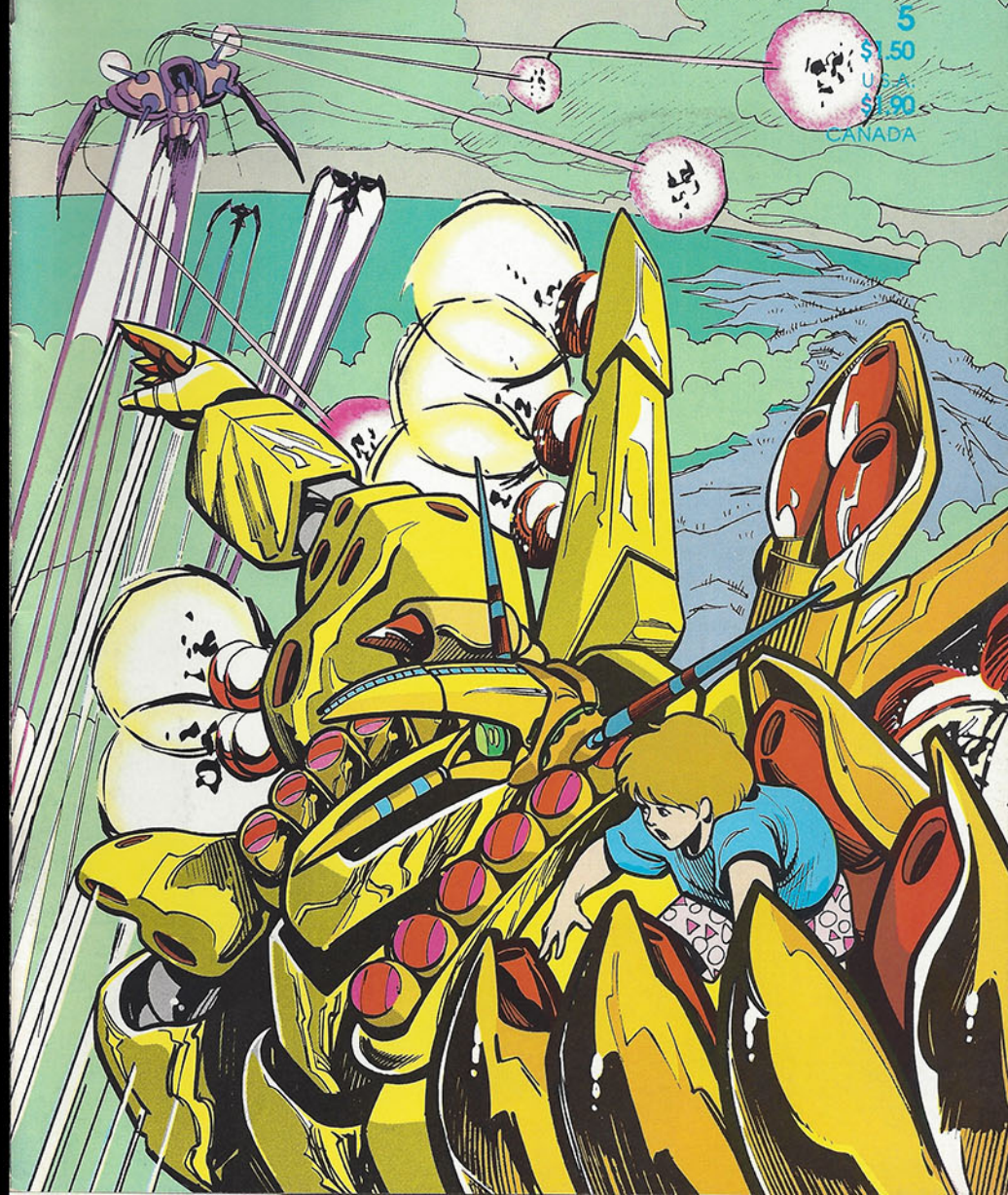




# MECHA



5  
\$1.50  
U.S.A.  
\$1.90  
CANADA

# First Contact

Mecha No. 5 October, 1988

Script  
Randy Stradley

Pencils  
Harrison Fong

Inks  
Harrison Fong  
Robert Caracol

Letters  
Jean Simek

Cover  
Harrison Fong  
Art Nichols  
Chris Warner

Cover colors  
Louise Kim

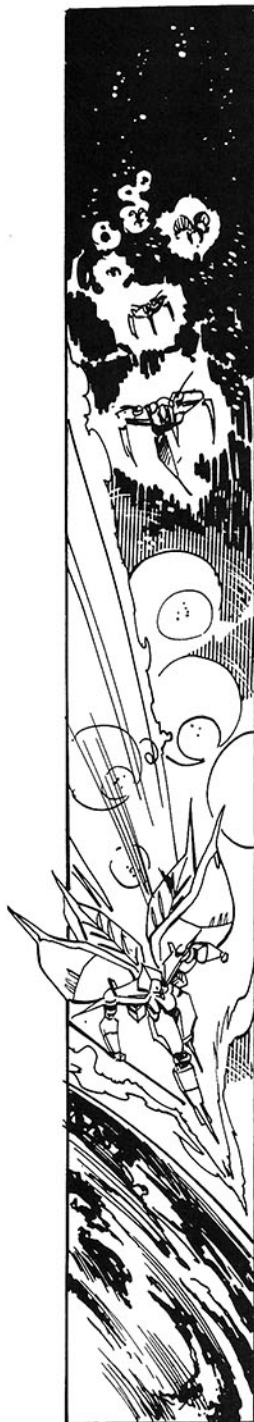
Publisher  
Mike Richardson

Editor  
Randy Stradley

Production  
Chris Chalenor  
Jerry "Wildcat" Prosser

Operations  
Neil Hankerson

MECHA #5 October, 1988. Published by Dark Horse Comics Publishing Co., 2008 S.E. Monroe, Milwaukie, OR 97222. All prominent characters are ™ and © 1988 Dark Horse Comics. All rights reserved. Mecha designs © 1988 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.



THIS MORNING THE AIR FORCE FOUND US, AND THEIR OTHER ROBOT, "JOLLY GREEN GIANT," CAME AFTER ME AND HYER.

