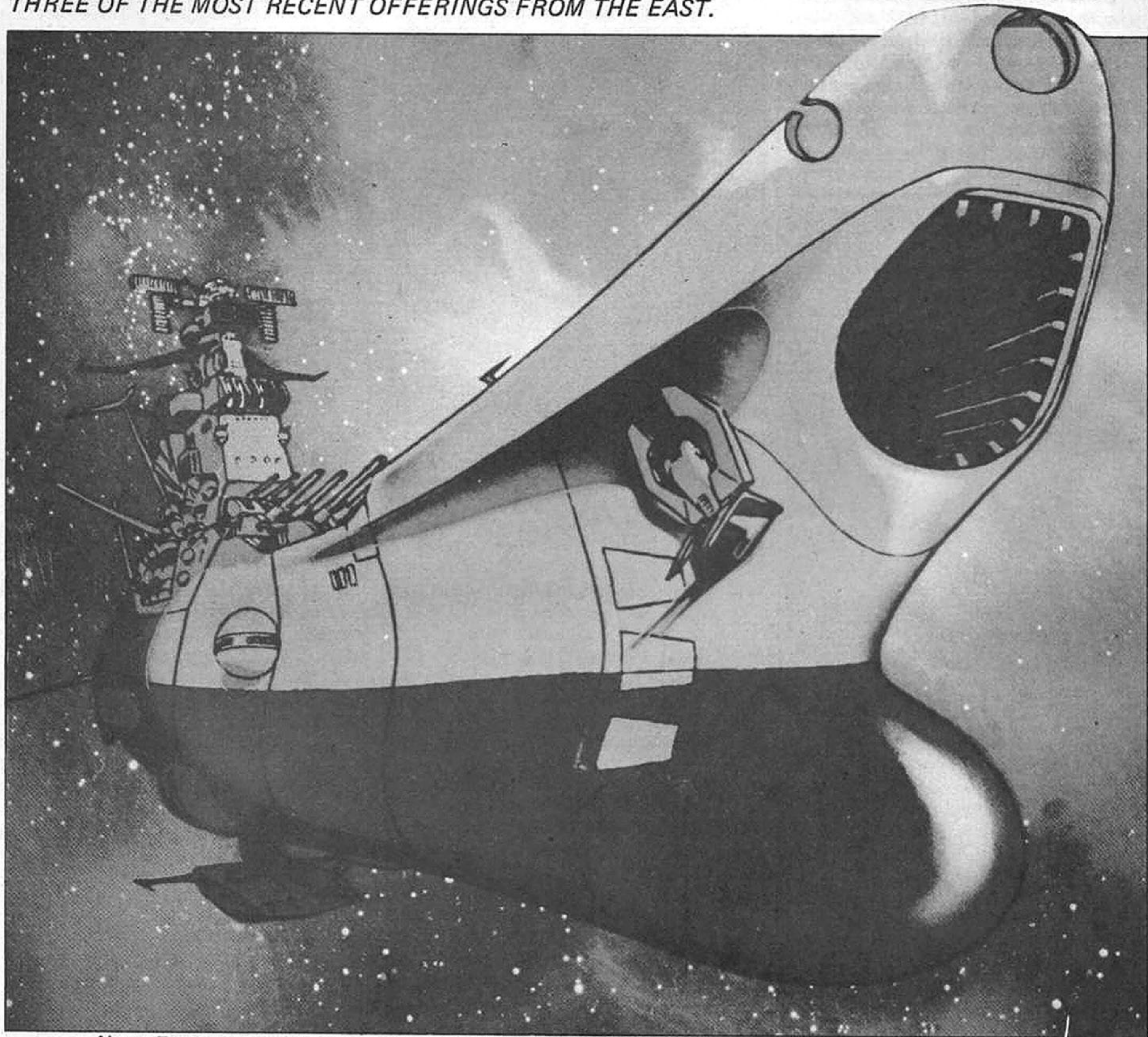


SF IN THE EAST

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BREACH OPENED UP FOR SF BY STAR WARS THE JAPANESE ARE ONLY NOW BEGINNING TO EXPORT SOME OF THEIR SCIENCE FICTION CARTOONS TO THE WESTERN WORLD. STARBURST REVIEWERS TONY CRAWLEY AND BOBBY DUPEA REPORT ON THREE OF THE MOST RECENT OFFERINGS FROM THE EAST.



Above: The Space Cruiser Yamato flies again in Arriverderci Space Cruiser Yamato. Opposite: Two scenes from the film.

