

Transformers Series Update  
February 7, 1985

To: G.I. Joe Writers and others:  
From: Flint

As you all know, we are looking for more scripts for Transformers. As of this writing, there are about twenty- five shows left \$3,500 apiece. Thus, there is plenty of work for everybody.

The script procedure is something like this: premises etc. should be submitted to Bryce Malek or Dick Robbins at Marvel 1(818)988-8300 1(818)988-8300, but if you want a free, advance opinion, send them to me.

We are figuring on a total throughput time of about thirty days. It breaks down something like this: 8 days for the premise to be written and approved. 5 days to write an outline (outlines for this series should run about 10-12 pages, 3 days for approval and notes on outline, 5 days to write the outline, 3 days for approval on the outline and 10 days to write the script (scripts for this series run slightly shorter than Joe scripts (around 45 pages). To get a sample, please contact Bryce of Hildy) add four days for the final edit, and we have a total of 30 working days.

However, this is not intended to slow you down. If you work quickly, please do so as long as you do not sacrifice quality.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES & ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS\*

Q: Why do transformers transform?

A: Two reasons, disguise and to gain the powers of their other form. Their Earthly forms (i.e. Car, Jet fighter, tape recorder) can be used to fool either other transformers, or humans or both. Cleverly used, this can add humor and suspense to scripts.

We should be careful to utilize the advantage of Earthly forms when they transform. (i.e. A deception in jet fighter mode should fly faster than in his other mode, and the faster the real-life plane, the faster the transformer should be able to fly).

Q: Who flies and who doesn't?

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A: All Decepticons, no matter what their mode, fly. No Autobots, with the exception of those who have flying modes (i.e. Powerglide, Cosmos and Jetfire) fly. This should be rigidly adhered to, despite what you might have seen in the mini-series.

Autobots, on occasion, may strap on jet packs, or hoverfoils (for over water) for a limited period of time, but these are **slow** and **vulnerable** to Decepticon attack.

Q: How many characters do we need to use per episode?

A: Each episode comes with certain required characters. There is a list of these at the end of the New Products Addendum. Other than that, figure on featuring 3 or 4 Decepticons and the same number of Autobots., though for battle scenes or other action that takes more characters, feel free to include them.

Q: What are they fighting for? What does each side want?

A: The Decepticons want to consolidate control over Cybertron and then conquer the universe. In order to retake Cybertron, they must gain energy to get the mechanical planet working again. That is why they are on Earth. They realize that sooner or later, they must destroy the Autobots, and will gleefully do so at the first opportunity.

The Autobots either want to convert the Decepticons to the cause of good, or destroy them. Also, due to their intrinsic goodness, they defend Earth and Earth's resources.

It should be noted here that several of the individual characters may have slightly different motives than the group. Check the bible.

Q: How vulnerable are the robots?

A: Some are more vulnerable than others, but basically, we should think of them as 5 or ten times stronger than an armored Earth counterpart of the same size. For example, a normal laser blast probably wouldn't do much to one of them, other than aggravate him, but a sidewinder missile would definitely ruin their day, causing a big dent or internal damage. There are no nukes in this show, but if there were, a nuke would certainly destroy any of them.

Showing damage is a tricky business. Though there have been scenes of dismemberment and decapitation, we should be careful.<sup>1</sup> Have all of the dents you want, but be careful of showing pain. One of the tricky things about this show is playing these characters as human-like AND yet keeping alive the fact that they are robots. Sparks, smoke etc., are all acceptable.

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, I know they are robots, but still they are thought of as humans.

Incidental robots can be destroyed at will as long as they are not represented as sentient beings. As a rule of thumb, think of it this way: if the character talks, don't kill him.

Damage done to a robot in robot mode should show up in the transformed mode. I.E. if you dent a car character's bumper, it should show up in the robot's leg (or wherever). This stuff can be played for laughs.

Q: What are energon cubes, and how do they work?

A: Energon cubes are compressed energy. All you do is insert any kind of energy, from gasoline to raw electricity and PRESTO! It becomes a teeming mass of glowing energy.