NOW WE'RE IN SAN FRANCISCO, AND MAIDEN AND GREEN GIANT ARE HEADED FOR A--



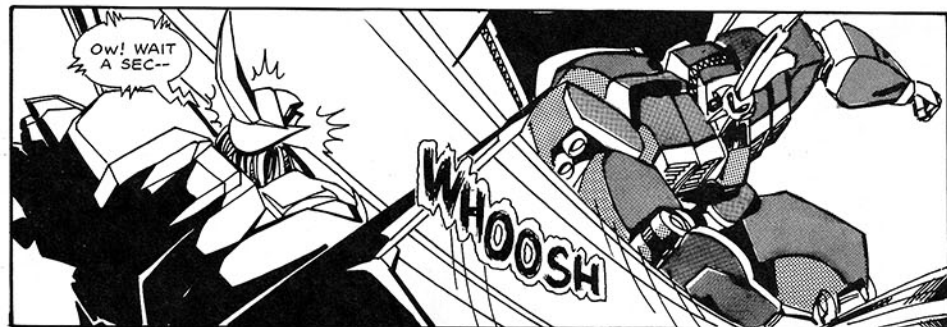
# SHOW-DOWN

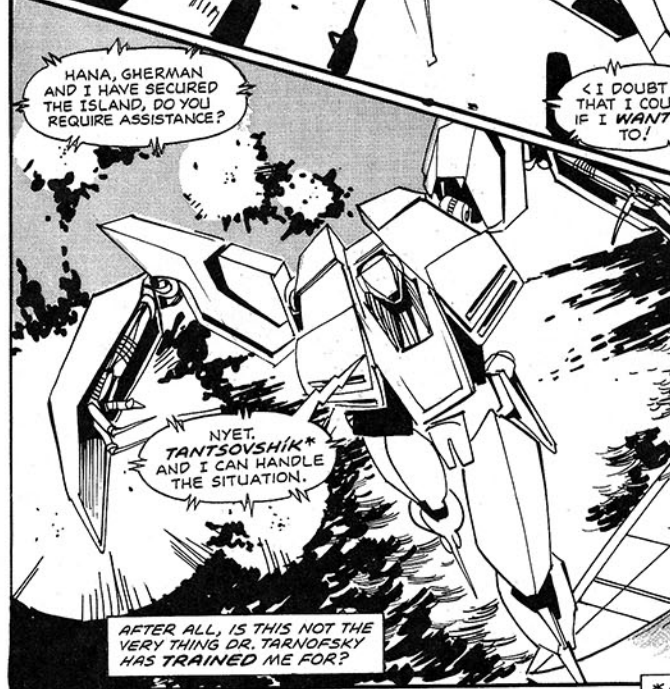
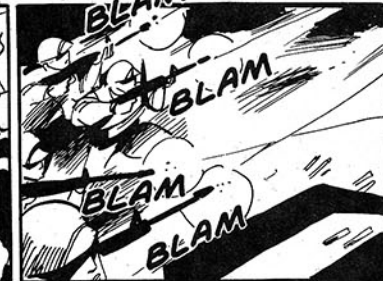
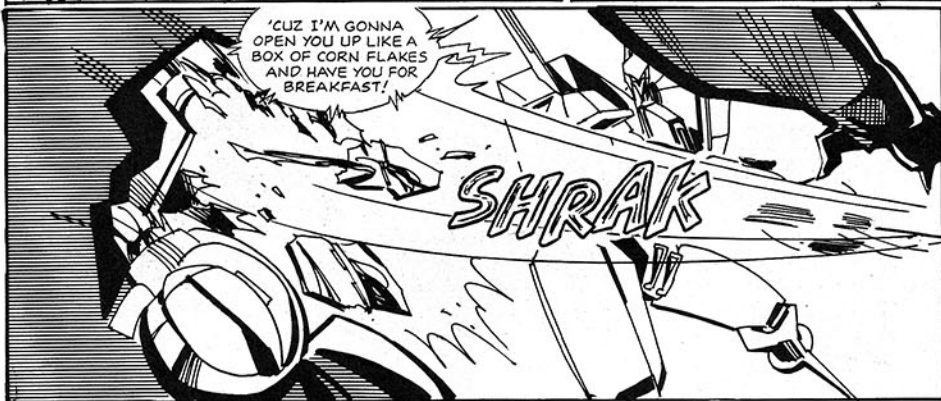
HYER!  
WATCH OUT!

CLUMSY,  
KEENE.

VERY  
CLUMSY!

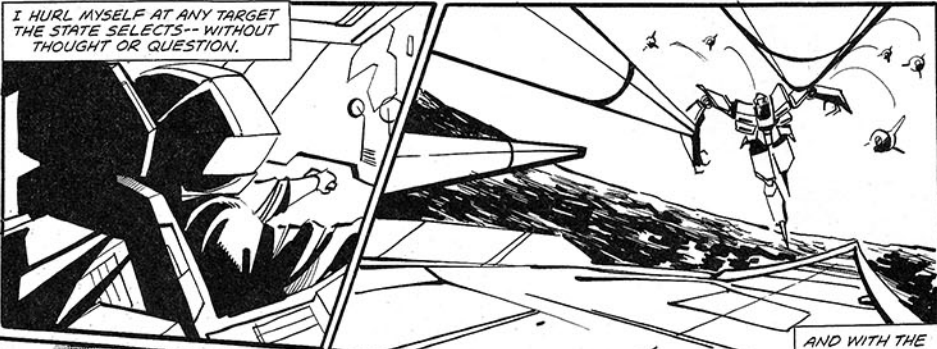
HYER'S FAST ENOUGH, BUT THE OTHER GUY IS TOUGH... REAL TOUGH.





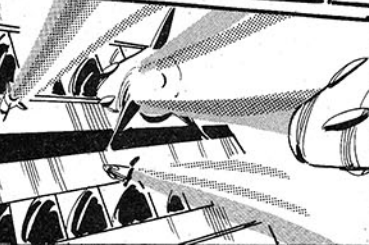
\*RUSSIAN FOR "DANCER."

I HURL MYSELF AT ANY TARGET THE STATE SELECTS-- WITHOUT THOUGHT OR QUESTION.



AND WITH THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON.

I TURN THIS DANCE-- WITH ITS UNLIMITED POTENTIAL FOR GRACE AND BEAUTY-- INTO A BALLET OF BLOOD AND FIRE.



WHY DO I CONTINUE?

HAVE I TRAINED SO LONG AND SO WELL THAT LIFE... DEATH... NO LONGER HOLD ANY MEANING?

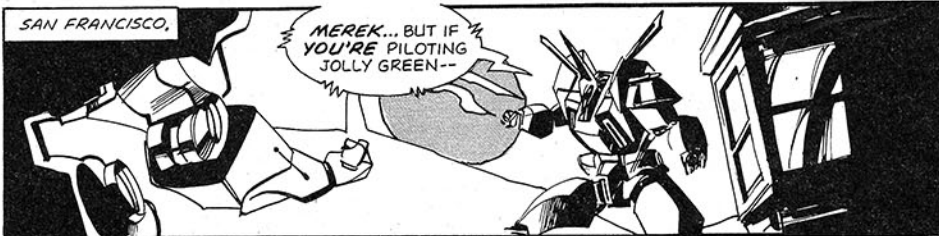
ALL I EVER WANTED WAS THE FREEDOM I ONCE FOUND IN DANCE. INSTEAD I FIND MYSELF IN LOCK-STEP WITH THE DEVIL.

