next event.

Presently, I took a seat in the main hall, towards the back as it turned out, the seats no doubt having filled up while I was engaged in conversation. I waited for the live script reading to start. Presently, the guests were introduced. I was taken aback to realise that a few minutes earlier, I had been chatting to none other than David Kaye, voice of Megatron and Optimus-Prime-in-waiting; his silent companion had been Garry Chalk, voice of Optimus Primal and Optimus Prime, guest of honour at this year's Auto Assembly.

The next day: autograph session. When I got to the head of the queue, Kaye happened to

be looking down when I placed my programme on the table for him to sign. When I spoke, he recognised my voice and looked up, "Hey, it's the Welsh guy." We spoke again about his roots; his parents are from Cardiff and Swansea and he still has relatives living in South Wales. Sitting next to Kaye, Chalk joined our conversation: "I'm from Abergavenny." Chalk went on to tell me how one of his past co-stars - on Exo-Squad, if memory serves - was not only also Welsh, but cousin of one Kylie Minogue. (The Minogue sisters' maternal grandparents were from Maesteg; sadly, I haven't been able to find a direct connection between the Antipodean singers and Transformers.)

Not long after, I was watching the special features on Metrodome's "Generation One" Season One DVD set. In an interview with David Kaye, in which he was talking about the fans, he told how he had met someone from Wales, his ancestors' native country, at a convention in Chicago. I had unexpectedly become the subject of a DVD extra! Several years later, Kaye remembered me when we met again at Auto Assembly.

So, Optimus Prime - and Optimus Primal - is Welsh and Megatron qualifies to play at scrum half. But that's just part of the story.

Wales has been involved in Transformers since the early days. The very first strip originated by Marvel UK and that which laid the groundwork for the success that would follow - Man of Iron - was drawn in part by Cardiff's Mike Collins. Collins continued to draw for the comic, including Furman's first story, *The Enemy Within* and was one of the few writers to wrest the pen away from Furman, writing *Crisis of Command*. Collins was also the artist responsible for drawing the first four instalments of that other essential series for British Transformers fans of the time: the *Ladybird* books.

As Collins pioneered art from Wales, so the new wave of Transformers artists has taken up the baton. Auto Assembly attendees will be familiar with the work of Simon Williams, Jason Cardy, Kat Nicholson and Kris Carter, who between them are building a rapidly growing body of work - on both sides of the Atlantic - from their Welsh bases. Collectively they have produced art for Panini, IDW, Titan, Metrodome, *CardboardCutOut.net* and various fan projects. Williams and Cardy have also collaborated on work related to Transformers: art for *Marvel's Death's Head Volume 2* trade paperback.

If, historically, the two main media outlets for the Transformers brand have been animation and comics, then arguably today's key outlet is cinema. Wales has given admirably to the first two, but what of the third? Surely Wales hasn't cracked Paramount's behemoth Transformers machine? Surely, in fact, it has. If you watch the

credits of either film, you will see one Ilt Jones. Treforest-born Jones swapped the Taff valley for the Hollywood Hills to become an award-winning location manager and served as Supervising Location Manager on the first two Transformers films; at the time of writing he is continuing in this position for the third. It's ironic that the man who had to help Michael Bay try to convince us that Petra and Giza are a stone's throw away from each other comes from a country that's smaller than the actual distance.

So far, this discussion has explored Wales' contribution to the licensed media that's designed to support (and at the same time, feed into) the central Transformers products, the toy line itself. But there does exist an important contribution that Wales makes to those actual Transformers toys. Caswell Bay, Newport NP19 4YH. This address appears on most Transformers toy boxes. It's the address of Hasbro UK's distribution centre. At some point, most of the Transformers toys in Britain will pass through this centre in Gwent. Granted, at any time Hasbro could hypothetically move their operations elsewhere, but for the moment, Wales plays a pivotal role in our enjoyment and the continued success of the brand.

Before I draw to a close, I want to return briefly to the cartoons. There's one more voice actor to add to the roster: St. Asaph's Richard Ian Cox played the role of Scattershot in *Cybertron*. Hardly as prolific as Garry Chalk or David Kaye, but it goes to show that Wales contributes in small ways and suggests that maybe there are more contributors out there that I haven't yet learned of.

I hope you have found this brief exploration informative; I hope also that it will encourage you to examine the contribution that has been made by your own country or region. I shall leave you with a little something to ponder: what was it that Megatron transformed into at the end of *Beast Wars*?

I Rise, You Fall

by Andrea Tang

The tall and noble mechanical form of Optimus Prime stood silhouetted against the gradually receding light of day. He was aboard a U.S military aircraft carrier ship heading away from Egypt and back toward U.S. land. In one hand, he held a long staff, a trophy from his recent victory over one of his most significant foes, The Fallen.

In these always appreciated peaceful moments to himself, Optimus's thoughts wandered back to events past. His mind took him back to recall his experiences during the time he spent in stasis-lock, what the humans compared to being in a state of 'coma'. Through his contact with the Matrix of Leadership, he had seen and learnt much about matters that had been a great mystery to him all his existence. Answers to historical questions and the truth behind fabled stories of Cybertron's past had been revealed to him. But perhaps most importantly of all for him, he had finally discovered where it was that he came from and meaning behind his name of 'Prime'. The visions he had seen and words he heard in regards to his heritage had been revelatory and humbling.

