



Transmasters Magazine. Issue #6, SPRING 2010

Welcome to the latest issue of the *Transmasters Magazine*. As you might have noticed, this is the first TM magazine since late 2007. Previously, Peter Phelps had been producing both the TM Magazine and TM Comic. Since that time he's been busy with real life matters and no one picked up the slack for him—until now, obviously. For simplicity's sake, I have decided to call this new iteration **issue six** and just continue forward (otherwise it will become like a professional comic series where we have twenty reboots for a given concept and rabid confusion among the casual reader).

But, why bother, you ask. Isn't Transmasters dead and gone? Well, yes and no. It's true that Transmasters hasn't been that popular in the last decade or so but everything's relative. I read over some early TransAction issues from 1992 and noticed even back then that people were decrying the lack of member involvement and forewarning of the club's doom. Since the whole membership dues fiasco in 1992-93, many have considered the club dead. But Tony Buchanan preserved through the nineties, carrying on the name through his activities as best he could. In the past five years Peter Phelps helped keep the name alive with his website, TM Blog and fan efforts (like the magazine and comic). If Transmasters died tomorrow, would the fandom at large care? I don't know. And why do another Transformers based website when there's so many already? But we can also take that logic and turn it around—would it matter if Seibertron.com, Tformers.com or whatever died tomorrow? After all, there's so many other TF websites around who would really care?

Having said that, I do believe we need to evolve faster into the electronic realm. If we could've kept the club better organized back in the early nineties we could've had the premiere TF website now instead of trying to play catch-up. Or perhaps the fracturing of the fandom was inevitable considering it's sheer size.

In the end, it doesn't really matter. The club's always been what people want it to be—either dying or thriving. I choose to believe the latter and at least try to keep things moving along into the twenty-teens.

I hope you enjoy this latest issue. Comments are always welcome, be they praise, criticism or just general questions. The next issue is planned for August 1, 2010 and contributions are always welcome!

Til All Are One!
Thunder

REVIEW: GaoGaiGar DVD
REVIEW: TF:A Shadow Blade Megatron
FICTION: Legends: Shockwave
COMIC: Me and Vegatron
FICTION: Legends: Alphatrion
Knock-Off Korner (various G1 KO toys)

This entire issue was produced by Tony "Thunder" Klepack. Contributions for future issues are welcome and encouraged!

(Some stock graphics were designed by Peter Phelps. Thanks to him for his many efforts).

PDF Compiled by BackBreaker.

The Transformers are Copyright and Trademark 2010 Hasbro/Takara Tomy. All rights Reserved. The *TransMasters* are a Non-profit club for and by Transfans.

King of the Braves: GAOGAIGAR

Volume One: Heir to the Throne




Synopsis: The story follows a boy named Mamoru, who was delivered to his human parents as a baby by a Mech called Galeon (Lion Mecha), who came from the stars. As an eight year old, he encounters the top secret Japanese government organization called 3G. 3G was created to protect humanity from extra terrestrial life forms and employs a cyborg named Gai Shishio, who is able to merge with the Galeon and transform it into a robot form. The robot form can merge with other forms (a bullet train, a drill machine and a fighter craft) to become Gaogaigar, a super robot. A mysterious alien force (called the Zonders, collectively) is merging humans with inanimate machines and causing them to become dangerous weapons that threaten all of humanity. Only Gai and the Gaogaigar can stop them! Mamoru is able to take the defeated Human-Zonder and use his amazing powers to restore their humanity, making him an invaluable asset to 3G.

Comments: This series is part of several *Brave* cartoons released in Japan (the final series from 1997). The Brave line was a cousin line to the Transformers in Japan in the 90s (which means they had the same designers at Takara basically. The toy concepts never mingled however). The series seems to be aimed at a kid or teen audience, as it alternates between really good elements as well as really dumb ones. We have things like a bad theme song (literally singing "Gao-Gao-Gao-Gaogaigar!"), stock footage and repetitive story telling. We also have good elements like cool mech designs, pretty decent animation and a potentially intriguing back story. The first three episodes reminded me more of Voltron then Transformers, to be honest. In each of them, we have the robot threat, the hero merging up all the way to his super duper mode and then kicking butt. In each episode, he uses the same technique to kill the bad guy robot. Fortunately, by episode four they decided to deviate from the formula slightly. And in episode five, we get Transformers! (Seriously, they have two fire engine style robots get created that can transform and ultimately merge together--although the merging didn't happen in episode five, just in the preview for episode six).

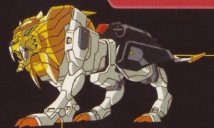
All in all, this is a decent series. It's animation is not spectacular (compared with Gundam Wing or Escaflowne) but decent and the writing is decent (just don't expect too much of it). Worth checking out if you're a TF fan that can't get enough and want to sample something a little different but not exceptional either.

BRAVE DESIGNS




CYBORG GUY

Classification: Human
 Type: G-Boat
 Height: 175cm
 Weight: 75kg
 G-Boat Class: Classified
 Construction: Atomic-Lithium Alloy Frame
 Engine: Machine Heart
 Maximum Output: 500kva
 Power Supply: 10-Channel Super Battery
 Arm Driver: Hydrographic Pressure Actuator
 Control System: 2300 sec
 Power Up: 30% up
 Emergency Power: 100% up
 Maximum Power Speed: 100km/h
 Weapon Systems: 1000 (Variable Discharge)




GALION

Classification: G-Boat
 Type: Space Mechanical Lion
 Height: 110cm
 Weight: 240kg
 G-Boat Class: Classified
 Construction: Supermetal Alloy
 Engine: G-Boat
 Maximum Output: 170,000kva
 Power Supply: 10-Channel Super Battery
 Arm Driver: 320kva x 2
 Control System: 1000 sec
 Power Up: 100% up
 Maximum Power Speed: 100km/h
 Weapon Systems: 1000 (Variable Discharge)




