



**DARK
HORSE
COMICS**

3

\$1.75

U.S.A.

\$2.20

CANADA

MECHA



First Contact

Where did all the color go?

It's the obvious question, isn't it? Unfortunately, the answer can't be traced to any one factor. The decision to produce *Mecha* (and, later this summer, *The Mark*) as black-and-white books instead of full-color was based on a number of converging events and realizations. I guess, if an explanation is necessary (and for loyal fans, I believe an explanation is deserved), you could say the "step back" to black-and-white was primarily due to continually missed deadlines in the latter phases of production, and the realization that despite the flap about black-and-white books not selling (a generalization that misses the *real* point: *bad* black-and-white books don't sell), our black-and-white books continued to sell—just as well as our color books. It finally became impossible to justify spending roughly double the production costs for a color issue on books that sold roughly the same as a black-and-white issue.

And there was one other factor: timeliness. Producing the book in black-and-white cuts about seven weeks off our production time, so this time around you can be assured of *monthly Mecha* adventures!

Catching up:

Last issue, a mysterious mecha battled an army of "demons" in space. Back on Earth, at the secret U.S. mecha base, the liberal-minded Hyer decided he didn't like the way the military was treating Terry Pierce (who they'd brought in for questioning), and took steps to free the boy from his holding cell. Meanwhile, in the South Pacific, unaware of Hyer's plan, Terry's father and his companions hatch their own scheme to escape from their Navy captors and rescue Terry.

Publisher
Mike Richardson
Editor
Randy Stradley
Production/cover colors
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Operations
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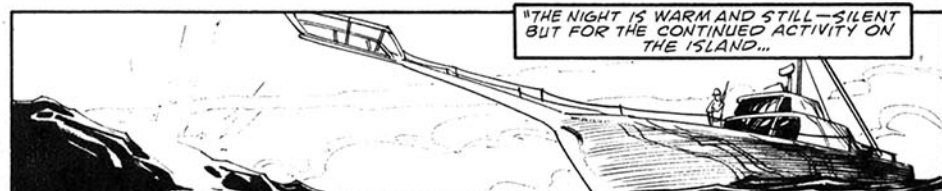
Cover
Chris Warner

MECHA #3 May, 1988. Published monthly by Dark Horse Comics Publishing Co., 3376 N.E. Sandy Blvd., Portland, Oregon 97232-1927. All prominent characters are TM and © 1987 Dark Horse Comics. All rights reserved. "Mecha" designs © 1987 Harrison Fong. Any similarity between any of the names, characters, persons or institutions and those of any person living or dead or institution is purely coincidental.

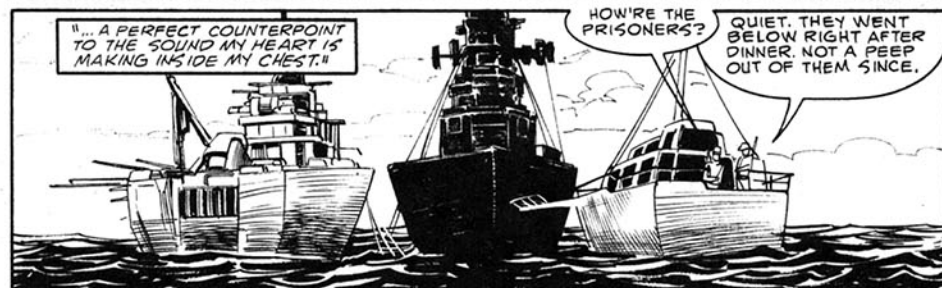
Next Issue:



Hyer and Terry have made good their escape—or have they? It's mecha against mecha, and San Francisco will never be the same! Art by Harrison Fong and newcomer Robert Caracol. Cover by Chris Warner!



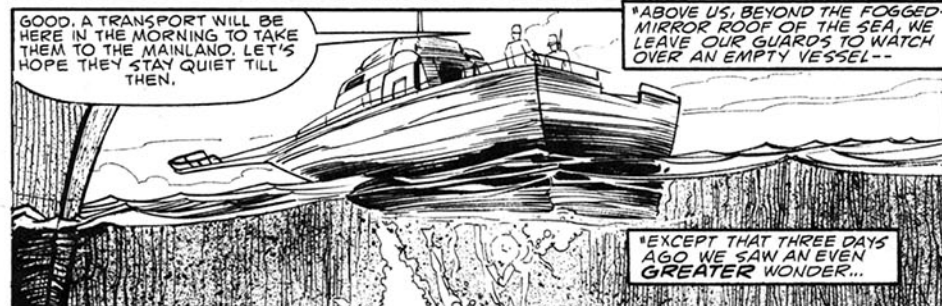
"THE NIGHT IS WARM AND STILL—SILENT BUT FOR THE CONTINUED ACTIVITY ON THE ISLAND..."



"... A PERFECT COUNTERPOINT TO THE SOUND MY HEART IS MAKING INSIDE MY CHEST."

HOW'RE THE PRISONERS?

QUIET. THEY WENT BELOW RIGHT AFTER DINNER. NOT A PEEP OUT OF THEM SINCE.



GOOD. A TRANSPORT WILL BE HERE IN THE MORNING TO TAKE THEM TO THE MAINLAND. LET'S HOPE THEY STAY QUIET TILL THEN.

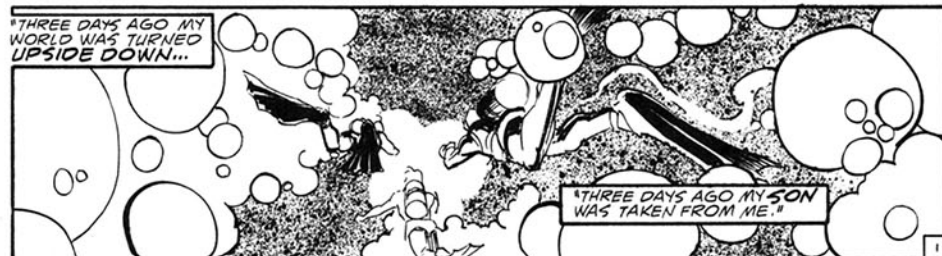
"ABOVE US, BEYOND THE FOGGED-MIRROR ROOF OF THE SEA, WE LEAVE OUR GUARDS TO WATCH OVER AN EMPTY VESSEL--"

"EXCEPT THAT THREE DAYS AGO WE SAW AN EVEN GREATER WONDER..."

"...AS WE SLIP INTO THE COOL EMBRACE OF A WORLD WHOSE WONDERS SHOULD TAKE OUR BREATHS AWAY."



"OR HORROR..."