Darkness. Coldness. He had barely possessed the awareness to recognise those concepts as far as he could remember about his state of mind at the time. Then there had been mist, surrounding him, collecting at his feet. Optimus had found himself striding through the white swirling clouds. Was he offline?

"Optimus Prime," an ancient voice echoed in his audio sensors.

Optimus scanned his unreal surroundings for the source of the voice.

"Optimus Prime" the voice echoed again.

"Who are you?" Optimus replied. "Where are you?"

"Closer than you realize."

Out of a thick cloud of white mist, a skeletal-shaped ancient Cybertronian figure emerged in front of Optimus. There was the outline of a long staff within one of his clutches.

Something about him felt familiar, like a feeling of kinship, but at the same time, there was something dark and terrible about him. Optimus was uncertain whether he was peaceful or dangerous, trustworthy or manipulative, good or evil.

"How do you know me?"

"I've known you for a long time, young Prime. You and I have shared history. You and I... are family." His voice rang of ages and seductive promises.

"How is that possible?" Optimus questioned, confused, but curious.

"I too am a Prime. One of the first."

The ancient and dark Cybertronian took a step forward toward Optimus. Optimus instinctively moved back a step.

"I am known as 'The Fallen', the last of the original seven Primes that came before all other Cybertronian life. And you, you are special. You are Optimus Prime, the last descendant son of our proud Dynasty. We are kin. We are brothers. The last Primes."

Optimus regarded The Fallen cautiously, unsure whether he spoke lies. But there was an element of truth in his tone.

The Fallen drew closer to Optimus, but this time, Optimus remained rooted to his spot, transfixed. The Fallen's mysterious ancient aura seemed to rob him of the ability and will to move. He felt compelled as well as cautious. He wanted to know more of his unknown origins.

"Do you know what it means to be a Prime, Optimus?" The Fallen almost whispered to a captivated Optimus Prime. "To be a Prime is to be a King, a God amongst our Cybertronian minions. Do you not feel it? The effect, the power you have over your Autobot followers? Do they not rely on your strength and leadership? Would they not die for you in battle? Would they not do *anything* for you willingly?"

Optimus's head bowed regretfully. "Yes. Many have sacrificed themselves in my name, under my command. So many."

One of The Fallen's cold, rusted claw fingers slipped under Optimus's chin and lifted his face up to his. Optimus stared into the fiery red abyss that was the Fallen's optics.

"Why do you display sorrow, young Prime? It is only right and fitting that they should worship you, die for you, a Prime! For you are their ruler, their divine King! You were *born* to be so."

Optimus shook his head. "No. I'm no ruling King or God. I am simply a leader of Autobot soldiers in our battle against our Decepticon enemies. I shoulder the burden of leadership in war. We fight for the freedom of all."

"But you could be so much more, Optimus Prime! Why burden yourself with unnecessary abstract values and causes for others? You are destined to rule as all Prime descendants are, as I am! We are the last two Primes! The Autobots, the Decepticons, the War, none these should matter to you, for you are *above* all those insignificant concerns! Cybertron, Earth, the Universe are all ours for the taking!"

The Fallen extended an inviting open palm out to Optimus. For a moment, Optimus was both fearful and mesmerised by the outstretched ancient

talons.

"The war can end. And you can be victorious!" The Fallen was coaxing into Optimus's audio sensors. "You can defeat your enemies with a wave of your hand! They will bow before your might! Your arch-nemesis, Megatron, hopes to achieve the power of Primes, but the truth is: Primes are born, not made! You are blessed to be of the former, Optimus Prime! You were created gifted with great power that only needs nourishment! A plentiful source of energon will provide you with the all energy you need to manifest your full potential, and I have it, the Sun Harvester!"

The Fallen's inviting open hand beckoned. Optimus regarded it uncertainly. His fingers began moving up involuntarily, as if being drawn by an invisible force toward The Fallen's waiting claws.

"Join me, Optimus Prime! I will guide you to your destined path! Once we claim the energy of Earth's Sun, ultimate power will be ours! We will ascend to our thrones and once again the Dynasty of Primes shall rule as Gods amongst insignificant Cybertronian and human mortals! It is *my*...and *your* destiny as Primes!"

Optimus's royal blue optics suddenly hardened then. His hands stopped and curled into tight fists by his sides.

"I have no desire to be a dictating tyrant God! Certainly not at the expense of Earth and humanity and all my fellow Autobots! That is what separates me from Megatron! You are no different from him! You are power-hungry, insane! I cannot believe I may be descended from the likes of you!"

The Fallen hissed sharply. "You dare reject me!" His ancient and dark face contorted into a hideous expression of anger. "You fool!" he spat at Optimus. "You would give up power and Godhood for...for worthless human flesh-bags and Autobot slaves?! You're a Prime, like me!"

"A Prime maybe, but like you? Never! Optimus responded in disgust.

Suddenly The Fallen lashed out at Optimus with his staff rod, knocking him to the ground. As Optimus attempted to sit up, The Fallen's clawed foot landed hard on his chest, pinning him down.

"How disappointing, Optimus Prime." The Fallen spoke in a grave voice. "You had to be like our other brothers, protecting life before harvesting power. And now you shall share the same fate as them: oblivion!"