DRILL GAO

Classification: G-Boat
 Type: G-Boat
 Height: 100cm
 Weight: 100kg
 G-Boat Class: Classified
 Construction: G-Boat Cast Frame
 Engine: G-Boat
 Maximum Output: 100,000kva
 Power Supply: 10-Channel Super Battery
 Arm Driver: 100,000kva
 Control System: 1000 sec
 Power Up: 100% up
 Maximum Power Speed: 100km/h
 Weapon Systems: 1000 (Variable Discharge)




SUPER MECHANO GAOGAIGAR

Height: 100cm
 Weight: 100kg
 Flexible Tank Capacity: 1000L
 Construction: G-Boat
 Engine: G-Boat
 Maximum Output: 100,000kva
 Power Supply: 10-Channel Super Battery
 Arm Driver: 100,000kva
 Control System: 1000 sec
 Power Up: 100% up
 Maximum Power Speed: 100km/h
 Weapon Systems: 1000 (Variable Discharge)



LINER GAO

Classification: G-Boat
 Type: G-Boat
 Height: 100cm
 Weight: 100kg
 G-Boat Class: Classified
 Construction: G-Boat Cast Frame
 Engine: G-Boat
 Maximum Output: 100,000kva
 Power Supply: 10-Channel Super Battery
 Arm Driver: 100,000kva
 Control System: 1000 sec
 Power Up: 100% up
 Maximum Power Speed: 100km/h
 Weapon Systems: 1000 (Variable Discharge)



STEALTH GAO

Classification: G-Boat
 Type: G-Boat
 Height: 100cm
 Weight: 100kg
 G-Boat Class: Classified
 Construction: G-Boat Cast Frame
 Engine: G-Boat
 Maximum Output: 100,000kva
 Power Supply: 10-Channel Super Battery
 Arm Driver: 100,000kva
 Control System: 1000 sec
 Power Up: 100% up
 Maximum Power Speed: 100km/h
 Weapon Systems: 1000 (Variable Discharge)

NOTES ON SOME OF THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE BEHIND GAOGAIGAR:

DIRECTOR: YOSHITOMO YONETANI
 Born 1963, from Tokyo. He previously directed "The Laughing Salesman/Warau Serusuman" and "The Doraemons" and went on to do "King of the Braves GAOGAIGAR," "Betterman" and "Brigadoon".

PRODUCER: RYOSUKE TAKAHASHI
 Born 1943, from Tokyo. Got his start as a director in Mushi Production working on the Sunrise show "Zero Tester." Best known for his hand in directing the files of "Armored Trooper Votoms" and "Fang of the Sun Dougram", and "Gasaraki." "King of the Braves GAOGAIGAR" is his first go at producing.

SERIES EDITOR: FUYUNORI GOBU
 Born 1942, from Tokyo. He was originally an assistant to the script editor and episode director at Mushi Production before becoming an independent playwright. After that he was involved in such shows as "Super Machine Zanbot 3", "Armored Trooper Votoms", "Blue Gagle Xabungle" and many other Sunrise shows.

CHARACTER DESIGNER: TAKAHIRO KIMURA
 Born 1964, from Fukuoka. His first time as a Character Designer in anime was with "Dirty Pair Flash", and his more recent work includes "Betterman", "Godannar" and "GunSword". He is also known to have worked in the game world.

MECHANICAL DESIGNER: KUNIO OHKAWARA
 After working at Onward Kashiwama as a costume designer, he joined Tatsunoko Production company, where he worked under Mitsuki Nakamura designing enemy robot characters for "Gatchaman". Following work on series such as "Hurricane Polymar" and "Tekkaman", he and Nakamura left to found Design Office Mechanan in 1976. There he was closely involved with many toy design projects. In 1978, he began working as a freelance artist, including stints with various Sunrise series, such as "The Unchallengeable Dairam 3" and "Mobile Suit Gundam". His visionary Gundam designs opened a new era in Science Fiction, and toys based on them were very popular with fans. His work has changed people's ideas about what a "Mechanical Designer" can accomplish.

Technical Details:

- Contains the first five episodes of the King of the Braves series.
- The first volume of the eighth series of the Brave series. There are five more volumes of this series (to-date). There is also a new release of the first DVD (a green jacketed version) although I am not certain of what the difference is (likely more features and 5.1 sound).
- English and Japanese soundtracks (Japanese with english sub-titles). Soundtrack in Dolby 2.0.
- 1:33:1 aspect ratio. (Full screen. Widescreen not available).

REVIEW

The Animated Shadow Blade Megatron Leader class toy is quite nice (he is a recolor of the original color scheme Leader class toy). The chopper mode is even nicer in-person and the toy doesn't seem to have any defects that I can see (actually, I found about two very small paint scratches but nothing serious like design defects or anything. Many TF:A toys apparently do have design defects). The toy has sound effects in robot mode, a transformation sound in-between modes and an engine noise in chopper mode (nice touch!) From a transformation point of view, he transforms a little weird--I didn't mind the old simple designs but this one has a couple of panels that you have to lift and rotate on the legs and his arm cannon panel needs to be removed to put under the cockpit in vehicle mode. All in all, a good \$40 toy (that retails for \$60 CDN. where I live normally).





HEROES AND LEGENDS

Shockwave

By Tony “Thunder” Klepack

I watch the myriad screens about me, seeking out further insight into the humans and how they function as a society. Thanks to the Ark's elaborate communications functions my task to understand these flesh creatures has been made all the simpler.