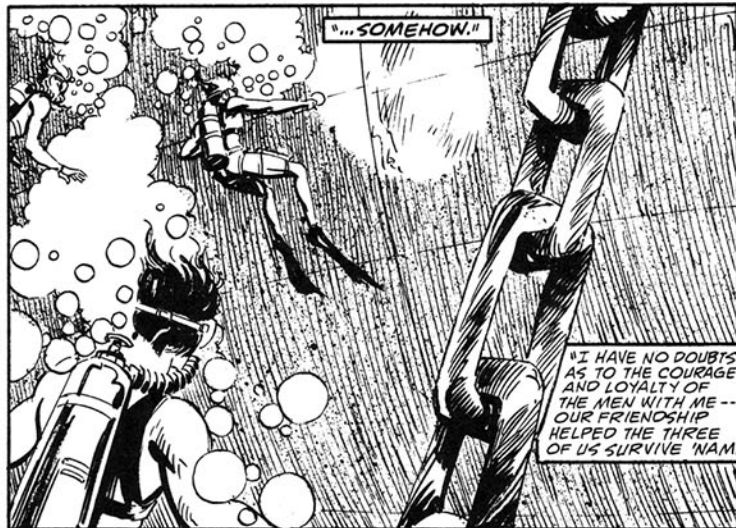


"THREE DAYS AGO MY WORLD WAS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN..."

"THREE DAYS AGO MY SON WAS TAKEN FROM ME."



"WE'RE GOING TO GET HIM BACK."



"...SOMEHOW."

"I HAVE NO DOUBTS AS TO THE COURAGE AND LOYALTY OF THE MEN WITH ME -- OUR FRIENDSHIP HELPED THE THREE OF US SURVIVE 'NAM."



"ONLY THIS TIME IT'S JUST US THREE--"



"--AGAINST SO MANY."

CAPTAIN! YOU SHOULD LOOK AT THIS! SONAR SHOWS SOMETHING THAT APPEARS TO BE A LARGE MANTA--

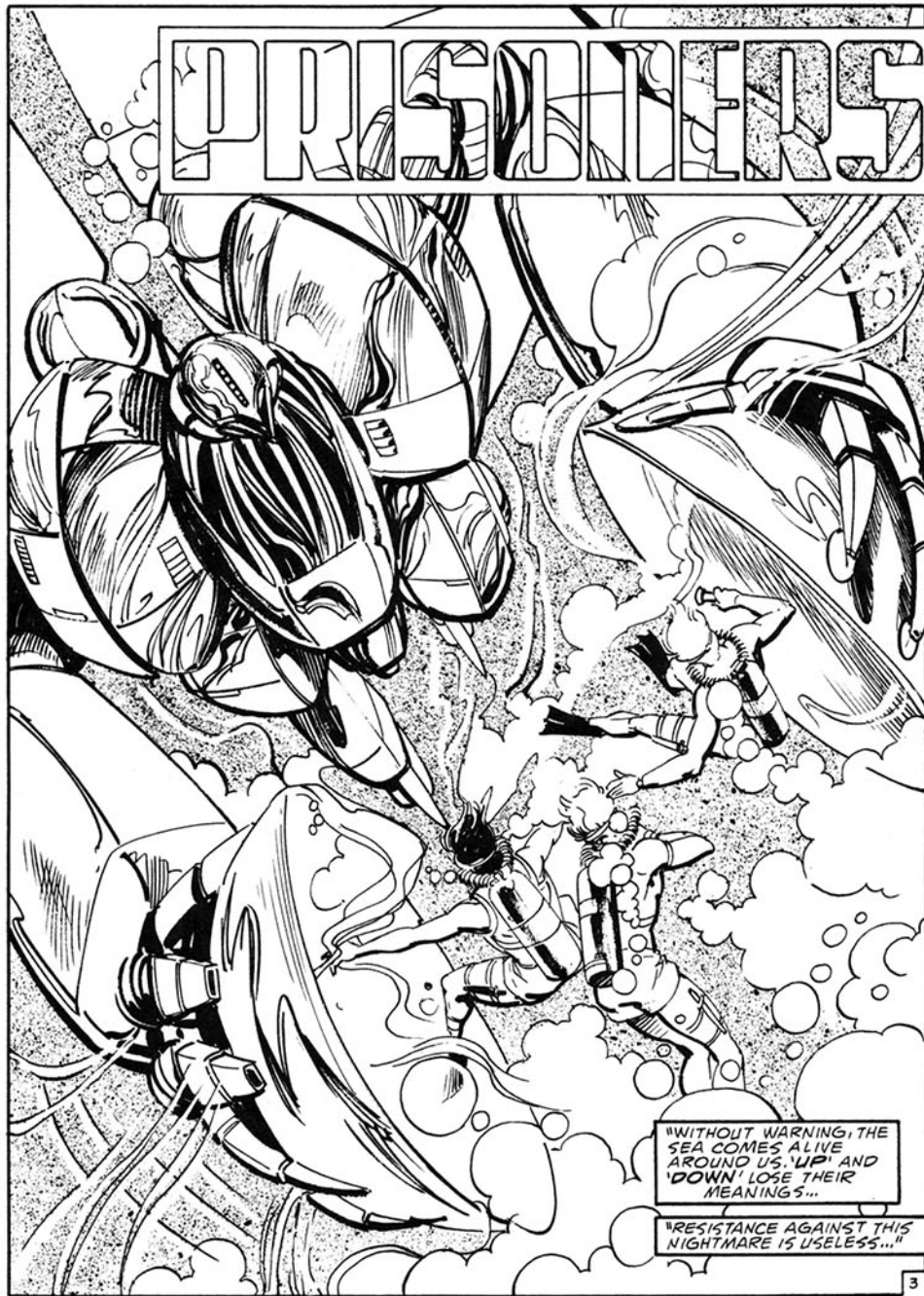


--APPROACHING FAST!

"THE ODDS DON'T MATTER, WHATEVER IT TAKES, CHANG, WORELY, AND I ARE GOING TO RESCUE TERRY."



"OUR OWN GOVERNMENT HAS NO RIGHT TO HOLD US AS--"



PRISONERS

"WITHOUT WARNING, THE SEA COMES ALIVE AROUND US, UP! AND 'DOWN' LOSE THEIR MEANINGS..."

"RESISTANCE AGAINST THIS NIGHTMARE IS USELESS..."

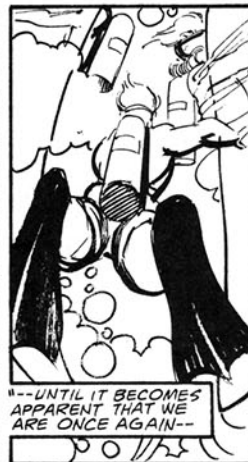
WRITER RANDY STRADLEY	PENCILLER HARRISON FONG	INKER ART NICHOLS	LETTERER JOHN WORKMAN
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CREATED BY MIKE RICHARDSON AND RANDY STRADLEY

MECHA DESIGNS BY HARRISON FONG



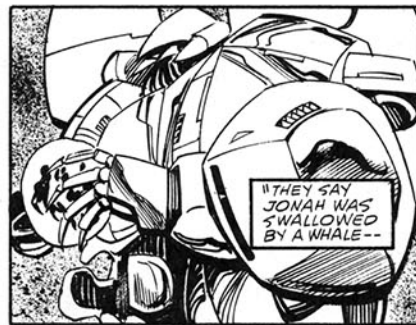
"BUT WE RESIST ANYWAY--"