The Fallen raised his staff weapon above Optimus's face, ready to drive it through his head. With what little strength he had, Optimus managed to pull the Fallen's pinning leg off his chest and cause him to lose his balance. As The Fallen stumbled back, Optimus rose to his feet and attempted to tackle The Fallen. The Fallen met Optimus in a locking of hands. The two Primes struggled in a wrestle.

"You are weakened from your wounds, Optimus Prime! And I am gaining in strength!" The Fallen taunted. "You cannot beat me! You will fall as your brothers did eons ago!"

Optimus felt his knees buckling under The Fallen's strength. His arms would soon follow.

"I must...must not give in!" Optimus thought to himself in desperation.

Then Optimus heard a distant cry. A human cry. Sam! Then he felt it. An incredible wave of energy suddenly coursing through him from his spark chamber in his chest, recharging him, filling him with life-giving energy. Suddenly he sensed himself being transported elsewhere.

Optimus lay dazed, like in a state of lucid dreaming, on sandy ground. The Fallen had disappeared. Instead, Optimus found himself surrounded by six shadowed Cybertronian figures looking down at him, but Optimus felt no fear in their presence.

"Optimus Prime, our last son," said one of the shadowed figures in a clear voice hinged with both sorrow and joy. "You have fought and lead nobly and courageously in a never-ending war, protecting the freedom of others. You honour the code of the Primes."

"The Primes..." Optimus murmured. "How...?"

"The Matrix of Leadership has allowed us to connect to your consciousness," explained another of the shadowed figures, "so that we may commune with you."

"You have been an orphan, ignorant of your origins and heritage all your life," the third of the shaded figures spoke softly. "You are marked with our symbols." He gently touched the set of ancient Cybertronian markings running down the side of Optimus's face plates. "The symbols of the Primes. But you do not know the significance behind the name 'Prime'. We will show you."

Optimus gazed peacefully up at the standing shadowed mysterious figures. Their presence, their voices were soothing. He felt so calm and at peace that he had no desire to try to get up from his laying position on the ground. And his surrounding company made no indication for him to move.

Then they all kneeled down around him. Each reached out a hand and touched Optimus at various points of his battered body. Their ancient metal hands radiated warmth.

Suddenly a download of images, memories swept through Optimus's core processor. He saw it all. The answers to his hidden past.

There had been seven of them at the start, the original seven Primes, created by the Allspark. Six of them produced an offspring by spark-splitting, descendant sons were born. Their numbers, for a time, grew to thirteen. The thirteen Primes had been leaders to the first transforming Cybertronians created after them, the seekers and

constructors.

The seekers went out into the universe in search of suns that could recharge the Allspark's finite life-giving energies; the constructors built the sun harvesting machines that would harvest the energies of chosen suns. But the Primes would not just pick any suns they discovered, they would only use suns that did not sustain other life.

They found Earth's sun. One of the seven original Primes went against the rule of preserving life and attempted to harvest power for himself only. On Earth, where early man roamed, he had a Sun Harvester constructed despite his brothers' decision to leave Earth alone.

The other six original Primes discovered their treacherous brother's plan. They went to Earth to stop him and a battle broke out between 'the fallen' Prime and his brothers. The Fallen had his army of early transforming Cybertronians and had already been empowered with energon from his Sun Harvester. He was stronger than his brothers, they couldn't stand up to him. They did the only thing they could; they stole the key to the Sun Harvester: the Matrix of Leadership.

Finally they sacrificed themselves to seal the Matrix away from the Fallen. The Fallen, thwarted by his brothers, was enraged. He ordered his seekers to spread out around Earth and search the globe for the Matrix key. It would be an indefinite mission for them.

Meanwhile, The Fallen returned to Cybertron with another mission. The six descendant sons of the other Primes still lived and still posed potential threats to his existence. He orchestrated a civil war on Cybertron to eliminate them. The First War on Cybertron began. One by one, each of the six descendant Primes fell to The Fallen's genocidal slaughter during the war.

The proud dynasty of Primes had all but been wiped out. None remained, save for one young one; an unknown orphan Prime, a second one created by one of the other original six Primes just before they had left to confront The Fallen Prime on Earth for his betrayal.

Anticipating The Fallen's murderous actions should he and his brothers fail to stop him, the original Prime that spawned this last Prime descendant had placed the new spark of his son into a transforming Cybertronian protoform, so he too would appear like the other transforming Cybertronians. Optimus Prime was thus born as a Cybertronian hatchling with the ability to transform. He had been cleverly disguised and hidden away from the Fallen's recognition amongst the transforming Cybertronians; in this way, the fathering Prime hoped to protect his last son from the Fallen's wrath. The fathering Prime left the marking symbols of the Primes on the head of his last son, so that he would know of his heritage when he matured. Before he departed for Earth with his brothers, the fathering Prime left his newly birthed

son with a trusted constructor on Cybertron: Alpha Trion, who protected, raised and taught the young Optimus Prime.

It would be a time before The Fallen would discover the last Prime descendant. When he did after centuries of hiding, waiting and conserving his limited energy, Optimus Prime had already grown to become one of two great leaders of Cybertron, sharing leadership with one called Megatron. The Fallen sensed a corruptible spark in Megatron and approached him. He planted the seeds of war in him and secured his loyalty, encouraging in him his desire for conquest and promising him great power and sole leadership of all Cybertron.