The humans are nothing compared to our species. This much is obvious. Like many primitive organic races they rely on simple concepts to dictate their lives. Their choice of entertainment is something called television—mostly fictionalized storytelling acted out with humans that dedicated to that end.

On a similar note, they seemed obsessed with endless commerce. The acquisition of personal and corporate wealth seems to motivate many of them beyond all other considerations. It is a foolish mentality to possess yet I feel it may come in quite useful in our future endeavors. While blatant conquest is much more satisfactory to a Decepticon warrior, it may prove useful to manipulate their business systems instead. We could easily dominate them with our advanced minds and have all that we ever needed without so much as firing a shot. If only Megatron could bend his grasp to understand such subtleties instead of relying on brute power alone.

Still, Megatron wouldn't be a problem for much longer. He had done well enough to run the Autobots and Optimus Prime down but in the end somehow they had still managed to defeat his forces. A corrupting agent in their fuel systems had incapacitated Megatron's group at the worst possible time allowing Optimus Prime and his Autobots a short-lived victory. Fortunately I had been monitoring the situation and stepped in at the appropriate moment, using my gamma radiation blast to eliminate the Autobot threat once and for all, rescuing my fellow Decepticons in the process.

Megatron's forces were slowly being resuscitated and all had swiftly sworn allegiance to my leadership. They realized, correctly, that I was the new authority among our ranks. Megatron had plenty of time to ensure his defeat of the Autobots and he had failed time and again. I had connected him up to life support systems for the time being so that he could be slowly repaired while I used the time to cement my leadership among his troops. By the time he was fully recovered there would be no denying the success of my overwhelming logic.

I supposed I really should have eliminated him totally as was the Decepticon way but some twinge of sentiment had stayed my hand, hoping instead he would see the merits of my strategy. I was, after all, guided by cold unassailable logic—something his rage and brute emotion had blinded him to time and again. That was why I would bring our people to victory and ultimate ascension in the Galaxy.

I would take Megatron's power away from him, using his force instead to help soften the peoples of the Earth even while I constructed a system to ultimately dominate their energy resources from within. Distracted by Starscream, Soundwave and the others, the humans would fail to see the real threat until it was far too late.

And then there was Optimus Prime.

On the eve of our greatest triumph, when the Council of Elders lie dead and all their resistance was ruined, he rose from nowhere, uniting our scattered foes against us and defending

first Iacon then other places as well against our total domination.

No matter Megatron's manipulations of the masses, Optimus Prime was the one beacon of hope our side could not find any way to extinguish. He could not be bribed, coerced or seemingly even beaten in straight battle. He was the reason the Great War had raged so long—when others stood ready to fall, he refused to. In a sense, one could almost admire such tenacity in an opponent on the battlefield. Also, remorse, that such a personage could not be on one's own side.

Regardless, there were many secrets on Cybertron, many long since forgotten due to the passage of time and the loss of vital information. One such fact was the true origins of our own species. Other involved great powers that had once walked Cybertron's steel surface only to seemingly vanish for reasons also lost to time.

One such secret was the Code of Creation. Vector Sigma was a hub of creation for all Transformers on Cybertron, ensuring for millennia that our ranks were never brought near extinction. It could give life, instill knowledge and many other such properties. Unfortunately, early in the war the great machine was lost to the cosmos, never to be found again no matter how much our forces searched.

However, there was a legend that a piece of the primordial code that created us had been separated long before and placed in a Matrix. This code became a force unto itself, a power that could grant life if one could manipulate its energies to do so. Legend foretold that the code—this Creation Matrix as it were, was passed down through the ages from the first Prime to the latest. Megatron, of course, had dismissed the concept as mystical superstition—but I knew better. Optimus Prime possessed this great power and I intended to take it from him myself. With it, I could grant life to a million new Decepticon warriors. When Earth was finally ours, no one anywhere could oppose our overwhelming power.

I had removed Optimus Prime's head module and reactivated it once I was certain his body was safely out of mental reach for it. So far he had not cooperated, not seen the futility of his situation. But it was only a matter of time before he would have to capitulate to my needs. His forces were defeated. Even now they hung as lifeless trophies from the cargo bay in the Ark, the last of their fuels have been drained and transferred into my Decepticons. There was no one left to oppose me here—resistance was simply illogical at this juncture. Sooner or later even he would realize that.

But all of that would come in time and I had been patient up to this point. The Autobots own probe had accidentally uncovered me weeks ago—no doubt searching for their Dinobot comrades. Of course I had made short work of Grimlock and his subordinates. They possessed the raw power but not the finesse or strategy that coursed through me. I had the knowledge and insights of a hundred great leaders coursing through my memory systems—what match could a grunt like Grimlock be to me? At any rate, I had waited countless millennia in a state near total status lock, a mere glimmer of my full consciousness aroused, awaiting the time someday when I could re-emerge. What was a few more months—or even years—wait until my ultimate plans came to fruition.

I had searched the information available to me and noted the commencement of a new and more sophisticated oil platform by the billionaire industrialist, GB Blackrock. The system was largely automated compared with early efforts. Even the humans primitive computers should prove sufficient for our needs once I conquered it for our kind. After all, my current and future warriors would be in need of energy—something this fossil fuel the humans craved so greatly

provided us in abundance in absence of proper Energon. Indeed, when the time eventually came, I would make contact with our lost home world and bring them news of our victory here.

I checked my internal systems once more, making certain my weapon systems were ready for what was to come next. I would strike the humans fast and savagely, ensuring their submission in swift time.

But first I decided to come in and check on Megatron one more time. He asks about where I've been all this time and I reply with as little information as I can. I have no interest in explaining about the Dinobots and how they managed to stop me due to a miscalculation on my part. He will see it as a potential exploit in his favor and I will not allow him to harbor any such delusions. He will be my follower now. His era has come to an anti-climatic ending. He is nothing more than my powerful foot soldier now. He will submit or he will die. It is that simple.