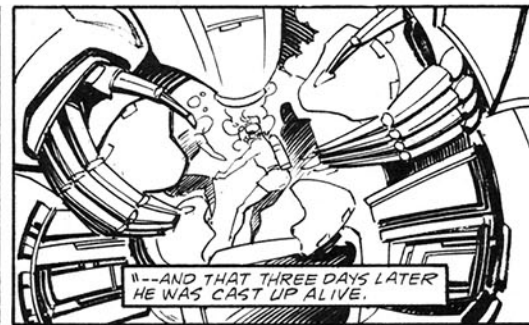
"--UNTIL IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT WE ARE ONCE AGAIN--"



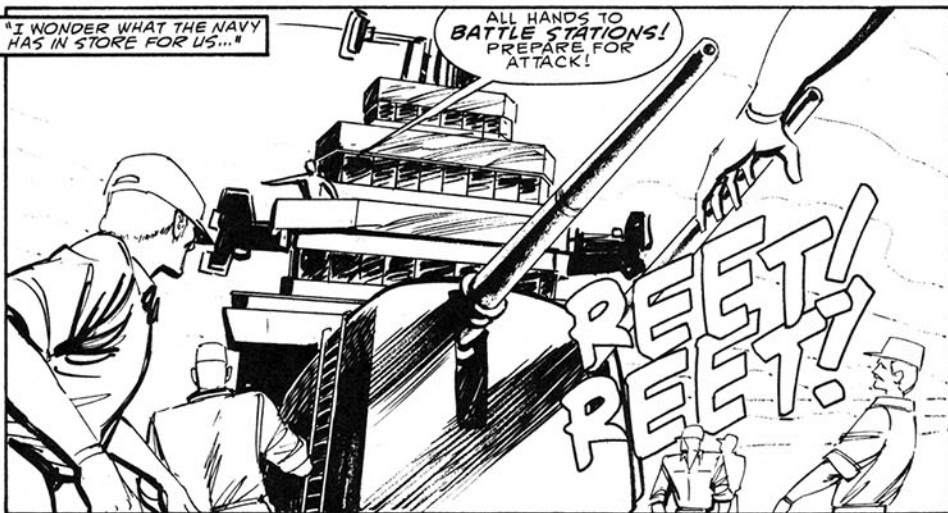
"--CAPTIVES."



"THEY SAY JONAH WAS SWALLOWED BY A WHALE--"



"--AND THAT THREE DAYS LATER HE WAS CAST UP ALIVE."



"I WONDER WHAT THE NAVY HAS IN STORE FOR US..."

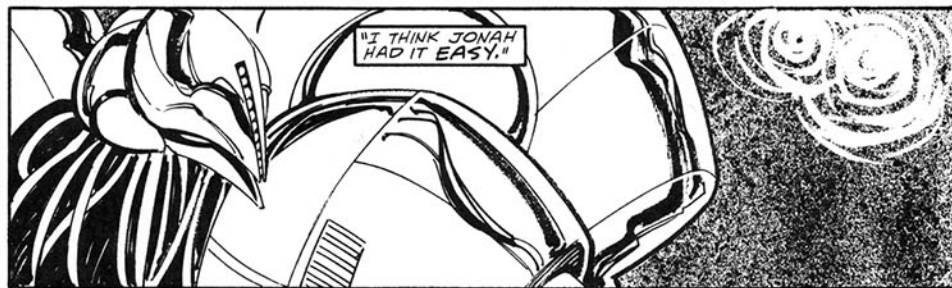
ALL HANDS TO BATTLE STATIONS! PREPARE FOR ATTACK!



FIRE CONTROL --READY ALL TUBES--

TORPEDOES STANDING BY!

--AND GET ME SOME LIGHTS! I WANT TO SEE WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST!



"I THINK JONAH HAD IT EASY."



THERE IT IS-- STARBOARD SIDE!

THAT'S NO FISH--WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING?

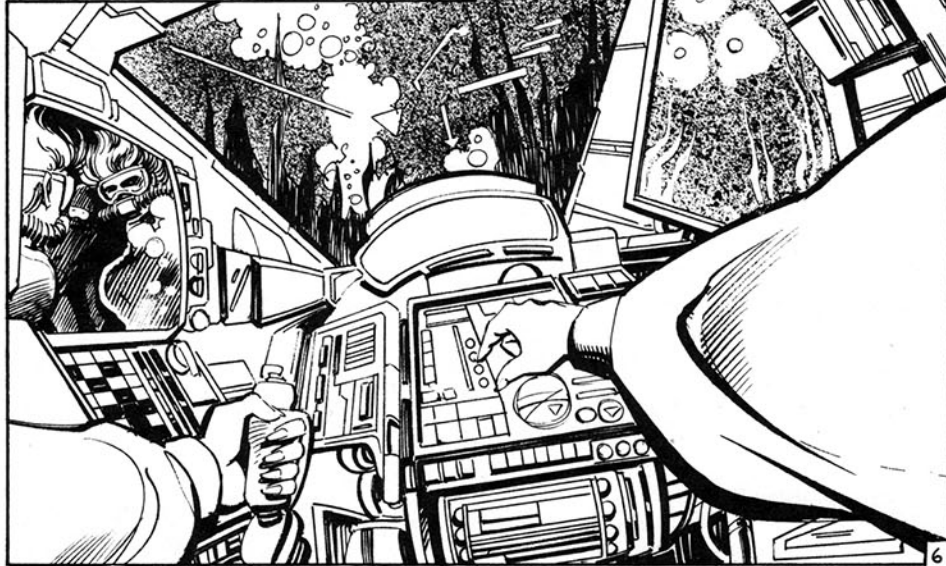


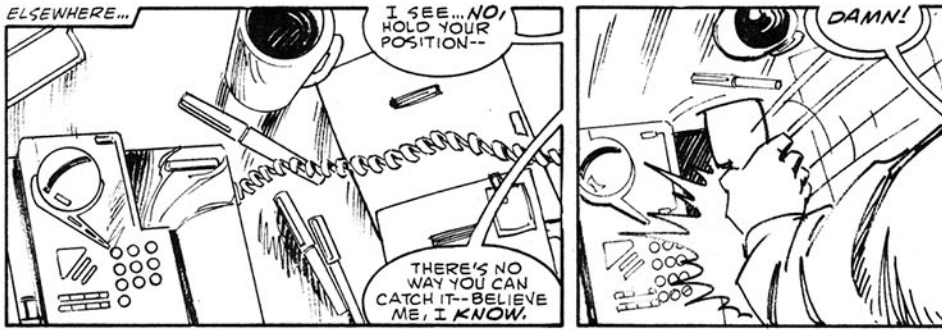
IT'S MOVING, CAPTAIN!

STAY ON IT!



"THEY'LL BE WIRE GUIDED, LOCKED ON OUR SONAR IMAGE AS WELL AS ANY ENGINE NOISES. I HOPE WHOEVER IS DRIVING THIS THING KNOWS WHAT THEY'RE DOING..."





ELSEWHERE...

I SEE...NO, HOLD YOUR POSITION--

DAMN!

THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN CATCH IT--BELIEVE ME, I KNOW.



OUR "UNDERWATER BOGIE" JUST MADE AN APPEARANCE AND KIDNAPPED THE CREW FROM THE PIERCE BOAT!

THE BOGIE? HOW DID IT GET INVOLVED WITH THIS?

PERHAPS IT PICKED UP THE SAME SIGNAL THAT YOU AND HYER DID IN YOUR ROBO-UNITS--

--THE ONE WE PIN-POINTED AS COMING FROM THE BOY'S UNIT ON THE ISLAND.



IN WHICH CASE THE RUSSIANS MUST ALSO KNOW ABOUT THE ISLAND!

--WE'VE GOT TO TAKE ACTION!

WHAT "ACTION" ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, COLONEL?

KEENE, LISTEN--

DOCTOR CONOVER, I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT BEFORE THIS SITUATION GETS ANY MORE OUT OF CONTROL--

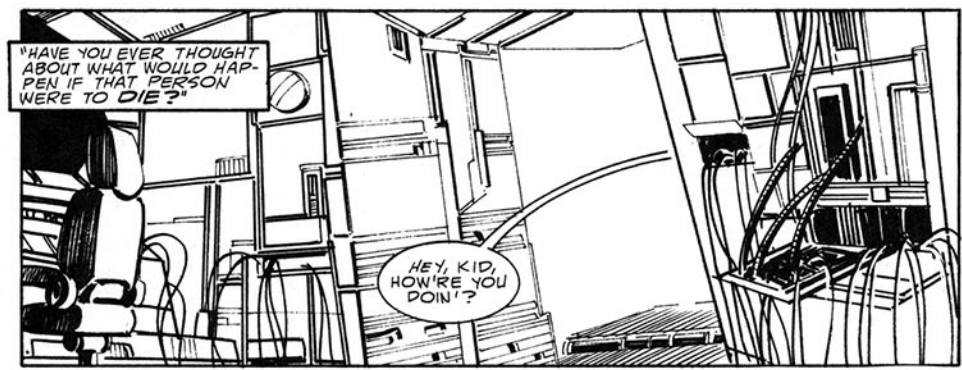


--YOU KNOW HOW THE FIRST PERSON TO MAKE CONTACT--

--WITH ONE OF THE ROBO-UNITS INITIATES THE "LINKING" PROCESS--

--AND HOW AFTER THE LINK IS ESTABLISHED, NO ONE BUT THAT PERSON CAN OPERATE THE UNIT, RIGHT?

YEAH...



"HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THAT PERSON WERE TO DIE?"

HEY, KID, HOW'RE YOU DOIN'?



UHHH... WHERE AM I? WHY CAN'T I MOVE?

YOU'RE IN A SECRET AIR FORCE BASE UNDER--

AW, NEVER MIND, YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT ANYWAY. HANG ON A SEC, I'LL LOOSEN THESE STRAPS...



THAT BETTER?

WHAT HAPPENED? I REMEMBER THE ISLAND...AND THE OLD MAN...HE DIED--

THEN I WAS HERE AND A WOMAN WAS STICKING NEEDLES IN MY ARM...

HERE, DRINK THIS?

WHOA STEADY, KID.

--AND HIS STATUE...NO, ROBOT--

CONOVER.

WAIT A MINUTE! YOU MEAN THERE WAS AN OLD MAN WHO WAS LINKED TO THE ISLAND UNIT BEFORE THE KID CAME ALONG?

THAT'S WHAT THE BOY SAYS. AND AFTER THE OLD MAN WAS KILLED BY THE "MYSTERY UNIT," THE BOY WAS ABLE TO LINK WITH THE ISLAND UNIT--

THE POINT TO THIS IS THAT FROM ALL INDICATIONS WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE OUR OWN PILOTS FOR THE ROBO-UNITS.

HYER IS NOT --AND NEVER HAS BEEN-- A TEAM PLAYER. GIVEN THE CURRENT SITUATION, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TRUST ANYONE WHO ISN'T WITH US ONE HUNDRED PERCENT.

--AND APPARENTLY UTILIZE IT TO DESTROY THE OLD MAN'S KILLER.

NOT HYER, AND NOT THE BOY.

SO THEY PUMPED YOU FULL OF "TRUTH SERUM" AND DRAGGED THE WHOLE STORY OUT OF YOU, HUH?

I GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED...

FIGURES, WH LOO, YOU FEEL UP TO WALKING? I THINK WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE--

"-- THERE'S NO TELLING HOW COLONEL MERK WILL REACT TO YOUR STORY!"

COLONEL, ARE YOU SURE THIS IS NECESSARY? HYER'S UNORTHODOX, BUT I THINK WE CAN DEPEND ON HIM WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN.

YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU, SON?

THE CHIPS ARE DOWN.

I KNOW I'VE JUST GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE-- I CAN'T STAND ANY MORE OF THAT MECHANICAL GRACE--

HE'S NOT HERE, COLONEL!

FIND HIM. PUT THE BASE ON FULL ALERT.

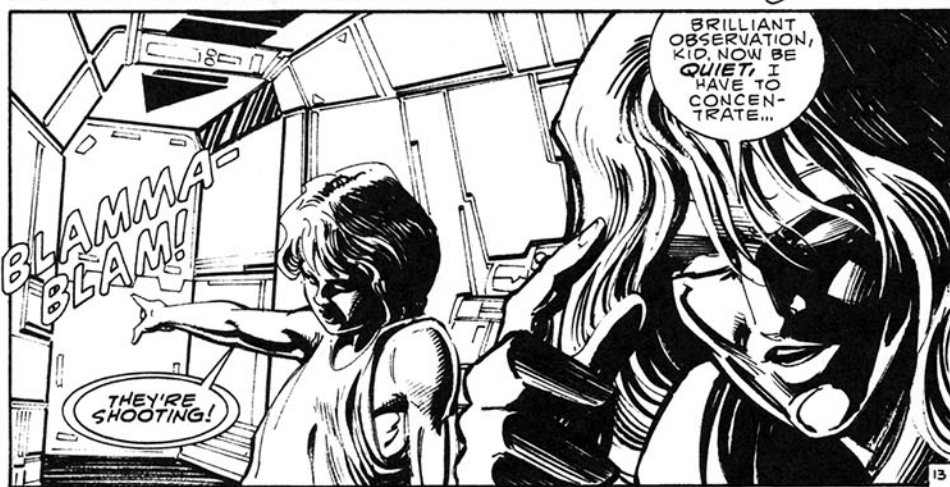
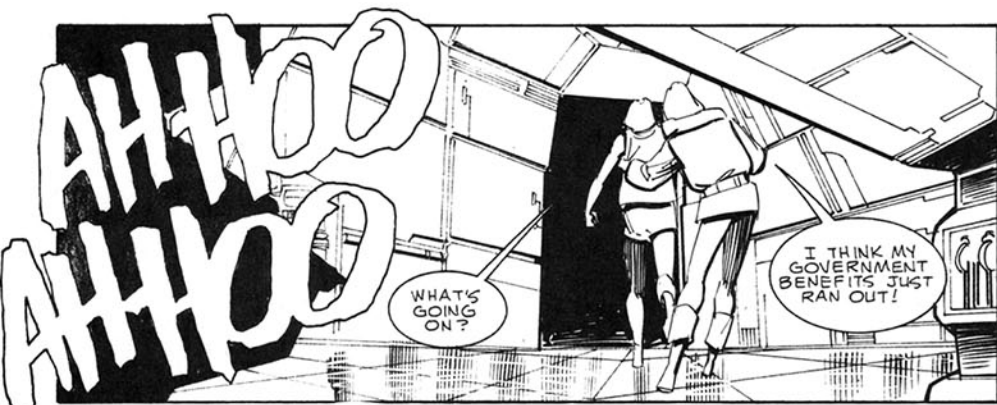
BUT COLONEL--