The shared leadership between Optimus and Megatron was thus divided and all Cybertron with it. Two opposing factions arose: the 'Autobots' that chose to still follow in Optimus Prime's leadership and the 'Decepticons' that followed Megatron's new deviating rule. Megatron designed the Decepticon insignia based on The Fallen's face, honouring the Fallen as the inspiration behind the Decepticons; The Fallen was the original first Decepticon. The Fallen commanded Megatron to seize the Allspark from the Autobots' possession. The Autobots did everything in their power to keep it out of Megatron's hands. In this way, The Fallen had initiated the second of Cybertron's civil wars: the Great Autobot-Decepticon War.

But The Fallen quickly observed that Optimus Prime would not fall easily; the last descendant Prime matched Megatron's ruthlessness with the strength of his own convictions. The Fallen would not risk direct confrontation with this strong Prime, so he continued to wait in hiding until the time was right, until the Matrix of Leadership was found and the last Prime was dead.

The download of knowledge finished abruptly. Optimus now knew the full history of the Dynasty of Primes, The Fallen's betrayal and his linked origins. The shadowed Primes drew their hands back from contact with Optimus's body.

The third shadowed Prime spoke again. "You are indeed a descendant son of ours. You are the last Prime, Optimus."

"The Fallen..." Optimus began.

"...betrayed us all," finished the fourth of the shadowed Primes. "He was one of us once, our fellow brother, until he broke our most important code: never to harm worlds that sustain life."

A fifth Prime continued. "The Fallen built a Sun Harvester device on Earth. He thought the human life on Earth was insignificant and worthless, an acceptable sacrifice for power."

The last of the six Primes spoke next. "We gave up our bodies to entomb the Matrix key that activated the Sun Harvester, hiding it from our treacherous brother, so that he would never be able to activate the Sun Harvester again."

"But now it has been rediscovered by the human boy you call 'Sam,'" the second Prime spoke again, "and he has risked life and limb to revive you with it."

"Return to the realm of the living, Optimus Prime." the fourth Prime declared. "You are still needed. You must end The Fallen's existence before he destroys Earth with the Sun Harvester and becomes all-powerful. Only you can defeat him now, for only a Prime descendent has any chance of matching another Prime's strength and withstanding his powers. Only *you* were *born* with the ability to bring him down."

"The Fallen knows this," the fifth Prime added on. "That is why he appeared to you and attempted to sway you to his side while you have been in stasis-lock, as he has done before long ago with your rival, Megatron, who fell prey to the temptation of his false promises. He anticipated your potential resurrection and wanted to secure your cooperation. But you have righteously resisted him and now know of his true dark intentions."

"He has disgraced the name of Prime and is no longer worthy of it," the first Prime said. "You have stood resolute and upheld our values of protecting life, Optimus Prime. The Fallen Prime must fall, and you must stand as the last true Prime. Truly, you are our last heir. Fulfill the destined task that only you can perform: the Fallen must be stopped, no matter the cost."

Optimus felt the strongest connection with this first Prime that was speaking. His spark felt drawn to this particular silhouette Prime more so than the others, as if he...came from him somehow. He could see this first Prime's optics emitting a royal blue light strikingly similar to his own as he stared down caringly at Optimus. The back of his ancient fingers stroked the crest of Optimus's helmeted forehead tenderly, proudly.

"Arise now, Optimus Prime," the first Prime encouraged, "our, my, precious son..."

Before Optimus could ask anything more, a blinding white light consumed him.

His optics came back online. His body convulsed with reignited life. There was another light shining into his optics, sunlight, and a young human male looking at him with a mixture of concern and amazement, Sam! Optimus attempted to push himself up. He still felt pitifully weak.

Then, out of nowhere, the Fallen appeared! The force of his teleportation sent Optimus sprawling to the ground again. He barely registered as the Fallen swiped the Matrix from Sam and disappeared into thin air as quickly as he had appeared. Optimus was vaguely aware of humans and Autobots around him, urging him to get up.

Then his attention was drawn to an old Decepticon seeker, Jetfire. The old seeker was critically damaged, but had seemed genuinely thrilled to see him, "a living Prime" as he had

declared incredulously. Jetfire told Optimus to take his parts and then to Optimus's numbed shock, the old seeker had then ripped out his own spark.

What followed next was beyond Optimus's full comprehension. He felt Jetfire's additional parts being magnetised onto him by his Autobots, and as this happened, his systems rapidly charged to extraordinary levels of power he was unused to.

He stood up, reborn with wings and thrusters extending from his back. His goal was clear: only one last Prime would remain, and his ancestry would be avenged. The time for Optimus Prime to rise and The Fallen to fall had come. The last Prime took his first flight toward the pyramid housing the Sun Harvester and where the Fallen stood. An expression of surprise replaced malevolent anticipation on The Fallen's face as he caught sight of the fast approaching Prime. Optimus flew to meet a fate he was born to fulfill: he flew to kill a brother.

On the aircraft carrier ship, heading back toward American shores, Optimus Prime finished his careful recollection of his experiences with the Fallen and the Primes during his period of stasis-lock, when he had been so close to death. The knowledge of them and their history and his own creation was now cemented in his processor and spark.

Optimus lifted The Fallen's staff weapon that had been resting silently in his hand in front of him. He gazed impassively at the ancient relic.