I WONDER, THE AMERICAN PILOT-- THE ONE WHOSE MUTINY ALLOWED MY COUNTRY THIS OPENING-- IS IT POSSIBLE THAT ALL HE DESIRES IS THE SAME FREEDOM I SEEK?

AND IF SO, CAN I MATCH HIS COURAGE? DO I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO CREATE MY OWN DESTINY?

SAN FRANCISCO.

MEREK... BUT IF YOU'RE PILOTING JOLLY GREEN--



THEN KEENE IS--

YOU BASTARD!

ME? YOU'RE THE ONE TO BLAME, HYER.

KEENE WAS A GOOD SOLDIER UNTIL YOU STARTED PUMPING HIS HEAD FULL OF QUESTIONS-- YOU UNDERMINED EVERYTHING HE BELIEVED IN!

--DEAD.

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEENE'S DEATH IS ON YOUR HEAD, HYER--

KWANG

AND YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR IT!





UGGNNH!

YOU KILLED KEENE, AND I'M TO BLAME?

IT WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME IF YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVED THAT.

FAK  
FAK  
FAK

HYER!

P-TANG  
P-TANG  
P-TANG

ARRGH!  
DAMN YOU!

BUT FRANKLY, I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE A LEG TO STAND ON!



ALL RIGHT, HYER! YOU WANTED THIS MAN-TO-MAN? WELL, YOU'VE GOT IT! BUT THIS ISN'T OVER-- NOT BY A LONG SHOT!



BELIEVE IT, YOU OLD BASTARD.



WHICH WAY DID HE GO?

HYER! ARE YOU OKAY? I THOUGHT THAT OLD GUY WAS GONNA--



WHICH WAY DID HE GO, TERRY?

Huh? Uh, DOWN ONE OF THOSE ALLEYS I GUESS. ARE YOU ALL RI--



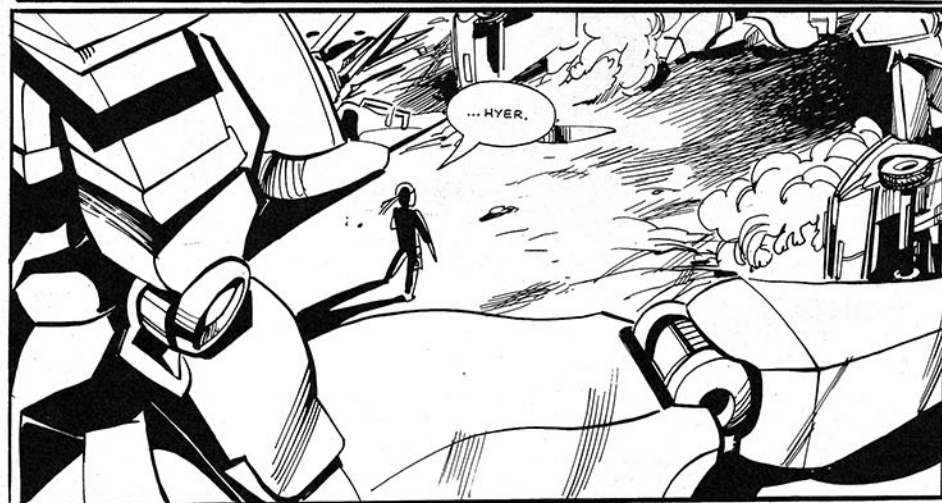
DAMN YOU, MAIDEN, DAMN YOU, AND ALL THE REST. WHY'D IT HAVE TO BE KEENE?

HYER...?



I'M GONNA KILL 'IM.

HYER!



...HYER.



DEEPHOLD. SOMEWHERE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN GONE, WORELY?

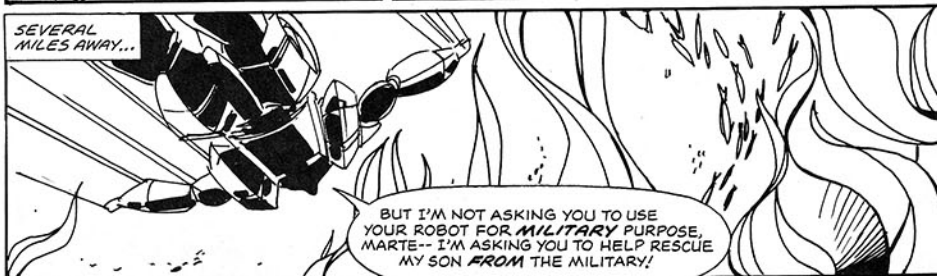
'BOUT FORTY MINUTES.



I WONDER IF JACK'S HAVING ANY LUCK WITH PROFESSOR BJORNSETH?

THE PROFESSOR CAN'T BE ANY HARDER TO CONVINCE THAN HER CREW HERE!

SURE HE IS, CHANG--



SEVERAL MILES AWAY...

BUT I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO USE YOUR ROBOT FOR *MILITARY* PURPOSE, MARTE-- I'M ASKING YOU TO HELP RESCUE MY SON *FROM* THE MILITARY!



WELL...

LOOK, I'M NOT GIVING UP ON TERRY. BUT THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY. WHY DON'T YOU RELAX FOR AWHILE? LET ME SHOW YOU A *FREE* WORLD THAT'S VIRTUALLY *FREE* FROM MANKIND'S INTERFERENCE AND CRUELTY.

I'VE ALREADY GIVEN YOU MY ANSWER, JACK. I'VE VOWED NEVER TO INVOLVE *MANTA* IN ANY ACTION THAT MIGHT RESULT IN DEATH. CAN YOU GUARANTEE THAT RESCUE ATTEMPT YOU'RE PROPOSING WOULD BE *FREE* OF THAT RISK?



LOOK, JACK! IT'S GERTA!

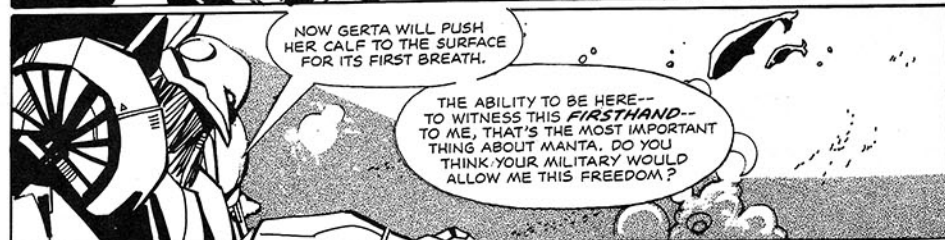
GERTA?