--THOUGH YOU SAY IT'S ONLY AN INDUSTRIAL SQUEEZE, IT LOOKS LIKE LUXURY AND FEELS LIKE A DISEASE--

NO ARGUMENTS, KEENE!

AH-HOO
AH-HOO

UH-OH! C'MON, KID! WE'RE OUTTA HERE!



COLONEL MEREK'S ABOUT TO FIND OUT I DIDN'T TELL HIM EVERYTHING I LEARNED ABOUT IRON MAIDEN IN THE YEAR BEFORE I JOINED HIS TEAM...



UH, GUYS, THAT THING'S NOT SUPPOSED TO MOVE UNLESS SOMEONE'S DRIVING IT--IS IT?



THOOM!



SOMEBODY GET THE COLONEL--FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON!



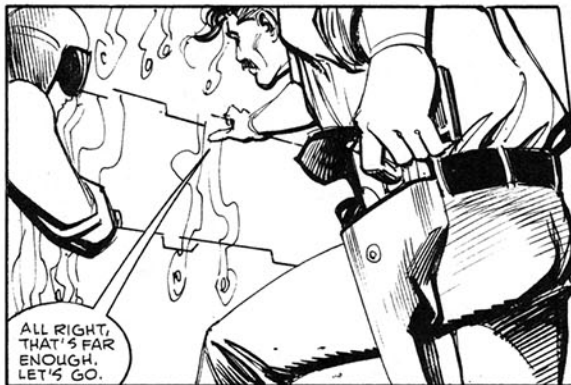
MEANWHILE...

HURRY UP WITH THAT DOOR!



I THINK YOU SHOULD AT LEAST GIVE HYER AN OPPORTUNITY TO--

STOW IT! KEENE.



ALL RIGHT, THAT'S FAR ENOUGH. LET'S GO.



GIVE IT UP, HYER--



I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA, MEREK-- WHY DON'T YOU GIVE UP?

OH, AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, I SUGGEST YOU BE REAL CAREFUL ABOUT MAKING ANY SUDDEN MOVEMENTS-- MY CONTROL ISN'T THE GREATEST WHEN I'M NERVOUS. I'D HATE FOR MAIDEN'S FINGER CANNONS TO GO OFF ACCIDENTALLY...

I MUST'VE BEEN CRAZY WHEN I AGREED TO WORK FOR YOU. THANKS FOR REMINDIN' ME OF MY IDEALS.



THIS ISN'T OVER, HYER! I'M NOT JUST GOING TO LET YOU WALK OUT OF HERE!

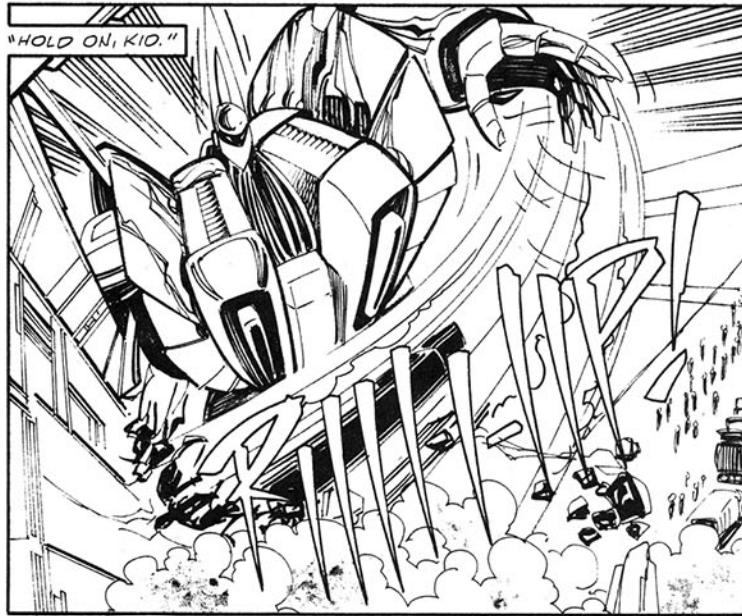


NO? WELL, STOP ME IF YOU CAN.