He was truly alone, the last of his kind, the only remaining Prime now surviving. His spark felt heavy momentarily with the realization. But there was so much more to hope for and strive toward in his future than to lament about a lost heritage: planet Earth was a strange but exciting new settlement for him and his small team of Autobots, every day he hoped to see more new Autobot arrivals, and they were forging a bold alliance and friendship between their race and humanity. The past was gone and dead, the future brought endless and amazing possibilities.

Optimus tightened his fist grasping The Fallen's staff. He continued squeezing it until he felt the relic snap in his grip. Then extending his arm out over the edge of the ship's runway platform, Optimus held The Fallen's broken staff over the waiting sea waves.

"Rest in peace my brothers and forefathers." he reverberated.

His fist opened effortlessly. The pieces of The Fallen's ancient staff dropped unceremoniously into the waters and eagerly sunk down into its depths. Optimus lifted his brilliant royal blue gaze to the distant sunset on the horizon.

His solemn metallic words were carried off on the wind. "Until we all are one."

Soldiering On

by Michael O'Sullivan

"Kup, that was incredible". As always, Springer's optics light up as he looks at me. Hero worship for the bot who trained Optimus Prime, held his ground for days on end during the final battle in Iacon, the tough old coot who is too stubborn to die.

The warrior fresh from battle.

"Lad, you're too easily impressed. Back in my day..."

I begin to relate an old war story, and like human children, Springer and his team of Wreckers draw closer, to better hear the wisdom of the legend that is Kup.

I look into their optics as I begin a story I'm sure I used umpteen times and I see myself reflected in those blue lights. I see myself...and I despair.

I'm so tired. I've been fighting for so long. Longer than Prime, Grimlock, even Ironhide.

I've seen so much pain.

I was there when Alpha Trion died, when Megatron killed Sentinel. I'm haunted by Thunderwing's destruction. A thousand missions as leader of the Wreckers haunt me. The faces of those I trained, those I knew I was ensuring would either die or take a life themselves follow me everywhere.

I remember the day I lost all hope this war would end.

And this, this is the worst. They idealise me.

Worship the ground I walk on. They see me as untouchable, unwavering. It's the greatest burden. Because it means I must fight. If I bow down, as my aching joints beg me to, they will lose hope. They need their idol. And so I kill myself a little each day. I keep it from them that their constant idolisation is destroying me.

I've ruined what Kup, so that they can drive themselves to kill or be killed.

Springer's the worst. He not only sees an icon, he sees a father. And so I must be both, and more, to him. But what tears me apart when I look at him is the certainty that I am his future. I will die in this fight. I'm certain of it. And Springer will see it as his duty to take up my standard. Become the

hero of his generation. Fight the good fight. Pass it on to those that follow.

And he will forget. Forget the person he was. Forget what it means to be more than an image in someone's mind. He will let them eat him alive.

And his hope will die.

"You tired old man?"

"Aye. Springer, it's been a long day".

A grin, "Aren't they all". I try not to notice the slight mech fluid stain on his hand. "Want to join me for a quick one?"

No. "Course, lad".

He leads me down the hall. And as we enter the cafeteria, sound erupts. It is full of people. Optimus stands at the forefront, his optics smiling. Prowl is standing behind him, looking bored. Another casualty of this life, but he doesn't have the wisdom to realise it. Jazz, Tracks, even Grimlock is here, although the big soldier looks uncomfortable in the crowd. I can relate. Across the hall, a banner reads "Congratulations on your promotion".

I think I'd cry if I could

Springer slaps me on the back "Prime's wanted to push you up the rank for ages, but we held off till after a big win. Thought it'd be appropriate, ya know?"

His arm wraps around my shoulder, affectionate radiating off him, as Prime, whose calming presence heals all wounds, comes up to embrace me. I grin, my face alight

Please

All I want to do is sleep

Rest

Can't I rest?

Eulogy to a Fallen Hero

by Andrea Tang

ost in his own thoughts, Optimus Prime was oblivious to the low chatter of the crowd around him.

Walking steadily and humbly toward a public stage in Iacon's main ceremonial courtyard with crowds of Cybertronian onlookers on either side of them, Optimus and his team, Ratchet, Bulkhead, Bumblebee and Jazz, carried the body of Prowl in an open case on their shoulders. Sari was flying close by them.

Hundreds had gathered for the public funeral ceremony to honour a fallen Autobot hero: Elite Guard officers, cyber-ninjas and the general Cybertronian public. Ahead of Optimus and his team, Alpha Trion, Cliffjumper, Perceptor, Arcee, Jetstorm, Jetfire and a sullen-looking Sentinel Prime stood in two lines flanking either side of the public stage. Optimus noted without judgement the absence of Ultra Magnus due to his current status of still being in medical recovery.

The former Earth-stationed Autobots reached the front of the public podium and slowly lowered their precious cargo onto the ground. Ratchet, Bulkhead, Bumblebee and Jazz then positioned themselves around Prowl's body, leaving the front of his case visible to the watching crowds. Sari landed near to her friends and bowed her head.

Optimus Prime paused in front of Prowl's dark and motionless body. He shut off his optics momentarily and heard Prowl's voice in his mind. "*Stillness... Be silent...*"

Optimus thought solemnly how Prowl had always tried to teach them all to be still and silent more often. He onlined his optics again and for a nano-klik, he believed Prowl was simply meditating in his open case before him, lying still and silent in focused concentration as he often used to. But cold reality quickly replaced the young Prime's illusion of his deceased comrade.