GERTA'S A GREY WHALE... I'VE BEEN PLAYING HER OWN SONGS BACK TO HER FOR WEEKS, TRYING TO WIN HER CONFIDENCE. LOOK! SHE'S GIVING BIRTH!



AMAZING, ISN'T IT?

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT...



NOW GERTA WILL PUSH HER CALF TO THE SURFACE FOR ITS FIRST BREATH.

THE ABILITY TO BE HERE-- TO WITNESS THIS *FIRSTHAND*-- TO ME, THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT MANTA. DO YOU THINK YOUR MILITARY WOULD ALLOW ME THIS FREEDOM?



SO WHAT YOU'RE *REALLY* SAYING IS THAT YOU'RE AFRAID TO RISK GIVING UP YOUR OWN FREEDOM IN ORDER TO HELP MY SON?

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT. I TOLD YOU-- IT'S THE *VIOLENCE* THAT I'M OPPOSED TO--

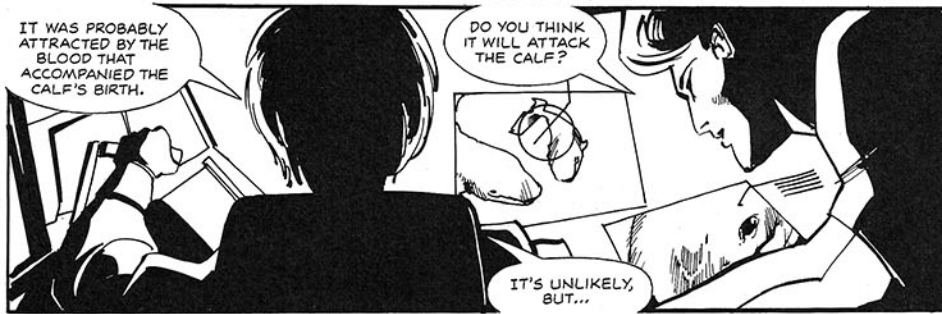
Huh? WHAT'S THAT?





SOMETHING *BIG*...  
COMING UP BEHIND US.

IT'S A GREAT  
WHITE. ONE OF THE  
BIGGEST I'VE EVER  
SEEN...



IT WAS PROBABLY  
ATTRACTED BY THE  
BLOOD THAT  
ACCOMPANIED THE  
CALF'S BIRTH.

DO YOU THINK  
IT WILL ATTACK  
THE CALF?

IT'S UNLIKELY,  
BUT...



NO! IT'S  
GOING AFTER  
THE CALF?

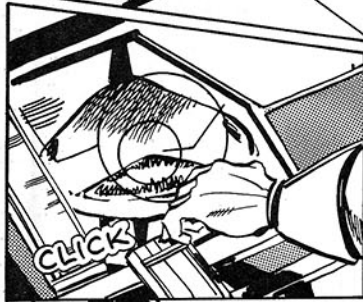


THAT'S IT,  
GERTA! PROTECT  
YOUR BABY!



IT'S NO USE.  
THE SHARK'S TOO  
FAST, FOR GERTA.

SHE CAN'T STAY  
BETWEEN IT AND  
HER CALF.



CLICKS



SSSSSS



SO MUCH  
FOR "A WORLD  
FREE FROM  
MANKIND'S  
INTERFERENCE!"



THIS WAS DIFFERENT.  
THE CALF WAS SO HELPLESS...  
I WAS THE *ONLY* ONE  
WHO COULD SAVE IT!

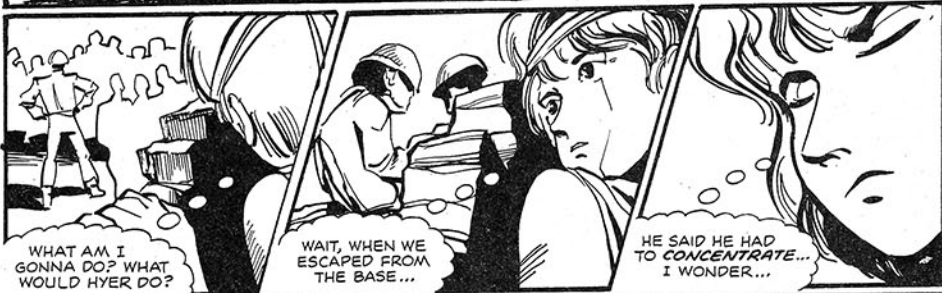
MY POINT  
EXACTLY.



MEANWHILE...

REMEMBER, THIS IS A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY! YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A TWELVE YEAR-OLD KID IN SHORTS, AND A LONG-HAIRED GUY IN A FANCY PILOT'S OUTFIT.

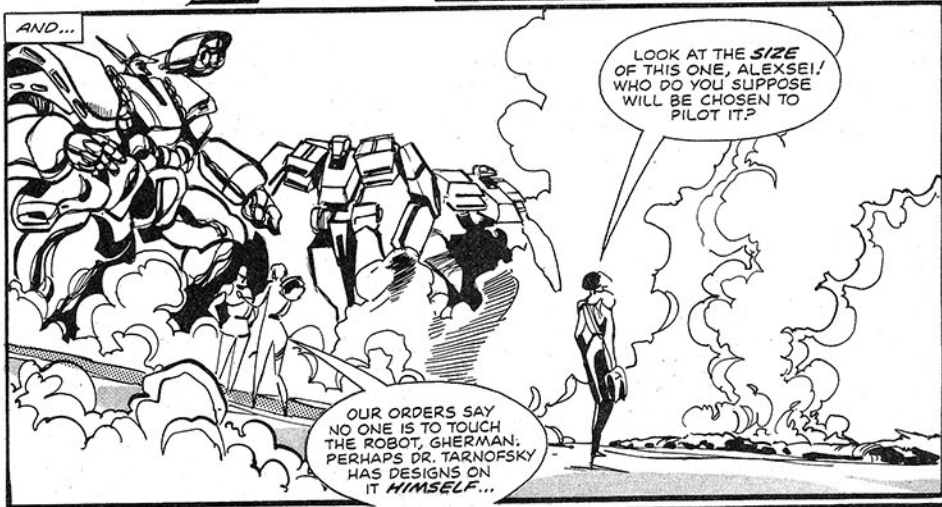
EVERYONE'S AFTER US!



WHAT AM I GONNA DO? WHAT WOULD HYER DO?

WAIT, WHEN WE ESCAPED FROM THE BASE...