SEE YA LATER, KEENE--



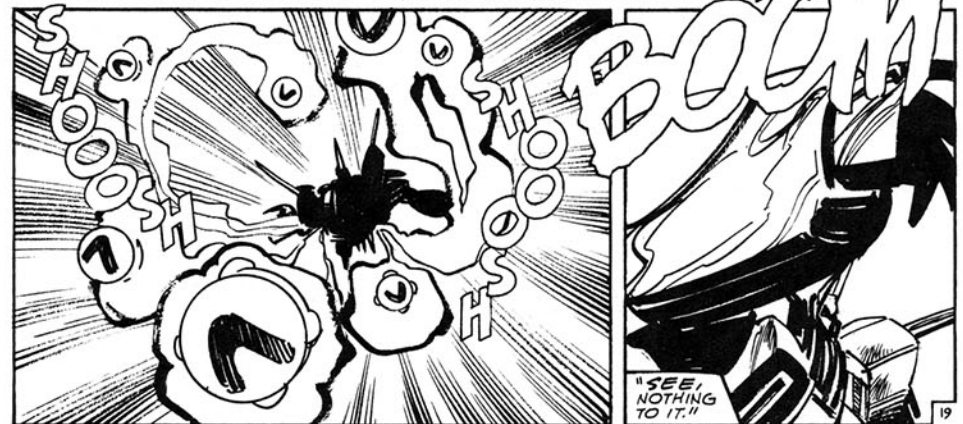
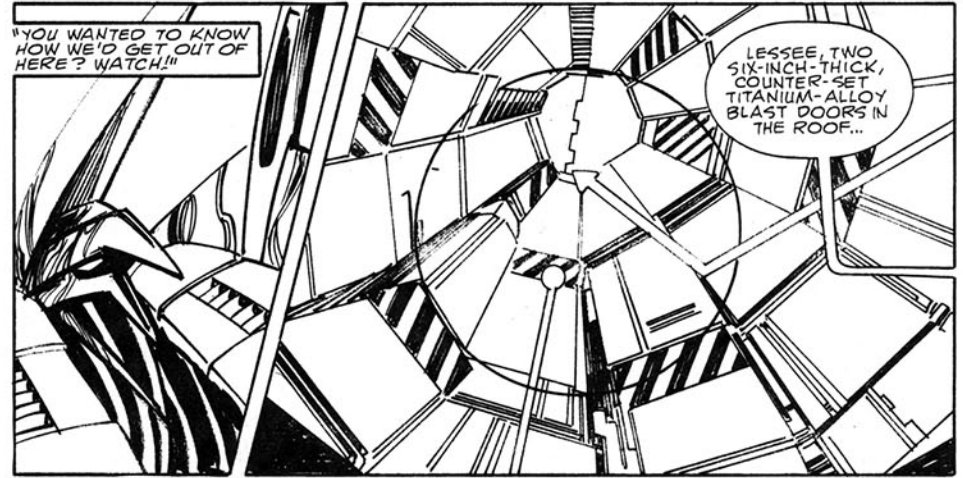
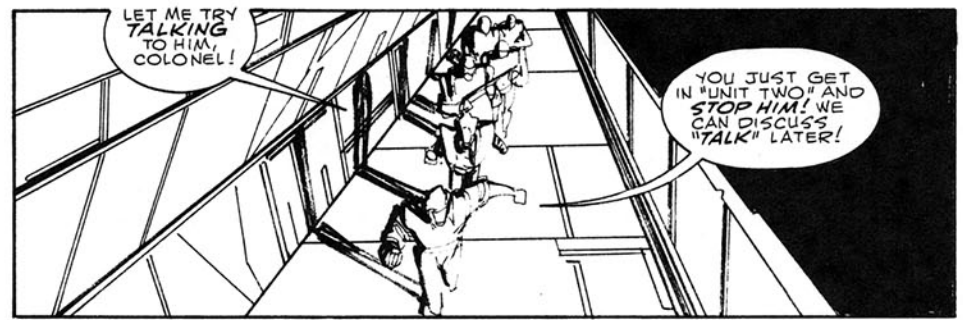
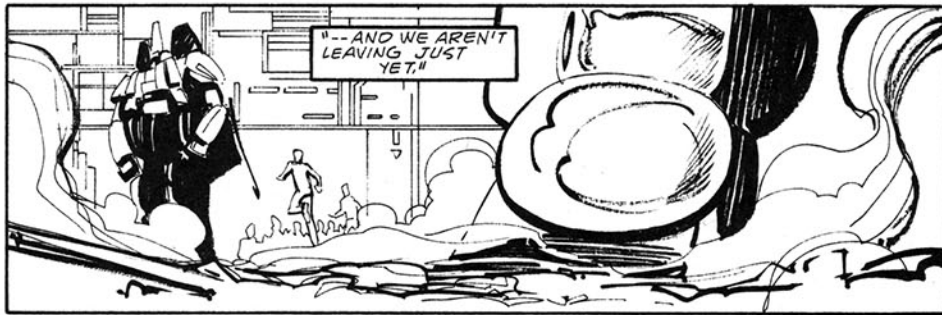
--IF YOU EVER GET TIRED OF PLAYING SOLDIER, LOOK ME UP. I BET IF IT WEREN'T FOR ALL THIS MILITARY CRAP, WE COULD BE FRIENDS.

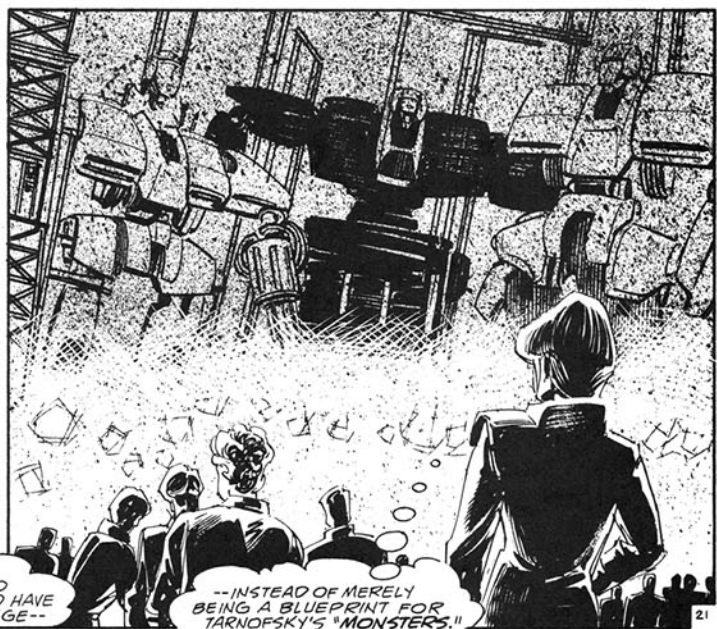
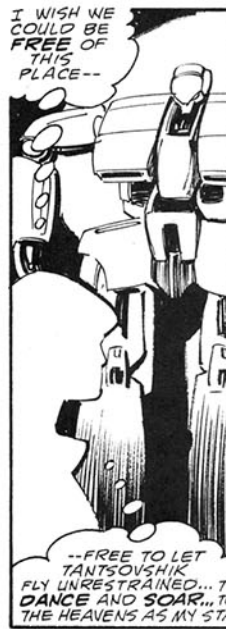
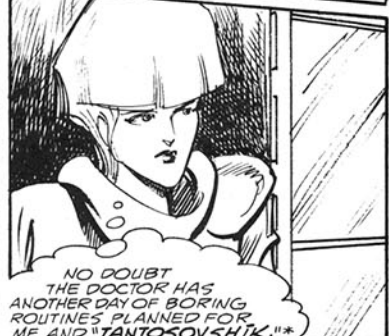
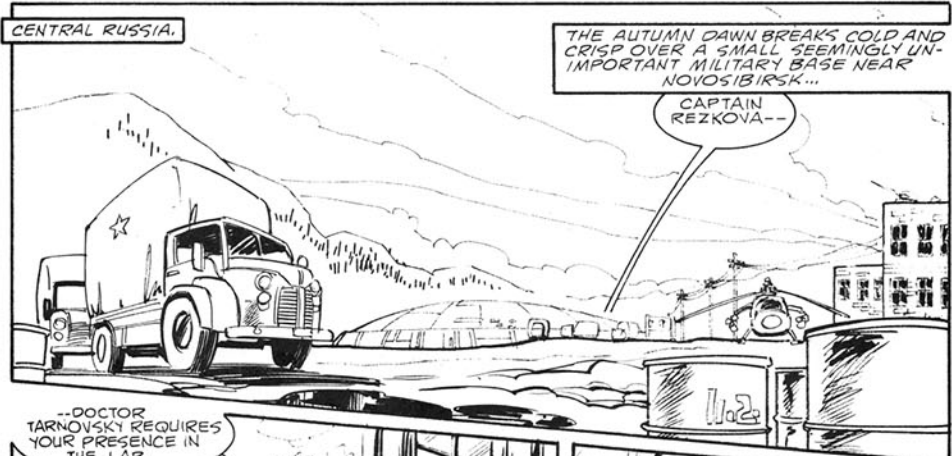
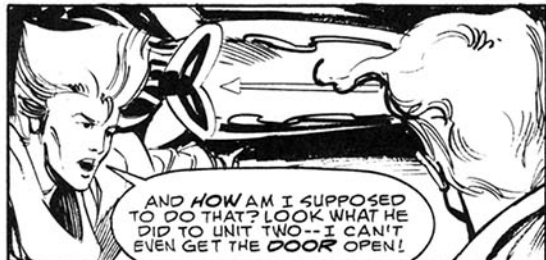


"HOLD ON, KID."