Concealing his quiet grief as best he could, Optimus looked up again toward the public stage waiting in front of him. Sympathetic and reassuring expressions from Ratchet, Bulkhead and Sari, a subtle nod from Jazz and a faint smile from Bumblebee encouraged Optimus as he made his way toward the podium.

With an intake of air, Optimus Prime ascended the public stage. Silence descended upon the watching crowds. Carrying himself with dignified composure, the young Autobot captain walked steadily toward the voice projector at the centre of the podium. Taking centre stage, he fearlessly confronted the Cybertronian crowds

gathered below him. They waited attentively to hear what he would say.

Optimus gazed down heavily once more to the bottom of the stage at the fallen hero they had all come to pay tribute to, then he lifted his head and began to speak clearly and sincerely. His once young and inexperienced voice now resonated deeply with the weight of burden.

"It is not often that we encounter kindred sparks. But I have had the honour. When I first met Prowl, he was lost in life as I was. We shared much in common."

I see the frustration in his visor optics again. I hear the anger in his voice, as clearly as if it were yesterday.

"First I fail to protect the protoforms and now this!"

The crack of the hard rock as his fist slams into it echoes.

"Do you have any idea what it's like to embark on a path only to find it so completely twisted and turned that you have no idea where you are?!"

His inner turmoil roars out to me. It connects to me.

"Oddly enough, I do."

Optimus' dim optics were the only betrayal of his internal state, but he did not falter in the delivery of his speech.

"Though he was aloof from the rest of us in the beginning, Prowl learnt gradually to become a member of the team."

He approaches me, offering his cooperation for the first time.

"You're not alone. A wise bot once told me a machine is stronger than its component parts. Only I had to learn that the hard way."

He holds his hand out to us. We lay our hands over his.

Optimus' voice rang strong in the audio sensors of the listening crowd. Rarely had the young Autobot captain ever felt more certain about what he was saying than he did now.

"I am privileged to have known him and had him fighting by my side. He was a bot of great honour and astonishing skill and ability, a true cyber-ninja to the core."

I am telling Ratchet that I cannot do it. I am not ready.

"Are you forgetting what happened the last time I tried to fly? If I couldn't handle

Starscream's fembot clone, what makes you think I can take out three Omega Supremes?"

His jet thrusters raise him into the air

beside me. For the final time, he offers me his assistance.

"Because I'll be right by your side. I know Master Yokeatron would say it's the ninja-bot, not the weapon."

Optimus pushed down the dull but constant pain in his spark.

"He respected life in all its forms and took the time to stop and observe the world around him. He learnt much from watching the simplest of things."

His back is turned to me as he gazes up at the old tree growing through the roof of his room.

"All this organic life, this...nature, it refuses to be contained, such a force of will.

But everyone here is blind to it. They all rush to see everything but never sit still long enough to experience what is around them."

A small smile tugged at Optimus' lips as he recalled the simple memory, but then the smile quickly faded.

"Prowl knew the meaning of sacrifice more than anyone. He has demonstrated it with his own."

He lies lifeless in Jazz's arms.

"He gave up his spark to save us."

I begin to move toward him. It can't...it's

not...

"No."

Optimus' blue optics fell.

"It is thanks to you Prowl that the Allspark is once again whole. You have given us back our source of life. For that, all of Cybertron honours you."

Optimus watched as his Autobots carefully lifted up the case containing Prowl's body again. They carried it toward a circular suspension pyre generator that was glowing with gold energy a short distance away from the stage.

"Prowl, our fallen hero, friend, brother, we dedicate to you our highest respect and gratitude. You sacrificed yourself to save us and others. We will carry you for the rest of our solar cycles in our memories."

A teary-eyed Sari hovered close by as Ratchet, Bulkhead, Bumblebee and Jazz placed the case down on the ground near the pyre generator and carefully lifted Prowl's body out. They brought him to the gold light of the pyre generator and released him above it. Prowl's body was held suspended in the gold light for a moment then began disintegrating. The crowds of hundreds of Autobots watched in solemn silence as Prowl's remains were transformed into glowing gold particles that scattered into the air.

"Rest peacefully, Prowl. May you be reunited with Master Yokeatron in the Well of Allsparks."

Some of the glowing gold particles drifted toward Optimus and swept past his face. The young Prime gazed upward at them as they floated up into the dark star-filled sky.

I will see you again, my friend.

Optimus sent his final words up with the departing gold particles.

"Til all are one."

Becoming Three

by Andrea Tang

We were given life from one spark. Arcee's.