He sees the Decepticons I have reactivated as they move some of the deactivated Autobots past his chamber. He asks what my plans for the Autobots are and I explain these ones will be melted down and used as raw material for the first of my new legion. He inquires if Optimus Prime will share in the same fate and I assure him he will not. In a rare moment, I allow my ego to show through, boasting about my plans for the Creation Matrix and how I will ensure Earth falls to our forces.

He maintains a facade of calmness but I can see it there in his optics. A fire of jealousy and hatred. He despises me for my plan, for the sheer unassailable logic of it all. He is ruined by emotion, by passion, and that has been his downfall from the start. I am ruled by the cold dispassionate logic of the machine and this is why I have succeeded thus far and why I will succeed where he failed.

Still, once I have achieved my objectives even he will not be able to dispute my superiority. He will come to accept as me as the savior of our kind—or he will die. There is nothing more to it than that.

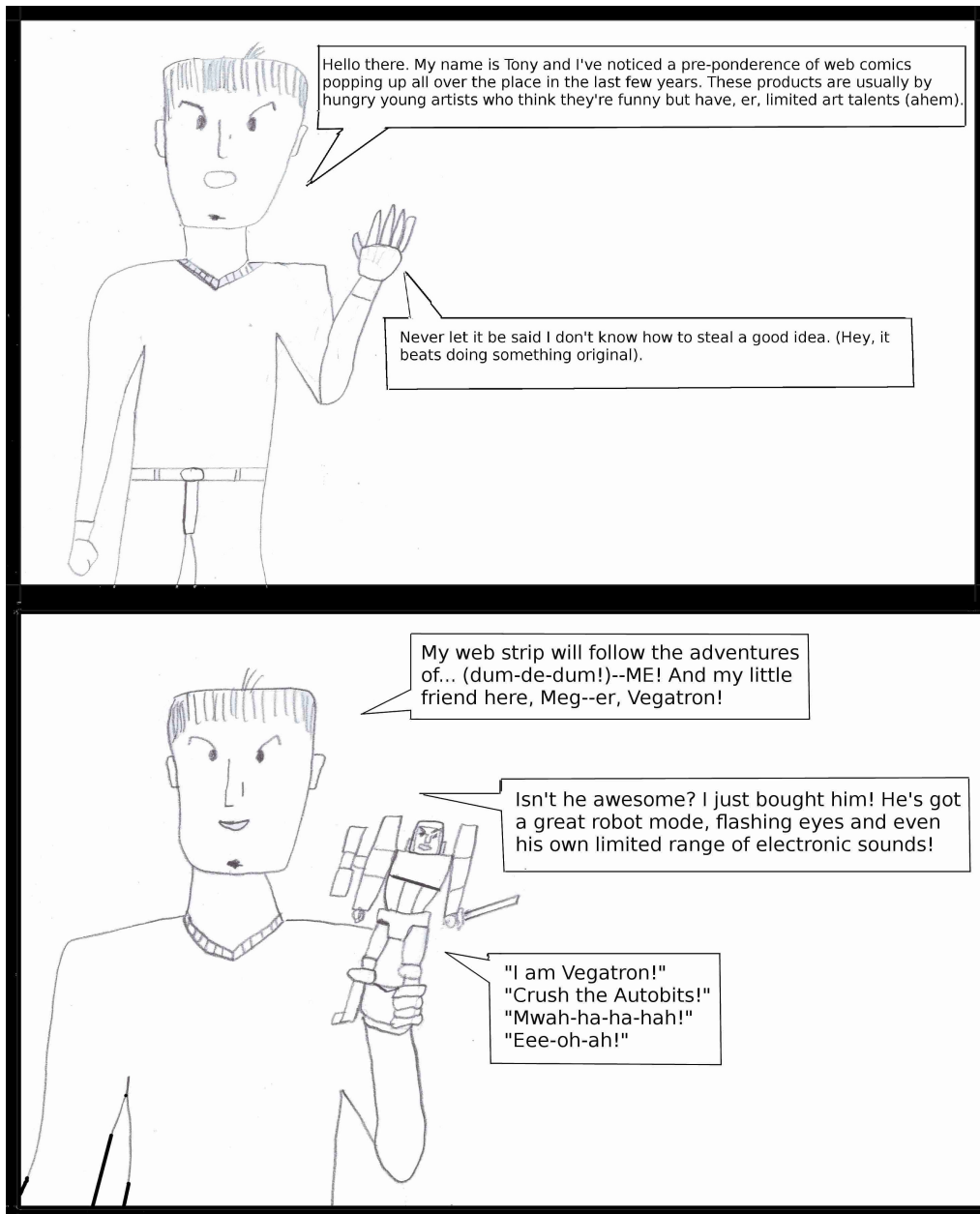
I turn and walk away, heading for the exit to the cavern. I have to get to that oil platform and initiate the next phase of my plan. Timing is everything in a well engineered plan and I must be precise if my calculations are to work.

I transform into my space gun mode and soar into the skies, bound for my ultimate destination. The past is over. The time of Optimus Prime, Megatron and indeed the entire Great War is over.