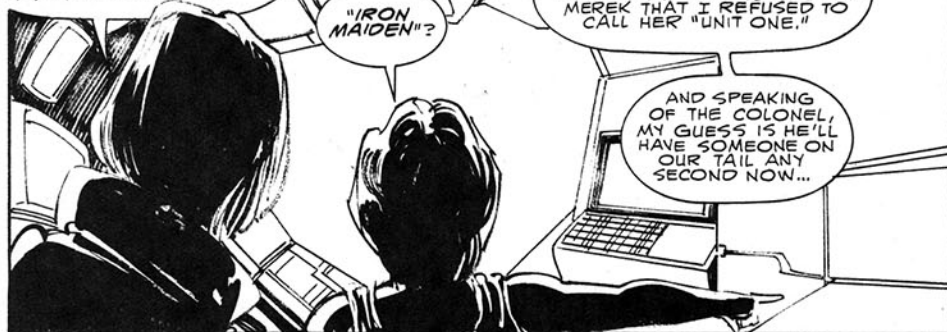
OUTTA THE WAY, FOLKS--





*RUSSIAN FOR "DANCER."

...ABOUT MACH TWO, BUT IRON MAIDEN CAN GO A LOT FASTER IF I LET HER...



"IRON MAIDEN"?

SURE! I HAVE TO CALL HER SOMETHING, RIGHT? BESIDES, IT ALWAYS BUGGED MEREK THAT I REFUSED TO CALL HER "UNIT ONE."

AND SPEAKING OF THE COLONEL, MY GUESS IS HE'LL HAVE SOMEONE ON OUR TAIL ANY SECOND NOW...



WHERE ARE WE GOING?

GOOD QUESTION.

I WAS GONNA TAKE YOU BACK TO THE ISLAND AND YOUR DAD, BUT THE SCANNERS SAY THE NAVY'S THERE IN FORCE--

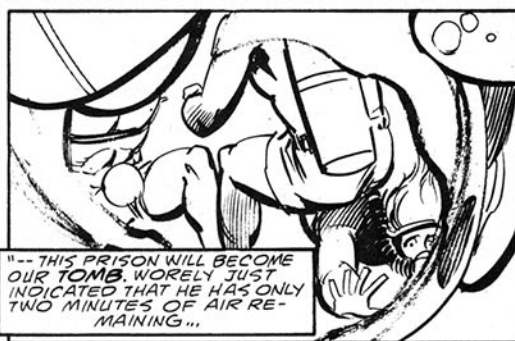


"--MAYBE WE'D BETTER JUST LAY LOW FOR A WHILE AND HOPE YOUR DAD AND HIS BUDDIES CAN TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES."



"IF I WASN'T EXPERIENCING IT, I WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT POSSIBLE TO MOVE THIS FAST UNDERWATER..."

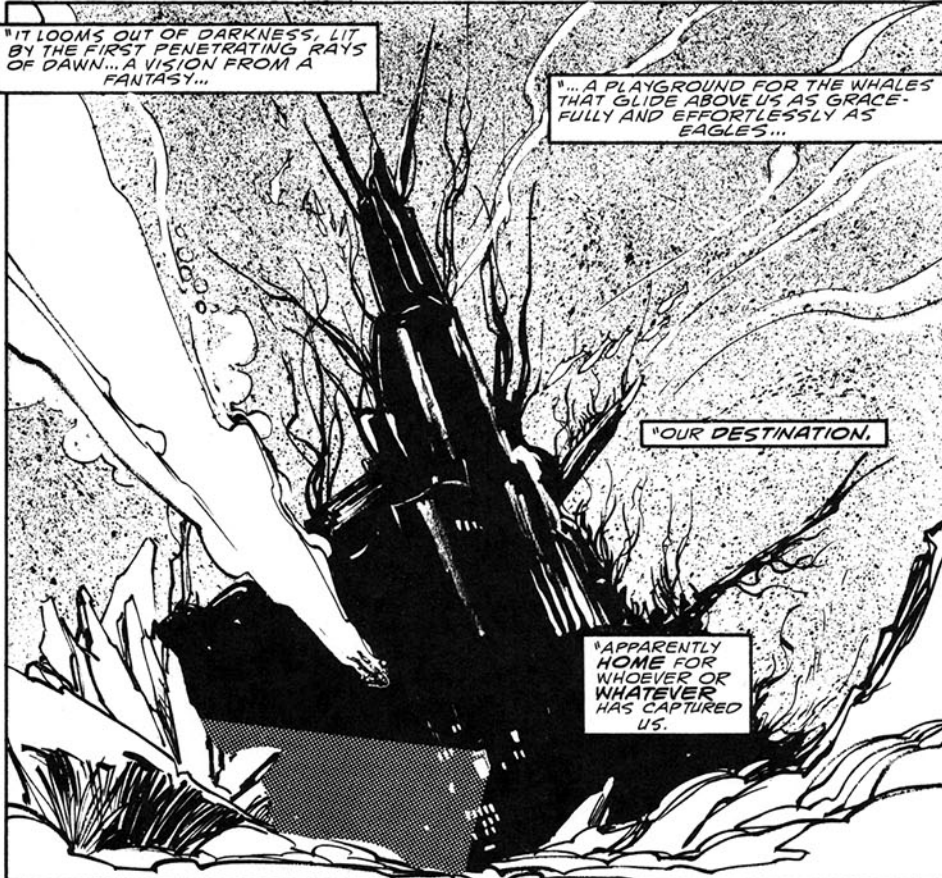
"EVEN SO, IF WE DON'T REACH OUR DESTINATION, WHATEVER IT MAY BE, SOON--"



"-- THIS PRISON WILL BECOME OUR TOMB. WORELY JUST INDICATED THAT HE HAS ONLY TWO MINUTES OF AIR REMAINING..."



"PERHAPS THAT WILL BE ENOUGH"



"IT LOOMS OUT OF DARKNESS, LIT BY THE FIRST PENETRATING RAYS OF DAWN... A VISION FROM A FANTASY..."

"... A PLAYGROUND FOR THE WHALES THAT GLIDE ABOVE US AS GRACEFULLY AND EFFORTLESSLY AS EAGLES..."

"OUR DESTINATION."

"APPARENTLY HOME FOR WHOEVER OR WHATEVER HAS CAPTURED US."

"A HOME FROM WHICH I RECEIVE NO SENSE OF WELCOME..."



SPLASH

KATANK



ANSWERS,
AND MORE ACTION
IN 30(?) DAYS.

