

## Transformers: The Stargate Battles, Part 1 of 4

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"Transformers: The Stargate Battles, Part 1 of 4"

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Source: Super Robot Magazine, April 2003

Note: This manga reads Right to Left.

### Hydra's comments

At last, I've been able to translate what I feel to be one of the highlights of Japanese Transformers fiction, a forgotten tale created by a manga artist who continues to have a strong relationship with Transformers to this day.

Many fans came to know Naoto Tsushima's work through the comics he currently writes/illustrates for the Henkei toys. He also did similar work on the Robot Masters line, but the first contact he had with Transformers was in fact this series, The Stargate Battles. Unlike his later toy-related works, this series was intended as a yet-untold part of the G1 story, and thus not constrained by any current toy line. From his toy comics and current serialization in Comic Bun Bun, many fans may have gained the impression that Tsushima only draws kid-centric character properties, and couldn't pull his weight in a serious story. This adult-oriented series from 2003, however, shows just how far that is from the truth.

Right from the get go, Tsushima shows that he's writing the series for adult fans. We have real science-fiction, international intrigue, and a sense of the fragility of human life in comparison to robot life forms. Tsushima's work is really cut out for him in properly depicting a point of time in the largely untouched 20 year span of 1986-2006, but as far as I'm concerned he succeeds tremendously. Without bursting into the futuristic world of the movie, the Trigger shows the progression of human technology with the cooperation of the Cybertrons. Tsushima also shows that he knows his stuff with his liberal use of characters, as more minor players like Cosmos and Reflector make appearances, while 2nd season additions like the coneheads and Omega Supreme are also visible.

Probably the one thing that has not been touched by any other Transformers fiction is the heavy international perspective, with other countries apparently resenting America's relationship with the Transformers. With lines bearing America for monopolizing the world's resources, this does certainly seem like it could have taken place in the late 90's. The traitorous Trov is also an interesting character, as although not explicitly stated we can assume he is meant to be an agent of the U.S.S.R., which is shown to exist as a major international power well into the 21st century of the Transformers world. It's possible that labelling him a Soviet would have been a little insensitive (look at the controversy over Indy Jones and the Crystal Skull), but being that "Trov" is probably some iteration of the Russian name "Petrov," his nationality seems to be a foregone conclusion.

Although Tsushima's art style has improved markedly since this story was published, he can be said to have a very distinct, almost human-like style of drawing robots that may or may not suit the personal tastes of fans. To be sure, there's something almost similar to Andrew Wildman's art in terms of the strongly expressive faces he draws. His storytelling is quite sophisticated, employing various twists and turns to make the considerable length of 50 pages just fly by. The real misgiving I have about the story is that it didn't continue longer, wrapping up after 4 installments due to the cancellation of the magazine it ran in, Super Robot Magazine. SRM was actually a great magazine that received positive response from fans, but its bimonthly release scheme was unusual and its content may have been before its time with the primary focus on classics series such as TF. The story managed to conclude in a satisfying ark, but if there had been a longer series continued it's possible we would have seen a lead-in to the Scramble City era, or perhaps the origins of the movie Transformers, who continuity-wise appear abruptly one decade later. As unfortunate as this may be, the complete four issue ark with between 40 and 50 pages per issue is still plenty of G1 goodness for fans to sink their teeth into.

TF Pulp will be translating the series in its entirety over the course of 2 months, with new issues posted on the 15th and 30th of each month until completion.