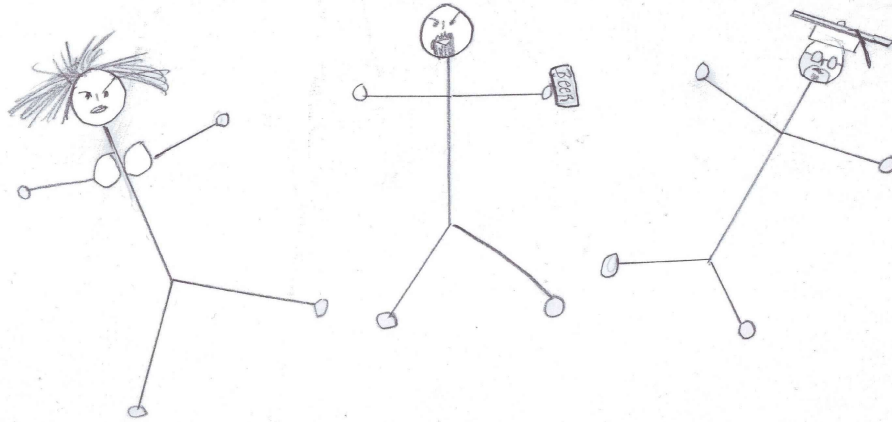
This is my time now. The time of *my* conquest and *my* rule.

I am Shockwave, Supreme Commander of the Decepticons!

Me and Vegatron

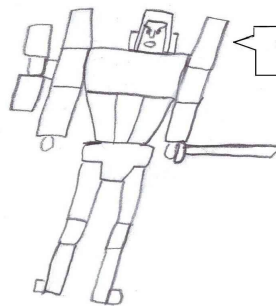
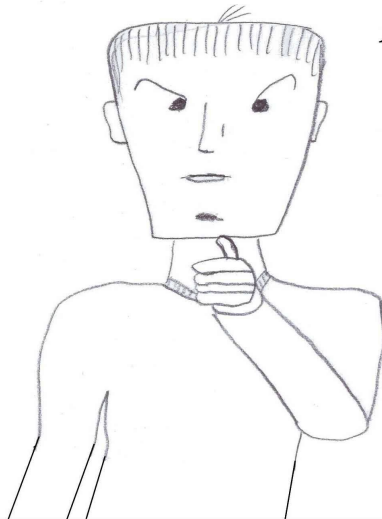


And, um, I guess we'll throw in some kind of supporting characters too. The token irritated girlfriend and.... um, the older sibling. Ooh! We can't forget the authority figure either.



That's all for now! Join me next time for more wild and wacky adventures!

Hmm... that wasn't so funny. Well, maybe nobody will notice this time around. What do you think?



"Crush the Autobits!"

HEROES AND LEGENDS

Alphatrion

By Tony “Thunder” Klepack

I look up at the glittering stars beyond my home and find solace in their silent consistency. I have been alive countless millennia and for all intents and purposes the cosmos out there never changes, never falters.

There is something to be said for that. For remaining true to what you are, true to your beliefs no matter the cost. This sentiment of consistency is especially ironic considering I am one of the eldest members of a race devoted to change. After all, due to the war our people need to constantly adapt their bodies in order to survive.

Still ideals are not the same as technology. Technology changes so abruptly we struggle to keep pace, struggle to try to remain relevant in our own minds lest the world pass us by on its inevitable race to wherever it is going. A race to perfection? Destruction? Mediocrity? I wish I could say for a certainty but even I do not know the answer to that.

Ideals are something one should consider long and hard, truly appreciate and never waiver in once they've adopted them. Can anyone truly say dedication to peace and the preservation of life is something one should abandon simply because such commitments have become inconvenient?

That is the predicament my people have faced for more years than I care to count anymore. We were once a people of peace, of ideals, of truth... that was before the dark times. Before the Decepticons.

We were created perfect, in the image of our very Creator, Primus. He hoped we would stand eternally vigilant, on guard for the arrival of his greatest enemy, the cancer that is called Unicron. So concerned was he with Unicron, he committed the ultimate sacrifice, shutting himself down forever so that his brother could never locate him and feast on the world of new life he had given himself over to.

So we lived for countless millennia in peace, unconcerned with things such as greed or evil. We lived long, growing wise in science and information. We had a great power even then but it was a power to create, a power to do good. We did not concern ourselves with destruction back then.

But somehow Unicron's evil was able to permeate our paradise from afar, giving life to the first and greatest evil our kind would know—the Liege Maximo, a vast and wicked Transformer that emerged on our world and began the inevitable unraveling of our society. In mere decades of his arrival, chaos and anarchy began to permeate our society. Suddenly there was dissent where there had been none before.

I know for a certainty that the Liege Maximo planted the seeds for the emergence of the Decepticon cause. Through his indirect influence, he aided in making certain those first evil roots would take hold among our people and we would forever be changed as a result. Perhaps his greatest achievement beyond all others was Megatron, the most powerful and formidable of all Decepticons to ever exist.

Megatron caused the Great War through his actions and plunged our people into millennia of warfare. Even after his disappearance the War continued, dwindling our resources and our peoples along with it.

During the early years of the Great War the Liege Maximo and his disciples left Cybertron forever, their mission accomplished. Their current whereabouts are unknown but certainly they continue to spread their pestilence of decay and destruction wherever they go even now.

Of course the Liege Maximo and Megatron alone do not share the blame for causing the Great War. Maximo created the conditions and Megatron campaigned for change, capitalizing on the climate. No, they did not begin the war.

I did.

During the dissent and chaos that gave rise to the Decepticon movement it was I that found Orion Pax and nurtured him, protecting him and teaching him to become the leader that the Autobots would ultimately need.

I didn't want to instigate the war but it was clear to me that if the Decepticons had risen to dominance and remained unopposed that our entire race would either become part of an unstoppable intergalactic juggernaut—or face total annihilation. Perhaps even both.

I tried my greatest to impart wisdom and knowledge in Orion Pax. He needed to know about tactics and combat, of course, but I also tried to teach him about power and trust. About faith and about opposing the darkness in life—greed, strife, corruption, oppression. About standing for something noble and protecting the weak, helping the oppressed and belief in the good things in life.