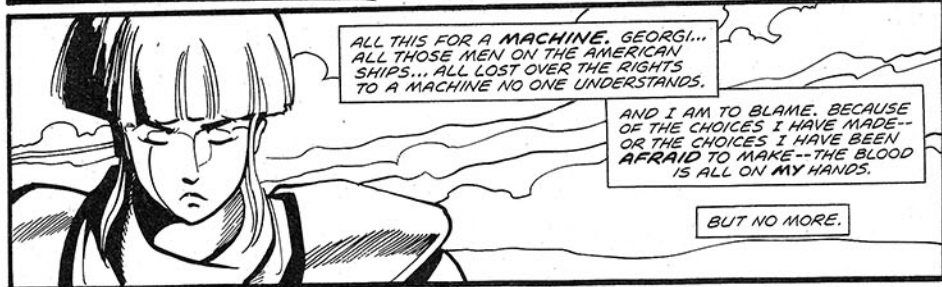
HE SAID HE HAD TO CONCENTRATE... I WONDER...



AND...

LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS ONE, ALEXSEI! WHO DO YOU SUPPOSE WILL BE CHOSEN TO PILOT IT?

OUR ORDERS SAY NO ONE IS TO TOUCH THE ROBOT, GHERMAN. PERHAPS DR. TARNOFSKY HAS DESIGNS ON IT HIMSELF...



ALL THIS FOR A MACHINE. GEORGI... ALL THOSE MEN ON THE AMERICAN SHIPS... ALL LOST OVER THE RIGHTS TO A MACHINE NO ONE UNDERSTANDS.

AND I AM TO BLAME. BECAUSE OF THE CHOICES I HAVE MADE-- OR THE CHOICES I HAVE BEEN AFRAID TO MAKE--THE BLOOD IS ALL ON MY HANDS.

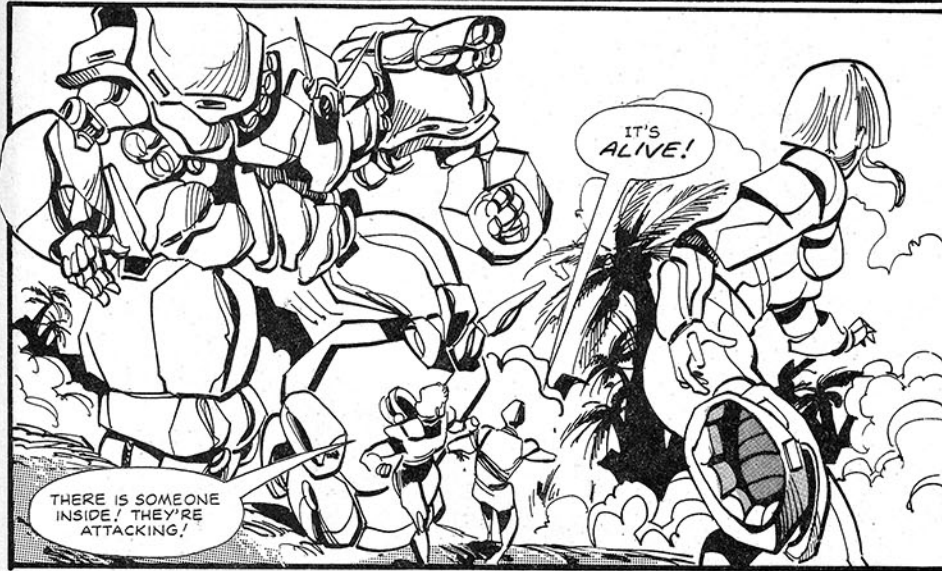
BUT NO MORE.



STARTING NOW I WILL NO LONGER--

Huh?

WHA--? HELP!



IT'S ALIVE!

THERE IS SOMEONE INSIDE! THEY'RE ATTACKING!

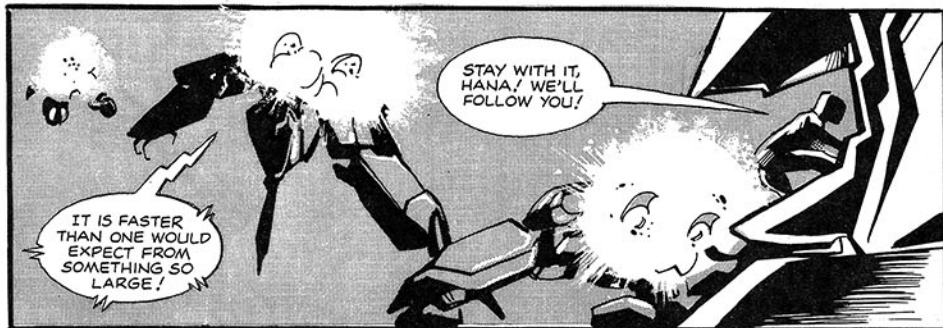


WE MUST NOT LET IT ESCAPE!

NO!

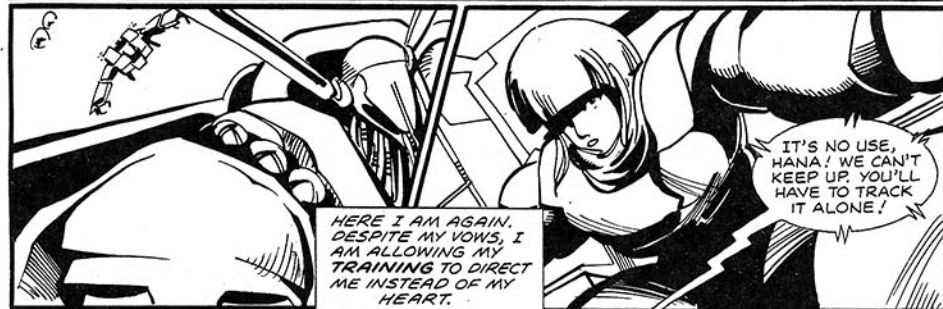
IT IS PREPARING FOR TAKE OFF! GET TO YOUR UNITS--

ROOAAAAR



STAY WITH IT, HANA! WE'LL FOLLOW YOU!

IT IS FASTER THAN ONE WOULD EXPECT FROM SOMETHING SO LARGE!

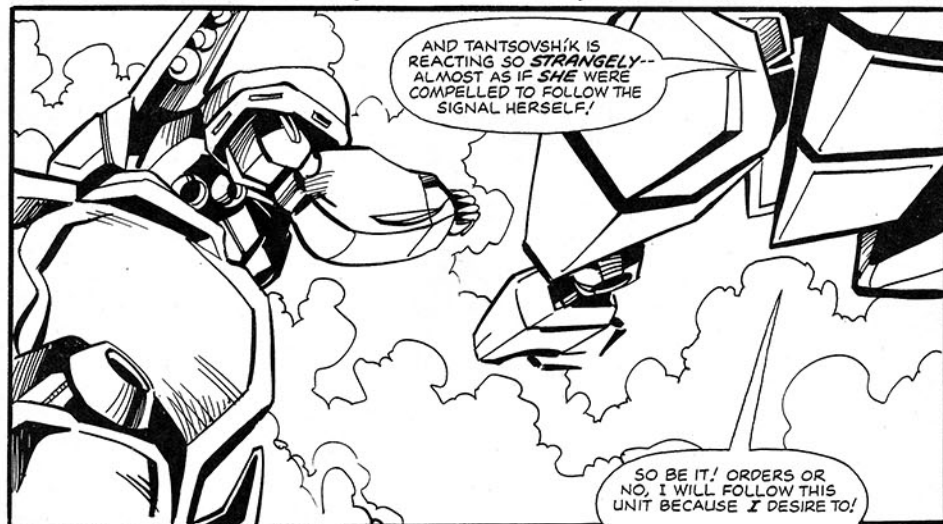


HERE I AM AGAIN, DESPITE MY VOWS, I AM ALLOWING MY TRAINING TO DIRECT ME INSTEAD OF MY HEART.

