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WEB EXCLUSIVE: 'Real American Hero' not retired yet

Walt Kneeland

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Whether you're a fan of G.I. Joe or the Transformers, these series have something new to offer you, as both are updated from their '80s roots for 2005.

From 1982 to 1994, readers were able to follow the Marvel Comics adventures of a fictional military unit called G.I. Joe. The unit's primary purpose was to combat a terrorist organization known as Cobra, and the rivalry ran strong for 155 monthly installments. In 1994, the team was decommissioned in the final issue of that comic series.

In September 2001, a new company called Devil's Due Publishing reinstated the team in a new comic series. This new series picked up seven years after the Marvel series, reflecting the real-life seven-year gap in the characters' stories. Though more realistic and contemporary-minded, this series kept its focus on the ongoing G.I. Joe/Cobra rivalry.

That rivalry was radically altered when a new group calling itself the "Red Shadows" was introduced, laying waste to Cobra and G.I. Joe alike. When the dust settled, Cobra was a shadow of its former self, and with the reduced threat-level, the Joe team was cut from the usual large cast of regulars to a handful of active members.



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This summer, Devil's Due launched a brand-new G.I. Joe series that picks up with events one year after the final issue of the previous series. Diverging from the A Real American Hero moniker, the new series is billed as America's Elite, reflecting the fact that the new team is streamlined at about a dozen members strong, each an elite specialist in a given field.

The new series has all anyone needs to get into the story. Though the characters have histories going back to 1982, they serve only as additional detail that long-time readers can appreciate, providing further depth to the characters in the new series.

Another '80s property often recalled along with G.I. Joe is Transformers. Like G.I. Joe, Transformers had a long-running comic series from Marvel (80 issues, 1984-1991), followed by several years of hiatus.

The property was revived in comics by Dreamwave in 2001, with multiple mini-series chronicling various sub-stories in the Transformers Universe, until the January 2005 bankruptcy of Dreamwave.

This summer, another comics publisher, IDW Publishing, picked up the rights to the comics and has prepared a new series written by veteran Transformers writer Simon Furman. IDW will release a preview issue of Transformers (No. 0) this October, followed in January 2006 with a new six-issue series (with the likelihood of becoming an on-going series if sales justify it).

While the characters will be basically the same, this series comes without baggage, as it is an all-new fresh start to the property. This series will be equally accessible to new and old readers alike.

Copies of G.I. Joe No. 0 and 1-3 should still be available at local comic shops at \$2.95 cover price. Transformers No. 0 will be available in October at a cover price of \$.99, with the on-going scheduled for January 2006 at a cover price of \$2.99.

To locate a comic shop near you, Diamond Comics, a national distributor, has a locator service available at 1-888-COMIC BOOK.

Contact ALL correspondent Walt Kneeland at wkneelan@kent.edu.

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