Did I succeed? I don't know for a certainty but I like to think I did. Certainly I didn't make things any worse overall. At least now our people have a chance again—something they wouldn't have had otherwise.

When the time was right and I'd taught him all I felt I could, I retreated to the bowels of Cybertron, close to the core where we were initially created. Optimus Prime as he was now known would need to be free to shape his own destiny, make his own choices. I could only guide him so far before he needed to trust in himself.

I watched him from afar as best I could while he was still on Cybertron and he performed his duty admirably as I'd hoped. Alas, he was lost in space some time ago now when he went out there to defend our world and the Decepticons ambushed them. Fortunately Megatron and many of his top commanders disappeared at the same time.

With Optimus Prime lost, the Autobot resistance on Cybertron has wavered but they've continued fighting a covert war as best they can with what they have left. Warlords like Straxus and Scorponok haven't made things easy on them yet still they endure because they know they must.

Not all of them are perfect. Not now and certainly not even when Optimus walked the steel surface of our world. But they all fight on our side because somewhere deep inside they know it's the right thing to do. For every brute like Grimlock or Sideswipe, there is a Bumblebee or Ratchet or Fortress Maximus that well and truly understands what it means to be an Autobot in their core. Perhaps even Grimlock is not totally immune to what is right. If he does have a moral compass within he hides the knowledge of it very well.

It has been forever and more since Optimus Prime left our world on his fateful mission and I have no way of knowing whether or not this war will ever end nor if it will end in favor of

the side of light. All I can do, all I've ever been able to do is follow my instincts in this matter. They tell me to carry on and persevere no matter the cost. I feel that we will win ultimately even though I cannot explain it logically. Is it a gift from our lord Primus? Or simply some sort of refusal within my core to succumb no matter the odds stacked against us? I do not know.

I am literally one of the oldest of our kind, made at a time when we did not even originally possess names. I was called A-3 initially until I took the name Alphatrion some time later. All the others are gone now, lost to history or passed on to unity with the Allspark. I am the last, so far as I know. But with that great age comes an awareness and a wisdom no longer possessed by any of the later generations of my kind. I am alone and unique.

I use my technical knowledge to tap into the Decepticons communications system. It is prudent to monitor their system intermittently so that I can keep up on current events and troop movements. Knowledge, after all, is power.

If the Decepticons win, then darkness will prevail. Of this I am certain. Our kind cannot be conquerors in a vast intergalactic army. If we do, we will never reach our full potential. We will waste our uniqueness in the pursuit of power—and when Unicron arrives we will die in vain.

We must rid of ourselves of the scourge of the Decepticons once and for all, purify our cores and seek out the truth path we once walked. We must remember our unity with the Universe, we must be at peace and we must learn to be as one. Only united can we truly achieve our potential—only united can we defeat Unicron and spread the legacy of Primus to all the reaches of the Galaxy.

Peace, compassion, unity. These are the lessons Primus wanted us to learn and impart on others. Anything less and we are a failure to our celestial brothers—and to ourselves. For too long our people have lost sight of these simple truths.

My meditations are interrupted a moment as I detect new and significant news in the Decepticons comm network. A signal has been sent and received. A signal from distant space... the Decepticons that left our world millennia ago with Megatron have survived—Shockwave has transmitted a message to the Decepticon High Command in Polyhex informing Lord Straxus of their situation.

And there is more...

The Autobots that his force pursued are also still functional and being commanded by no less than Optimus Prime himself! I find a sensation of pure jubilation rising in my chest and I permit myself a wide smile at this news. All hope is not lost—the side of light has endured its worst test ever and passed, surviving against seemingly impossible odds.

I scour their system for all the pertinent news, finding that it is still scant in its nature. This has only just occurred in the last two days time and I doubt even the Autobot resistance is aware of it yet. I record all that I can until I am satisfied I have it all and disconnect. Xaaron and his forces will be excited to hear this news and I will make certain it find its way to them.

I consider matters once more, pondering my earlier thoughts.

We are indeed a people who are ever changing, ever adapting to the world around us. The Outworlders even call us Transformers because of our unique mecha-morph abilities. But in our cores we must remain ever constant to our values. Immobile, unchanging.

As constant as the stars.

Knock-off Korner

Since the very beginning, we've had unofficial releases of transformable robots. Some were similar in theme while others were actual knock-offs of the official toys. In that spirit, I present a review of several recent KO TF toys...

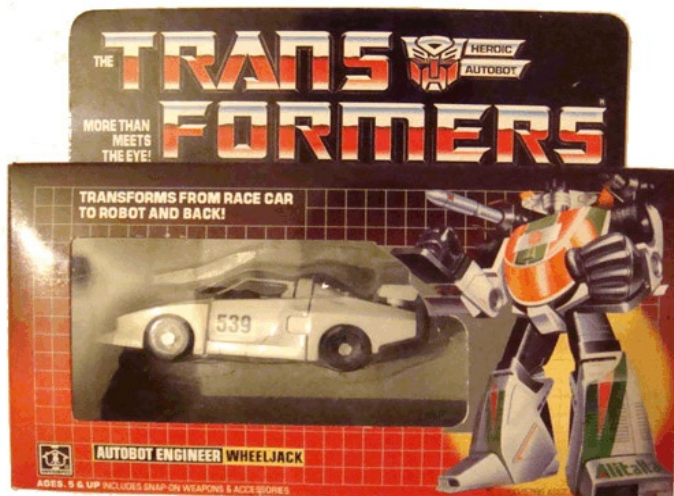
WHEELJACK

Wheeljack's package is quite similar to the original G1 toy. Almost identical, except for a couple of issues. One, he's attached to a cardboard backing in a plastic bubble (the original toy was encased in styrofoam to keep it stable). Interestingly, Wheeljack's profile says his function is "Mechanical Engineerp". This is the first time I've seen one of these with a really obvious typo on the package. Otherwise, Wheeljack's package is in iffy shape. The toy is off the cardboard package inside the box (I've had this before with the KOs. The glue isn't strong enough to keep them attached all the time. The original toys largely used styrofoam and didn't have this problem). Also, the Wheeljack box window is loose (again, bad glue). I'm not too bothered by it though.