IT'S NO USE, HANA! WE CAN'T KEEP UP YOU'LL HAVE TO TRACK IT ALONE!

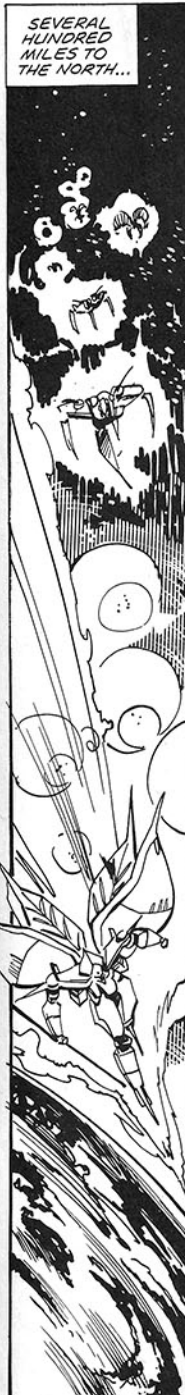


eh? WHAT? IT IS THE SAME SIGNAL I MONITORED FIVE DAYS AGO-- THE ONE THAT LED US AND THE AMERICANS TO THE ISLAND IN THE FIRST PLACE!

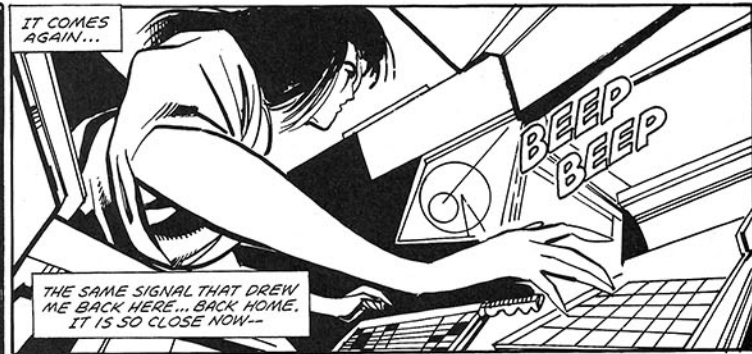


AND TANTSOVSH'IK IS REACTING SO STRANGELY-- ALMOST AS IF SHE WERE COMPELLED TO FOLLOW THE SIGNAL HERSELF!

SO BE IT! ORDERS OR NO, I WILL FOLLOW THIS UNIT BECAUSE I DESIRE TO!

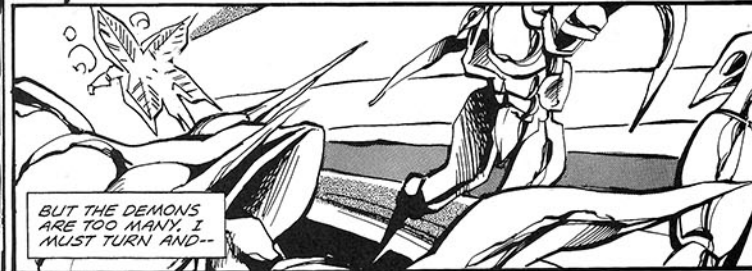


SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES TO THE NORTH...

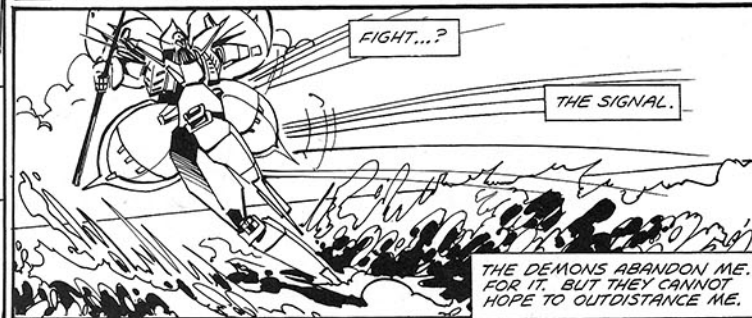


IT COMES AGAIN...

THE SAME SIGNAL THAT DREW ME BACK HERE... BACK HOME. IT IS SO CLOSE NOW--



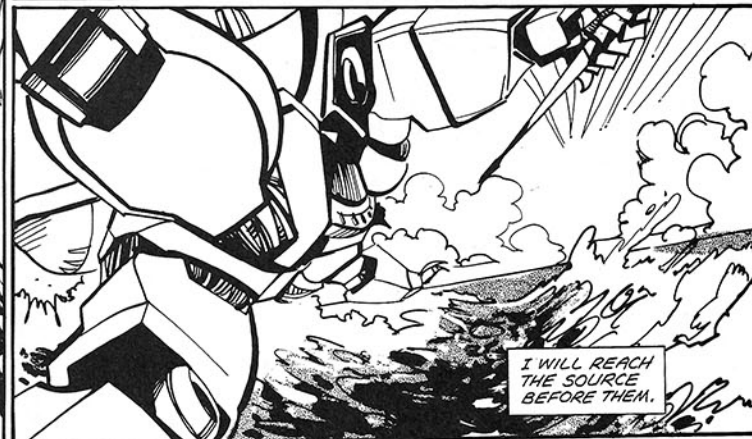
BUT THE DEMONS ARE TOO MANY, I MUST TURN AND--



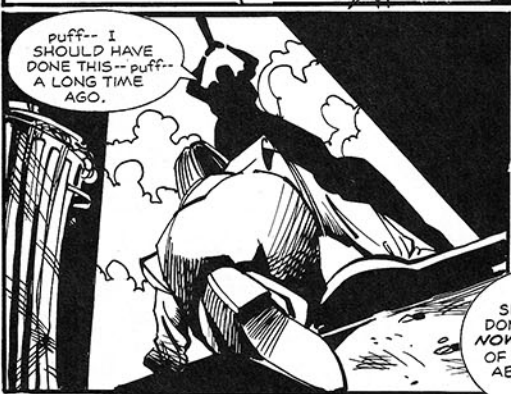
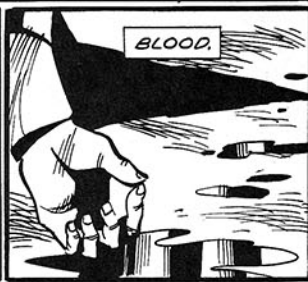
FIGHT...?