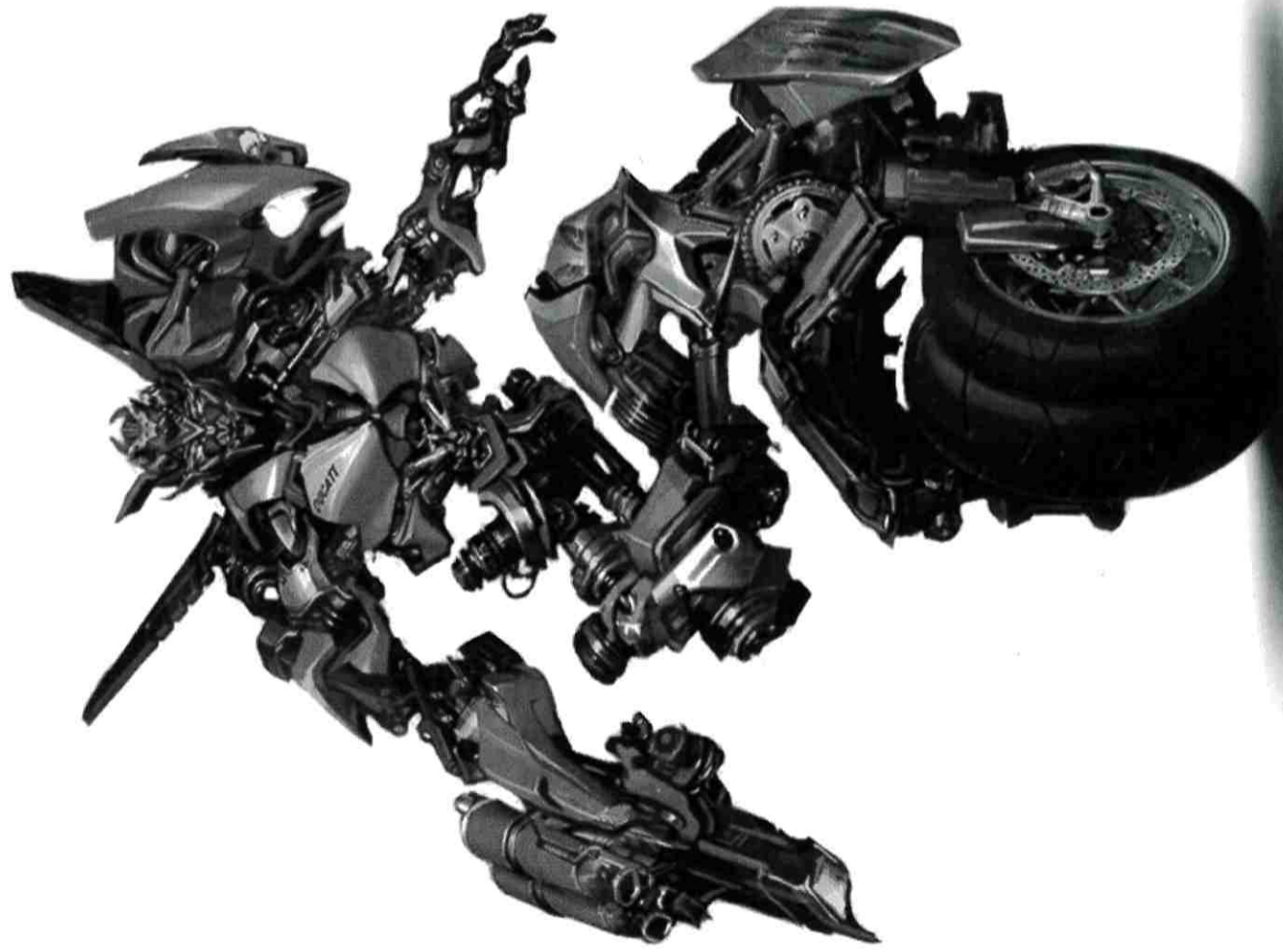
Captured, in a Decepticon experiment to create new soldiers, Arcee's spark was transferred between three new matured protoform bodies. One became three.

Her spark resisted reprogramming. She remembered she was an Autobot. 'We all' remembered.

Shared consciousness, shared minds, shared perceptions. Her. 'our' skills tripled. 'our'

firepower tripled. We saw through three sets of optics; our three minds exchanged thoughts freely; we fought in perfect conjunction with one another, feeling each other's movements, knowing each other's battle plans; our spoken words were divided between us or harmoniously combined. We were three parts of one, three aspects of the female Autobot warrior, Arcee, embodied.

That was how it was initially. Arcee's spark had been split amongst three bodies. We were



simply three parts of Arcee, linked and operated by her single mind and will. But the division did not end there at just a physical level. We became mentally divided as well. Arcee's original spark and mind was fracturing. She was splitting into the three of us.

It began soon after escaping the clutches of our Decepticon captors, Thundercracker and Flatline. Though we were intrinsically linked to one another in body and mind, we quickly began to realise that we each were also capable of independent thought, solitary actions and spontaneous speech. We would know what we each were going to say or do or was thinking, but the capacity for each of us to operate without the others' input or influence became apparent.

What had those Decepticons done to me? To us?

With the passing of solar cycles, our consciousnesses were pulled further and further apart. Individual personalities and character traits began to manifest in each of us, as if the former single mind of Arcee had been split into three separate components amongst us. We sensed boundaries building between our shared minds, as separate entities, separate beings, though we were still linked to one another mentally.

It became... 'appropriate' for us to name one another. Our red sister remained most faithful to our mothering Autobot's original programming and spark in words and deeds. She was caring and fiercely protective of others. She remembered the comrades that Arcee had suffered the loss of before her...our division. She remained 'Arcee' in name. Our blue sister exhibited a confident and forceful personality, seemingly the distillation of Arcee's determination and drive to prove herself to others. We called her 'Chromia'. She seemed to like it. And finally, our purple sister. She displayed a calm focus and quiet strength, and was strangely enigmatic. She reminded us of Arcee's departed close friend, the first Elita-One, whose spark was extinguished at the hands of Starscream on Cybertron. Our purple sister decided on her own to name herself in honour of her. She became 'Elita-One'.