Q: What if the transformers run out of energy?

A: When any transformer runs out of energy, life becomes sloppy fast. First, we should show that he is running low (a device in the show will be invented to do this), Second, he should not be able to use his gun. Third, he should not be able to transform. Fourth, he should not be able to walk and finally, he should not be able to talk. At this point, it is threatening to his life essence and other characters should be very concerned.

Q: Where should the stories take place?

A: Presently, most of the stories are set on Earth. This need not always be the case, but some consideration of the human characters should be taken when they have far-off adventures.

Cybertron has not been fully developed, but you should think of it as a wholly technological (mechanical) planet that may have started out as a space station eons ago, but has grown from the center out. Therefore, the deeper you go into the planet, the older things get. At the moment, the planet is largely inert, due to lack of energy. However, that does not mean that everything on the planet is dead, rather it is like your phone machine or VCR, if accessed, old defense systems or lights may work.

Transformers move from Earth to Cybertron via space bridges. There is only one of these, it is controlled by the Decepticons, and moving back and forth is difficult and dangerous. It only works on certain occasions.<sup>3</sup> Think of them like the "beaming platforms" in Star Trek.

On Earth, the Autobots are headquartered inside (under) a dormant volcano and the Decepticons have an undersea base. Do not let this stop you, from creating other, temporary bases. For instance, some Autobots may use a used car lot as a secret base, and Decepticons might have secret hangars or small air bases to stage their operations.

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<sup>3</sup> When the plot calls for it.

Transformers do not simply fly around in space, though it is assumed that they can exist, quite comfortably without atmosphere. Due to the admission of new characters COSMOS and ASTROTRAIN, both the Autobots and Decepticons have space travel abilities. Use space sparingly, as the series should be grounded on Earth. However, if you want to run a parallel plot where one group (or Autobots AND Decepticons) is in deep space and another is on Earth do so. Also, it is possible to have part of the episode take place on a distant planet. In short, if you want to do an episode on a distant planet, fine, but we should find an interesting reason for them to go there, and begin and end the episode on Earth.

Use interesting locations on Earth. Though it has been expressed that we avoid staging battles in major population centers<sup>4</sup>, feel free to take them anywhere you want to take them. I have a personal bias against deserts, as they have spent quite enough time in deserts, and the terrain is boring.

#### PITFALLS AND OTHER THINGS TO AVOID:

##### AVOID THE FOLLOWING:

- "We've beaten the Decepticons this time, but they'll be back" endings.
- Laughing Dissolves
- "Simulated humor"
- Insult fight scenes ("Your mother wears proton boots").
- Robots standing around talking (give them business).
- Characters talking to themselves. This is unhealthy behavior.
- Any other stock Saturday Morning Conventions.

#### BATTLES

Battles should have the following characteristics.

- 1) Both sides should have a concrete reason for fighting.
- 2) They should be tactically and strategically correct. I.E. We should know who is where, when and fighting whom.
- 3) They should be destructive. (Note: I'm about as socially irresponsible as they come, but even I draw the line at representing combat as a fun thing where nobody gets hurt).
- 4) Win, lose or draw, we should know the outcome, and the reasons for it should be clear. (i.e. We shouldn't have one side arbitrarily retreat. We should give them a reason.)

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<sup>4</sup> In general, be careful of human terror, i.e. masses of people screaming and running.

<sup>5</sup> Gordon Kent, 1981

5) Most of all, battles should be played as REAL (whatever that means).

### MISCELLANEOUS

The primary problem with this show is that there are so many characters and it is hard to tell them apart. No matter what we do, we are stuck with this problem, but there are ways to minimize it. Some of them are as follows.

Limit the number of characters in scripts and in scenes.

When dealing with a particularly confusing Transformers like the three identical planes, or twin cars, use the names in dialogue (as naturally as possible) and keep the relative scale of the characters in mind. In most cases the characters transform to a size proportional to what they are in real life. There are, however, notable exceptions to this (Megatron and Soundwave come to mind). Deal with this in a clever way.