THE SIGNAL.

THE DEMONS ABANDON ME FOR IT, BUT THEY CANNOT HOPE TO OUTDISTANCE ME.



I WILL REACH THE SOURCE BEFORE THEM.



# Random Data

Send your comments c/o Dark Horse Comics, 2008 Monroe, Milwaukie, OR 97222

Well, here we are again. As you can see by the new title at the top of this page, we have a new name for this letter column, and it's time to announce the winner of our contest that was begun way back in issue #2 (nearly a year ago!). Our winner, who will receive the wonderful prize we offered (Just what was the prize? Anyone remember?) is Douglas Lent of Wareham, Massachusetts! Congratulations, Doug! The rest of you who entered, but didn't win can take comfort, however. Douglas' winning entry has only one more issue to reign before the Mecha saga comes to a close. Yes, sadly, Mecha will end next issue. Not officially cancelled, mind you, just on hiatus until we can think of new horrors to subject our cast of characters to—and new ways to get more of you to purchase the book. Truth to tell, Mecha generates more mail and fan response than its print run warrants, and Harrison and I want to thank all of you for your support. I've said it before—you Mecha fans are a loyal and vocal bunch. We salute you.

Dear Mecha People,

Just a short letter to say congratulations on what has to be one of the most intelligent and original of the "giant robot" genre books in the American market. The mecha are interesting and well-designed, but not direct rip-offs of any anime shows I am aware of. Well done, Harrison!

The move to black-and-white will not upset me too much. The art is generally clean enough, but in some panels the art does not always show the events the dialogue seems to indicate. Issue #3 seemed to need color, but I suspect that future issues will do just fine without it.

One feature I'd like to see return is the description of the capabilities of the various mecha, preferably in the pilot's own words. Maybe if there isn't room enough for it in the regular book you could do an Annual and recap the various mecha that appeared in the past year as a back-up feature.

I can't figure Colonel Merek's logic in waxing Keene and

taking "Unit 2" to go after Hyer and Terry. The best outcome he can hope for is to cripple Iron Maiden—more likely destroy it—and risk losing America's remaining mecha in the process. Merek has zero practical experience, whereas Hyer has had his mecha for at least two years and knows more about the capabilities than anyone else seems to. I think Merek secretly envies the pilots and decided to take Keene's for his won. Scuttlebutt gets around in the military, and Keene's buddies are gonna be waiting to return the favor to Merek. Not to mention the certain Court of Inquiry and probable Court Martial that ought to come up as a reaction by Merek's superiors. Colonels can't make decisions like that. Disobedience of an order to kill a child and a civilian (or fellow soldier) is within all soldier's rights. I look forward to future events on this subject.

Make mine Mecha!

Mark A. Faulkner  
Texas

*Mecha readers are not only loyal, but smart, too! You were the first (but by no means last), Mark, to pick up on the fact that Merek had offed Keene back in issue #3. Wrong (and illegal) as Merek's actions may have been, however, he made his decision in a moment of crisis and made the choice he thought was best for his country. And, you must admit, it's pretty difficult for Keene to protest his treatment now that he's dead. Perhaps Merek does secretly envy the mecha pilots, and perhaps he will suffer the censure of his superiors and fellow officers, but I think he made his decision based on the most expedient means of preventing a "mecha gap" with the Soviets—consequences be damned. Strangely enough, Merek's action caught even me by surprise. Originally I'd planned for both Merek and Keene to be continuing characters in the story, but when it came time to script issue #3 I took one look at Merek's face and knew that he wasn't going to put up with any hesitation on Keene's part. And*

*you thought this was only a comic book.*

Dear Randy,

I just finished reading *Mecha* #4, and I have two problems with it.

1) I liked it better in color. When it was in color, the story was easier to follow and color adds a lot to the action of the story. Color is just better than black-and-white for this comic, so please bring it back, even if you have to go bi-monthly again.

2) Who's flying Jolly Green (Unit One)?! You killed Keene in #4 (actually, he met his end, albeit off-panel, in #3—Randy), but left a black hole. Some of my friends that read *Mecha* think that someone not introduced in earlier issues is flying it, but most of us think that Merek is the new pilot. Who's right?

Otherwise, last issue was pretty good. But get Terry back to his mecha. And where is the suicidal Japanese girl? Sincerely,

Fred Rotinski  
Vancouver, WA

*Well, by now you know the answers to just about everything, don't you Fred? Color, at least for the remaining issue of Mecha, is out of the question. I agree with you that this book looks better in color, but our budget thinks it looks better in black-and-white. You also know now that you were right about Merek taking over the controls of Jolly Green (Did someone really think I resort to having it be a character that hadn't previously been introduced? Thanks for the vote of confidence, buddy!). Well, other than that, I hope you're happy, Fred. Terry's back with his mecha, and as for the "suicidal Japanese girl," read on...*

Dear Randy and Harrison,

I picked up the second issue of *Mecha* in October (?) and quickly hunted down a copy of the first. I was amazed by the unbelievable clarity of the colors, the raw, yet attractive quality of Mr. Fong's work, and the inking. I waited for a month, then two, and suddenly, after what seemed like an eternity,

*Mecha* #3 was here!

Now for some comments and questions on the story so far:

1) Is the pilot of the space-faring mecha (first seen in issue #2) the Japanese woman who attempted suicide? The pilot's thought patterns seem to point to her—poetic, self-reflective, and remembering a time when she (or he) tried to escape destiny.

2) It seems to me that Professor Bjornseth happened upon that underwater structure when she lost contact with her crew on the ship (issue #1). The "mecha bonding" must have happened inside. Is her base the source of the mecha (a long-downed ship or something)?

3) I'm glad you didn't kill off Terry's parents; the vengeful orphan has been so overdone that there isn't much more you can get from it. Besides, it would make a much better story if he had to deal with the responsible protection of his parents and friends rather than simply cope with their deaths.

4) Just what abilities does the man/machine link provide? Hyer seems to have external control over Iron Maiden. Hana Rezkova seems to be able to open up the engine housings and weapons of her mecha (How else can the Russians be building duplicates?), and the exclusive acceptance of a single pilot seems to appear to be a common trait to all of them.