Feedback

Send your comments c/o Dark Horse Comics, 3376 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland, OR 97232

Okay, okay. We're late. You don't have to tell me. I know it better than anyone. I knew we were late way back in October of last year, but it was, so to speak, out of my hands at that point. However, now that we no longer have to worry about color and the extra time and expense color entails, we'll have **Mecha** out to you on a regular monthly basis.

However, with all of the setbacks this book has suffered, there's one thing that continues to make this job more than worthwhile: the mail we receive from you readers. Surprisingly, even with only two issues out, **Mecha** continues to receive as much mail as some of Dark Horse's more popular titles such as **Concrete** and **The American!** Though the audience for **Mecha** may be smaller than for other books, you're a very vocal minority—and I wouldn't have it any other way! And we'll make the long delayed announcement of the winner of the "Name the Letter Column Contest" next issue. Now, to your letters:

Dear Mechanics,

When I got to my favorite comic store, the owner clapped his hand on my shoulder and said, "You're going to be very happy, Mike."

I waited patiently for him to finish with another customer, then he went into his reserved comics and pulled out (ta dal) **Mecha** #2!

I almost ripped it out of his hands, and I uttered a shriek loud enough to turn all the heads in the store (it was really crowded). Finally, after what seemed like a million years, **Mecha** #2 is

out! Please don't make me wait so long again (unless it would affect the comic's quality!)

Mecha has got to be one of the most awesome comics out. **Mecha** #1 showed four types of mecha, but not all of them.

Mecha #2 showed only two additional mecha, when are you going to introduce the rest?

I just loved the way that Hyer described Iron Maiden.

Here's my entry for a name on your letters page: "Mechages" (as in "messages"), or it could be "Incoming Mechages."

In closing, your comic is much better than any of the 3 **Robotech** series, **Transformers**, or any of the other robot comics! Awesomel
Sincerely,

Mike Bene
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Go ahead and shriek, Mike. Shout it to the hills! Tell all your friends about **Mecha** (or any other comic you like). Write letters to the creators of the books you buy. But most importantly, tell your comic shop owner or manager that you like a particular title—and that you plan to buy it on a regular basis. Through your letters you can talk to us, but it's through your readers that we talk to your retailers. The only way a retailer knows to order a particular title is if you ask for it—and that's the only way you can be certain that they'll have it on hand for you.

Mr. Richardson,

Dark Horse Comics is a major part of my life. I try to

buy, or at least read, all of them. As a patron of the Beaverton Pegasus, seeing a good part of the Dark Horse staff is a common occurrence. In fact, I remember Randy Stradley manning the cash register several times.

My point is this: **Mecha** is probably your best book. It may not gross as much as the others, but the style is unique. I can't explain it; it makes you think and ponder about what could and will happen. Harrison Fong's mecha are amazing, and have a certain flare missing in other robot comics. The book stands alone.

Now, as for your letter column title, I pose an answer: the Mechaphone. Consider it.

Thank you for your time (put cute little company slogan here).
Sincerely,

Mark Furman
Portland, OR

"Cute little company slogan," eh? Maybe "Make mine **Mecha**?" or "Mecha just aren't for kids anymore?" or "Home of the rising **Mecha**?" Naw, I don't think so, Mark. But you're right, I used to man the cash register at one of the Pegasus comics stores, back when Dark Horse was just a getting started. I used to be able to handle all of the calls to artists and writers, do all the paste-up and do everything else that needed to be done from there too. But those days are long gone. Now Dark Horse is more than a full-time job (that's an understatement if I ever made one), but the thrill is still there—especially when we can work with artists as

talented as Harrison, and receive letters like yours.

Dear Mecha,

"Wow!" I can't believe how good **Mecha** is. I thought it was just going to be another comic about robots, but you proved me wrong. I LOVE IT! **Mecha** #1 was superb, but a little hard to understand. **Mecha** #2 was just as good, but still a little confusing. But I'm not complaining!

I love the art, inking, and covers; and I read the letter columns. I would like to submit an entry to the letter column contest. My entry is "Mecha Talk."

Keep up the good work. **Mecha**, I'm yours forever (or as long as the comic runs). Sincerely,

Neil Campbell
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada

As long as the comic runs, huh? I guess we can't ask for more than that, Neil.

Gentlemen,

Congratulations on planting the acorn of what could be a mighty oak in the comic book industry and beyond.

The international cast introduced in issue #1 is welcome, and hopefully will develop as people and not degenerate into the "all-too-frequently-used" character stereotypes. One suggestion: please show us the cast's emotional experiences while their relationships develop as well as the action sequences.

The art is excellent, and the selection of Visual Concepts for the color separation work demonstrates your sincerity in delivering a product of high quality. Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Murphy Anderson at a con in Toronto where I first heard about the work being

done by Visual Concepts. **Mecha** is just another example of the integrity of their work.

Continued success,

Francis R. O. Martin
Oakville, Ontario
Canada

Well, as you've seen from this issue, Francis, we're no longer able to make use of Visual Concepts fine separations for the interiors of Mecha, but they're still providing us with seps for virtually all of our covers, and doing a great job!

Dear Randy and Harrison,

I love this comic. The mecha drawn by Harrison are fantastic. I am a fan of *Robotech*, but only on the TV. When I saw the *Robotech* comic I thought, "Great!" but the art was just so lame—unlike this comic. Excellent work.

In **Mecha** #2 I'd like to find out more about the mecha and the pilot that was out in space fighting "demons" (as the pilot put it). He is the most intriguing character in **Mecha** so far, I think. Do we get to find out more about his mental struggle? And why does he call the area of space he's in "hell"? Also, are the demons he fought the same as the monster that Terry fought in #1?

The description of Iron Maiden in the back was great (also, Iron Maiden is one of my favorite groups). I hope you describe all of the mecha in future issues like that.

Sincerely,

Stan Zienka
Decatur, AL

P.S.—Make it monthly!

Monthly? Okay! Again, sorry for the unwarranted delays, but they're behind us now, Stan. In answer to your questions, you will find out more about the pilot out in

space in upcoming issues. And, yes, the "demons" are of the same origin as the thing Terry battled in issue #1.

Dear Fellow Robo-Readers,

It does disappoint me that **Mecha** is going black and white, but will that stop me from buying **Mecha**? Heck, no! The storyline and art of this graphic serial novel is too appealing to drop. **Mecha** is a collage of high-tech wizardry, intrigue, and superb graphic art. I would rather it be in color, but the lower price and monthly sales make up for this loss of "life."

I have a theory on where the mecha came from, which is as follows: some time ago, in Earth's ancient history, a battle took place in space between mecha. What few survived found their way to Earth where their pilots reprogrammed them to sleep. They were to sleep until the time came when they would be needed. This time is now, when their true maker's enemies are searching out these "weapons." The use: unknown.

Doug Leedy
Beaverton, OR

Thanks for all of your support, Doug! Interesting theory on the origins of Mecha, too. Close (in some respects), but no cigar! Keep reading for the answers you're seeking.

Next month (a mere thirty days from now): Inker Robert Caracol makes his comics debut, and Terry and Hyer get deeper into trouble, in: "Strangers in Paradise"

We'll see you then!

Randy