Stories should have a clear sense of theme. Avoid preaching, but there should be a clear and apparent reason for telling the story. Unlike the early stories, these stories do not have to focus on energy, though the overall conflict between the Autobots and Decepticons should always be taken into account.

Wherever possible, let's get a sense of the personalities of the Transformers. We should have a sense of what they do when they're not out denting each other. We have already shown them playing basketball, and there should be more stuff like this. Decepticons basically don't care for humans, though occasionally they will employ thugs to do their bidding. Autobots, by and large, like humans and associate with them relatively freely.

Though we must keep Spike and Sparkplug around, we should always be on the lookout for interesting humans (and/or Aliens) to put into scripts. Likewise, we should have more women (frankly, recording sessions filled with men are a drag).

FINAL NOTE: Nothing in this letter or anywhere else is chiseled in stone. If you have a great idea that seems to run counter to one of these directives, let's hear it. Have fun, and call Bryce, Dick or myself if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Flint

## TRANSFORMER STORY IDEAS

As an extra-added bonus, I am including some Transformer story ideas. These are just jumping-off places. Do not feel compelled to use any of them, they are primarily just to give you some impression of what we are looking for. If you think of something better, by all means, let's hear it. If you want to use one of these, give Bryce or Dick a call to make sure that it hasn't already been taken. These are given out on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- 1) The Autobots and Decepticons arrive on a planet where they are worshipped as gods. The Autobots must decide how they are going to handle the situation, while the Decepticons try to take full advantage out of it. (BUZZ DIXON has staked his claim on this one).
- 2) The Autobots discover that some of their colleagues, who they believed were dead, are, in fact, in prison on Cybertron. Somehow, they have to bust into a transforming prison and get them out. This could be a good means of introducing some new characters. At the end of the episode, we can show them picking their Earth disguises. Anybody interested in doing this episode should talk to Bryce first.
- 3) Hoist is a pacifist. In one episode, he saves and repairs a Decepticon. Warpath objects, saying that no quarter should have been given to the enemy. The saved Decepticon (talk to Bryce about who it should be) returns the favor at the end of the episode.
- 4) The Decepticons use their enormous size to abuse humans, and then get a taste of their own medicine when they arrive on another planet where they are tiny and treated like toys by their gigantic masters. (note: treat them like toys, but do not call them toys.)
- 5) One of the Autobots runs out of power in Automobile mode and is stolen. The others have to get him back. (This assignment goes to the person who can best tell us what happens when you open the hood of a transforming car. I asked the producer about this and he informed me that he had never opened the hood of a transformer.)
- 6) Though some means, the Autobots and Decepticons are lead to believe that they are obsolete and must triumph over a new and possibly superior technology. (This is based on the proposition that the greatest abstract fear any piece of technology has is that of obsolescence)

- 7) CONNECTICUT YANKEE: Autobots and/or Decepticons travel back medieval Europe and think knights are robots. (Doug Booth has this one)
- 8) JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF CYBERTRON: The Autobots and Decepticons have to fight their way to the center of their own planet through a maze of primitive monsters to try and find the "original program" -- the machine that made all of them. (Typing this has kind of make me like it. I might write this one)
- 9) Decepticons re-program an auto factory to produce transforming models which they use to commit crimes and, thus discredit the Autobots.
- 10) A part of one of the robots is stolen and held for ransom.
- 11) Decepticons try to pick off the Autobots one at a time by creating transforming car washes, truck weighing stations, toll booths etc.
- 12: Decepticons rig the space bridge to shoot the Autobots to an unknown planet, and the stranded Autobots have to find their way home from deep space. This, of course, should be played off against a plot on Earth where stranded Autobots are desperately needed.

*HUMAN'S UPST.  
TRANSFORMING  
CARS FROM  
AN ALLIG  
RACE ARE  
PUTTING  
THEM OUT  
OF WORK*

Well, there are some ideas. As you might have noted, they are in different stages of development. Some of them might lead to whole episodes, some are just bits in an episode, others might not lead anywhere at all. They are simply intended to stimulate ideas.

Good luck. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Flint

*Hedy-Sunbow  
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