Wheeljack's stuff (missiles, weapons, stickers, instructions) were in a re-sealable bag instead of the usual style (i.e. open ended bag, one side folded over with a piece of tape). It made me wonder if someone had opened this toy before (the tape on the ends looked good, but...)

Wheeljack's right fist and his right car doors is a bit loose (for something that should be new). The other side is a bit tight by comparison. I did manage to transform him okay... Also, his missile launchers work just fine. I've found previous KOs to be hit and miss in this department. Wheeljack has all his stickers (no rub symbol though). The toy has some diecast metal as well. Also, the toy has some trouble standing up straight--although this may be a design flaw (I never had an original, so I'm not sure).

Verdict: All in all, kind of middle of the road as these toys go.



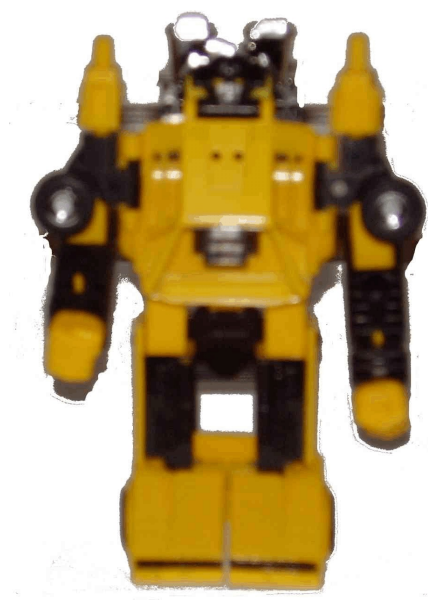


SUNSTREAKER

As far as Sunstreaker goes... the box was in perfect shape with nothing loose. The toy also has die-cast metal, also has no rub sign but all his stickers are included (as well as accessories). He transformed a bit better then Wheeljack. His arms were folded quite tight in car mode and I was worried I might force them and snap them off when I changed him to robot mode but I managed to do it okay. His arm launchers also work fine. All in all, I would say Sunstreaker is an improvement over Wheeljack

Verdict: I'd rank him among the best of these KOs.

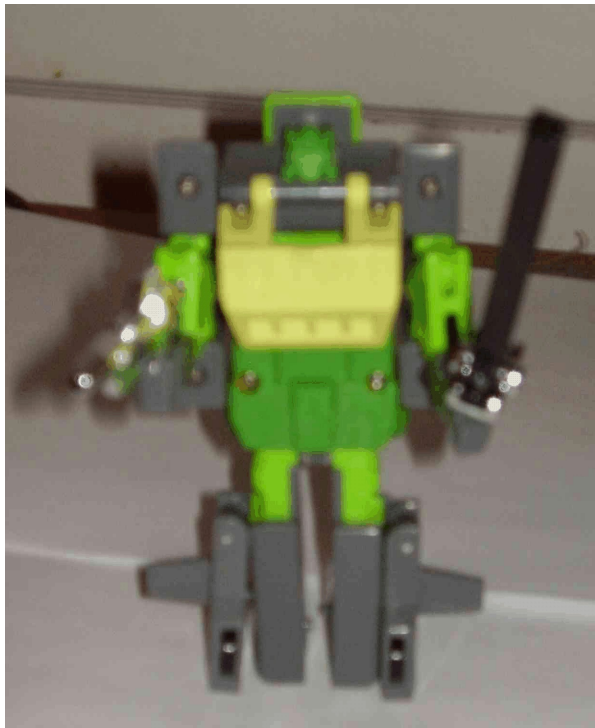




SPRINGER

Springer came in a box with a cardboard backing as well (instead of styrofoam). Like his G1 counterpart this toy has a metal chest and diecast parts. He was a breeze to transform and his part and weapons seem to work like they should. Top heavy toy (design problem, I guess).

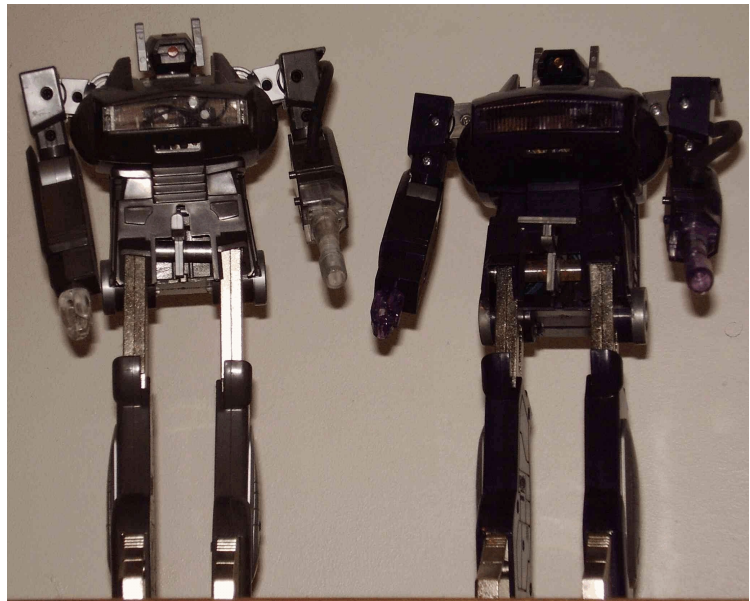
Verdict: Definitely one of the best KOs of recent years.