When we arrived on Earth to finally join Optimus Prime and his team, they were as shocked as we had been to see what had become of their comrade Arcee. Optimus Prime promised to look after us, but we do not require protection or help. We are the products of a Decepticon experiment to create more soldiers. Arcee's original abilities, skills and firepower are tripled through us. We are not weaker. We are stronger than before. We are more capable than we once were of fighting Decepticons. We will not be denied of participation in the Decepticon-hunting missions here on Earth.

Since arriving here, the gaps between us

have widened. We are growing apart, dividing, becoming true individuals. The differences in our experiences and interactions with others have served to further develop our separate senses of character.

Bumblebee, in his broken voice, had asked me if I remembered much about our past on Cybertron. He was uncertain how much of the old Arcee he knew was still alive in me and my sisters.

I told him I remembered the events at

Tyger Pax: the launching of the Allspark into space, how Megatron crushed his vocaliser...

I told him that I was still 'Arcee', and that I remembered him dearly.

Our old trainer, or rather Arcee's old trainer, Ironhide, had asked me if my aim and the skills he had once taught me were still sharp.

I replied that I could still hit a turbofox from fifty meters away, or snipe him when he least expected it.

He smirked.

I also told him with a wink to call me 'Chromia' now.

Optimus Prime asked me what had become of Elita-One on Cybertron. He needed to know.

I told him solemnly of the extinguishing of her spark in Starscream's attempt to recreate the Allspark on Cybertron.

His brilliant blue optics had dimmed.

"Elita...gone..." he had uttered.

"But never forgotten," I replied in small comfort. "I have devoted myself in her memory. I honour her by sharing her name. I now am Elita-One."

Optimus had said nothing, simply looked forlornly into the distance.

I followed his gaze.

We fell together into a grieving silence.

We were one, then three parts of one, then finally three linked individuals.

Though our mental bond has remained a sturdy link between all three of us, we are irrevocably divided. We are still aware of one another's presences and thoughts even when we are spatially apart and working on different tasks, but we each make our own decisions now.

How far will we fall away from one

another? The former female Autobot warrior, Arcee, has been torn into three. Her pieces, us, are drifting apart.

Arcee's most intact component, our red sister, acts as our leading head. She maintains our coordination, holds us together in a stable form, and directs us to function as an efficient, swift and deadly Autobot strike team. Chromia seems to have more in common with Ironhide now, sharing his passion for weapons. And Elita-One lives as

the shadow of her namesake, honouring her in her every word and deed.

We are unified, but undeniably distinct. We are conflicted in our feelings about what has happened to us. We find our increased abilities more useful than ever in the war against the Decepticons, yet we are not the one being we once were. We are experimental products that should never have been conceived. Unnatural. Freaks. There is a constant sense between us of being 'stretched out', with no way to return to our original form. We are still coming to terms with this.

Like maturing protoforms, we are becoming fully grown, developing our own unique personalities and learning to be autonomous beings. Out of one spark, we are turning into three beings. The price is separation, the severing of a unity that was once one mind. Our bonds are becoming increasingly like fine threads, less and less detectable, stretching, thinning...

Arcee will never be the same again. Though it is when we are in close proximity to one another that the sensation of 'rejoining' still teases us. At these moments of closeness, we can feel ourselves being drawn together, our sparks following the echoes of once being unified, seeking to be one again... For brief moments, our minds remerge into a single consciousness, becoming whole and complete again. But it is only for brief moments.

The experimental tampering of the Decepticons has divided what was once Arcee in body, mind and spark. She exists now as three distinct faces through us.

One day, she will have her vengeance on the Decepticons. All three of her.

COMING SOON

64 pages just wasn't enough for what we had planned. Don't worry though, while we couldn't squeeze things in here, they will find a home.

Several other short-stories and works of fiction were created for this magazine and they will find their way out to all of you via an exclusive PDF collection which will be available a short time after Auto Assembly closes its doors.

In addition, Simon Plumbe will be looking back over Ten Years of Auto Assembly and sharing his thoughts with you about how far it's come. For AA veterans it should jog a memory or two, and for some of our newer and younger attendees you can look back at a what it was like to be transformers fan in the dark days before Facebook and high-speed broadband!

Well we hope you've not only enjoyed the magazine but the convention as well, and to those of you who couldn't attend but ordered a copy, thanks very much and hopefully we'll see you another time, such as next August for Auto Assembly 2011.

WWW.BIGBADTOYSTORE.COM

Worldwide Shipping!

Generations 2010 Series 03

Activators Starscream

BBTS Exclusive
Decepticon Piranacon
G1 Commemorative Seasons

Deluxe 2010 Series 03

Primus 2010
TakaraTomy Version

TA30 Autobot Blurr

Scout 2010 Series 02

Megatron Bust
Bank

Transformers T-Shirts & Caps

Japanese Transformers Animated
TA38 Wingblade Optimus Prime

Voyager 2010 Series 02

Human Alliance 2010 Series 01

MP-M01 Masterpiece Transformers
the Movie Edition Starscream

WARNING: CHOKING HAZARD - Items contain small parts. Not for children under 3 years.



AUTO ASSEMBLY 2010