5) Keene doesn't seem to be the "Let's kill anyone we find inconvenient" type, so did Merek kill him and take his mecha, or is he planning a double cross? Keene doesn't seem to know the abilities of his own mecha. Is he holding back some information like Hyer did? I'd hate to think he just took Hyer's word for granted. He may have a stupid haircut, but he struck me as an intelligent man.

The story is unfolding at a tantalizing (almost painful) rate, however, I'm concerned. What's going to happen when there aren't anymore big secrets to keep the readers enthralled? You might want to hold out a biggie to be the capstone of the series.

Also, the black-and-white format is fine as far as I'm concerned. My only complaint is that it makes the mecha a little harder to define visually.

However, all the mecha together, each a different color, could be a little obnoxious.

Finally, I really like the way the robots have been presented. You have managed to achieve a fine balance of plot elements and characters. Though the mecha are unique and powerful, they are still just machines—never more than an extension of the pilot. I'd appreciate it if you brought back the mecha descriptions in the back of the book, but not if they'd give us too much information prematurely. I hope that you'll consider making a graphic novel out of *Mecha* because I can't keep an issue in mint condition. Thanks for three issues of sheer brilliance (well worth the seven month wait, I should add) and for making *Mecha* monthly.

Emery E. Calame  
Austin, TX

*You know, Production Manager Chris Chalener noted that the people who write to Mecha ask a lot of questions—and like to number their questions. Yeah, so?*

Anyway, to answer your questions, Emery:

1) Yes, now it can be told. The pilot of the space-going mecha is indeed the "suicidal Japanese girl." Harrison and I had big plans for her. What will happen now? We shall see...

2) It's always been my feeling that Marte Bjornseth linked up with her mecha, Manta, first and then discovered the "underwater structure" during one of her dives in Manta. But, hey, it all happened off-panel in issue #1, so I can't be sure. Can you?

3) Kill Terry's parents? I guarantee that is absolutely the last thing I'd ever think of doing. Of course, Keene was going to be a major continuing character too...

4) The limits of a pilot's control over his or her mecha is limited to how willing the pilot is to open his or her mind to the automatic input from the mecha. But, as I think became apparent last issue, Hana Rezkova doesn't have the ability to "open her engine housings." The "duplicates" the Soviets are producing, while sophisticated by Earthly standards, are far inferior to the "real" mecha.

5) Keene, as you now know, never got the chance to double cross Merek. As for Keene's control over his mecha, perhaps he did simply take Hyer's

Last Fall,  
**ALAN MOORE**  
was asked,  
"...is there work out  
there that you *have*  
to have?"

He mentioned  
*Love & Rockets,*  
*Neat Stuff, Wierdo,*  
*Marshal Law,*  
*Journey* and

PAUL CHADWICK'S  
*Concrete*

Here's what he said:

"Getting closer to the mainstream super-hero market, I think that Paul Chadwick's *Concrete* is certainly one to watch. It's a wonder, a really nice, charming little story. Some of the episodes, hardly anything happens. There's not any of the same sense of inflated melodrama that typifies so much of the medium, just really nice little stories that make you feel good."\*

Thanks, Alan!

\*Comics Buyer's Guide  
May 6, 1988

I HAD TO  
GLUE IT ON!





# ROACHMILL #3

To save a beautiful exotic dancer from the clutches of a vicious mutant biker gang, Roachmill must enter the most dangerous region in the world—New York's Central Park!

Roachmill's only companion: His arch-rival Zoolou!



Roachmill © 1988 Rich Hedden & Tom McWeeney

word for the limits of the the mecha. Being a by-the-book kind of guy, why wouldn't he? After all, Hyer more or less "wrote the book" on mecha control and handling. How was Keene to know that Hyer was less than honest in his revelations?

Dear Mecha Team,

I just started my *Mecha* collection with Issue #4, and I thought it was great. I'm a big Japanimation fan and love robots. Everything about this comic is great. The mecha designs by Harrison are absolutely marvelous. Give that man a cigar!

One more thing: Could you please print my full address? I'm looking for a pen pal who is interested in *Mecha*, Japanimation and comic books.

Thanks, and send me the bill for the cigar (just kidding).

Eddie Welch  
1529 West Pampa  
Mesa, AZ 85202

Happy to oblige, Eddle. As a matter of fact, anyone else who'd like to receive mail from other *Mecha* and/or Japanimation fans—this is your chance. Next Issue I'll run the full address of all who request it so that you readers can keep in touch even after *Mecha* is just a memory. Who knows, maybe if enough of you band together and form a fan club...

Dear Mecha,

Hey! Somebody sucked all of the color out of my *Mecha* comic! C'mon, Randy, I'd rather have it in color, even if it had to go back to bi-monthly, because everything else (even some of the ads) between the covers is fantastic! I believe your observation that, "Good black-and-white comics do sell," is very true, but color is an improvement to any comic.

Robert Caracol's inks were pretty good; I think he's a lot better on machinery than on people, much different that most artists. Harrison's mecha designs are simply a wonder to behold! It's so rare to see a robot that looks like someone put some thought into it.

For me, however, the plot is really the thing that keeps me glued to the set. Thanks for not talking down to me and explaining why whoever is doing whatever; I'll figure it out.

The mysterious "enemy" is vaguely reminiscent of the *Dynamo Joe* story, except they look a little more interesting. I hope you do zillions of issues—every one of them as good as the first four have been.

Tell you what: If you make it to #100, I'll buy two copies. Motivating, huh?

Tiamat Kam'en'ehar  
Portland, OR

So that's how we get our circulation back up, eh? Okay, you heard it here first: Next Issue will be Issue #100! Everyone buy two copies! If only all of our problems could be solved so easily. Thanks for the comments on the story, Tiamat. Personally, nothing irritates me more than having the feeling of being "talked down to"—whether it be in a comic, a book, a TV show or a film. I like to be given credit for whatever brains I have, and I'm glad to see others feel the same way. I guess the only thing in your letter I disagree with is the statement that "color is an improvement to any comic." Take a look at Mark A. Nelson's work on *Allens* (you just knew I'd work a plug into this letcol somewhere, didn't you?). Would color really be an improvement? If the art is drawn for black-and-white, color is more likely to interfere with the work than enhance it.

Hey, Randy—

I just picked up a copy of *Mecha* #4, and I enjoyed it. So much, in fact, that I now have to try and scout out the first three issues to add to my collection.

This is indeed a Pyrrhic victory.

Unless, of course, you'd be so amazingly kind as to send them to me at no charge.

Elvis Orten  
Dawson Springs, KY

Sure thing, Elvis. You bet. Right away. Yes, sir. What was that I was just saying about being given credit for whatever brains I have?

**Next Issue:** The world is on the brink of all-out nuclear war, the mecha have disappeared, Terry is trapped inside a computer induced nightmare, Merek makes a decision, so does Jack Pierce, and this storyline concludes! Whew!

—Randy