SHOCKWAVE

Shockwave actually did come in a styrofoam insert. He also has a sticker that looks like the traditional rub symbol—but doesn't work ironically! His parts are snug and he transforms with no problems. The plastic and diecast parts on him feel pretty thick and well engineered. Even better, his electronics actually work! (I also have an original Shockwave and his sound chip is dead). His trigger is slightly different than Shockwave's—Shockwave has a standard trigger but Knockwave has a flat piece on top of his (but who cares, really?)

Verdict: A very nice KO toy!

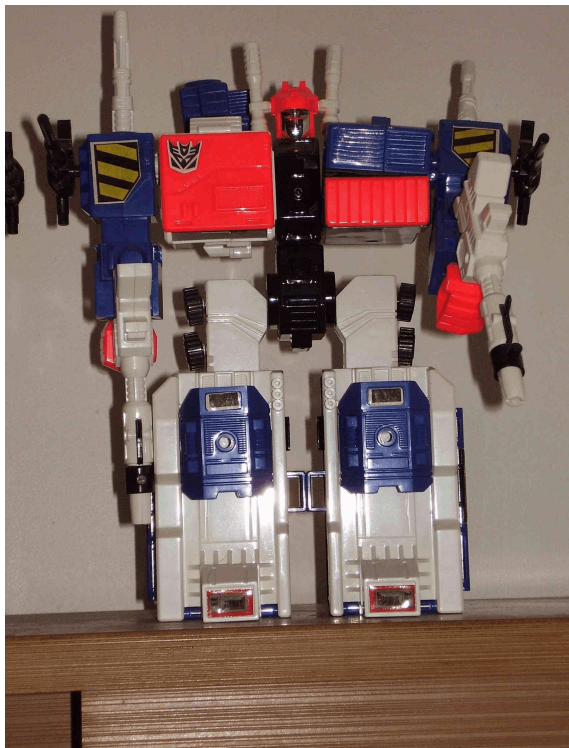


Shockwave on the left, Knockwave on the right

METROTITAN

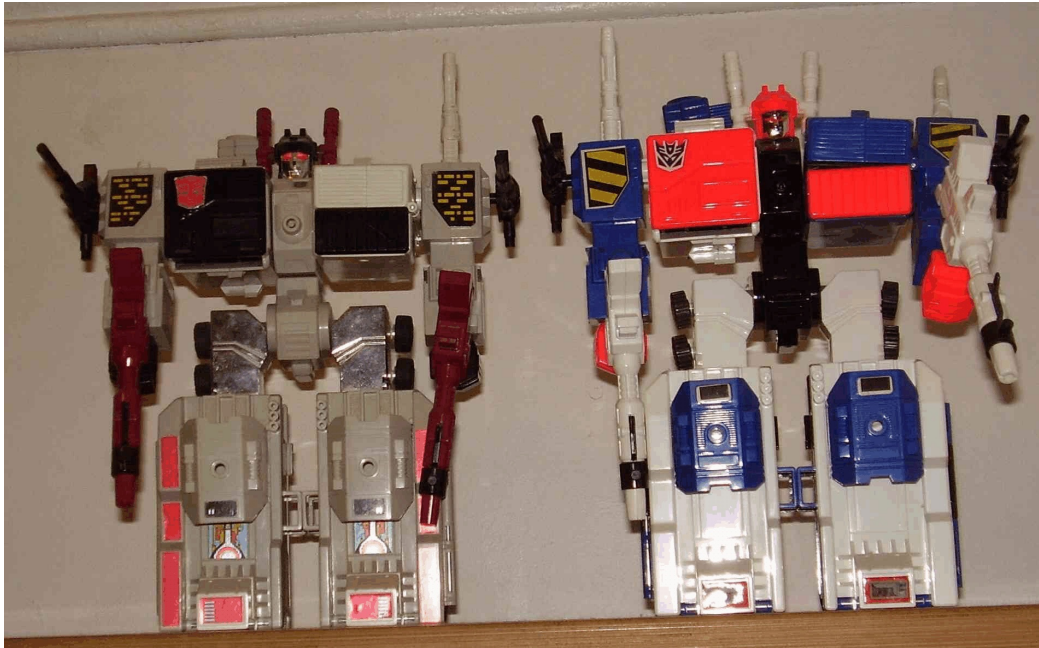
A fairly sturdy toy in general—I can see and feel no structural problems on the fake. One major difference between the original Metrotitan and the KO is that the knock-off's red parts are more of a hot pink instead (no idea why). One also needs to understand that this Metrotitan is just the KO Metroplex with new colors and it doesn't completely replicate the original Metrotitan. For example, while the stickers are correct for Metrotitan, the instructions are for Metroplex's stickers instead which can lead to confusion (the stickers don't correspond so some of my sticker placement was guess-work). Also, KO Metrotitan doesn't have the original toy's Micromaster (Metrobomb—a recolor of MM Skystalker). He does have the other stuff though, such as Metrodash (Scamper), Metrotank (Slammer) and Metroshot (Six-Gun) in their correct Japanese colors. My Metrotitan's left chest piece that folds out doesn't stay down tight completely (however, I think this is a common problem for this mold—my old Metroplex did the same thing but my newer one doesn't. So it's not because it's a KO specifically). Also, my Metrotitan came in a box decorated up as a G1 Metroplex toy (instead of being changed to look like a Metrotitan box). The toy was packed in styrofoam inside the box. (I've seen very few of this KO around on the internet—it came out shortly before Takara officially reissued their Metroplex toy. Could this actually be a *rare* knock-off?)

Verdict: Despite my concerns, a pretty good toy overall.



Up-close and personal!





Together at last!



Fake and loving it!