ARRIVERDERCI SPACE CRUISER

Report by Bobby Dupea

There was not much, I seem to recall, that trenchant Starburster Tony Crawley could find in favour of *Space Cruiser* — Japan's sf animation trip (see *Starburst 2*). It was, though purely by accident, the international screen's first direct response to *Star Wars*, and

considering the thoroughly mediocre stuff that has been winging our way ever since, *Space Cruiser Yamato* (to give the film its true title) was not that bad after all.

Actually, it was being made before, or at least at the same time as *Star Wars*. There's no way a 101-minute animation film — even from Japan — could have been started, finished and released so rapidly after Lucas. So it was never trying to cash in on the Lucasfilm at all!

Well now . . . prepare yourself for a second

slice: 151 minutes this time, from the same Toei team of creator Yoshinobu Nishizaki, character-designer Leiji Matsumoto and composer Hiroshi Miyagawa. And if you feel that lot is a mouthful, wait for the title. Are you really ready for: *Arriverderci Space Cruiser Yamato*. The original must have been a vast success in Italy. *Sayonara Space Cruiser Yamato*, I might expect — but *arriverderci* . . . ?

The Tokyo trojans have offered an alternate title as well. *Tremendous Knights*. They may be

hot stuff in animation circles. But they really need to go back to the drawing board where titling is concerned.

Whatever you call it, this one *is* influenced by *Star Wars*, with more than a touch of *Close Encounters* — in its eye-popping achievement, the impregnable Comet Empire . . . This is a super looking mix of Lucas' Death Star and Trumbull's Mother Ship.

For those of us who braved the wrath of Crawley's review, we left the original in 2200 AD with an irradiated Earth being saved from the Gorgon hordes by the old battleship Yamato, pride of the Jap World War II fleet being dug up and refurbished as an intergalactic space cruiser.

Now, it's 2201. Earth is thriving anew. The poor old Yamato is back in mothballs, replaced as flagship of the Earth Fleet by the new

After the last film, Yamato has returned to more mundane duties.

super-dreadnought Andromeda, complete with all-powerful undulation guns. And our previous heroes — Kodai, Shima, Sanada and the rest of the Yamato's 114-man crew — are back to mundane duties, like escorting interplanetary transporters.

Or they are until they start receiving an SOS, sound only, and later a *Star Wars*-style holographic image, from a lady called Teresa of the planet Teresat. The government refuses any rescue attempt, but the Yamato boys go after her anyway, joined by extra forces, including commando leader, Saito. The closer they get to her voice — and thereby her planet — the more dangerous adventures they run into. And predicted doom.

Teresa warns them of a weird white comet out to destroy not merely Earth this time, but every planet in the universe. The Yamatoans, then, have a hell of a fight on their hands. King Zwarder of the Comet Empire gives a fleet of missile boats to Desler, leader in the first film of the Gorgons of Gamilus, and out to avenge himself . . .

Once our young heroes reach Teresat — and therefore Teresa — there's no hugging and

The Yamato and the Earth defence forces battle a white comet.

kissing. Not even a handshake. She's a very ethereal young lady — of negative substance. "If I touch an earthling, a terrible explosion will occur," she explains. Hmmm! Having told Kodai and his troops as much as she can about the evil doings of Zwarder and his Comet Empire — she disappears.

And so the big battle is won. The Yamato and the Earth Defence Forces versus this white comet. No contest! Zwarder commands Earth to surrender. Yamato warps about and fires its undulation gun. Flash-bang-wallop — the white comet burst into flames . . . then out of the fire looms this bizarre spherical fortress, the very substance of the comet. The Comet Empire itself.

Round Two . . .

But no, I'm not giving the ending away. Except to say, it's not what you think, but yes it is *very* Japanese.



VOLTUS V Report by Bobby Dupea

Toei of Tokyo are really pushing out the sf animation this year. After their *Yamato* sequel, their myriad tv series (which is, I'm sure where their films derive from), *Voltus V* is their latest export to an expectant world. Ninety-three minutes of supercharged adventures starring the mightiest robot in space, yet. (Beat that, Richard Kiel).

Trouble is with Toei, if you've seen one, you've more or less seen them all. The poor old Earth is being invaded again — "two million years since human beings first came into the world".

Fortunately, for background art work, the Earth Defence Forces are headquartered in Tokyo. Unfortunately for the HQ, the Boazan Empire know where it's situated and sends in Super Hornet, a monstrous robot to waste them. Fortunately, for everyone else, we have our own secret weapon — Voltus Five, a super, electro-magnetic robot machine, developed by a certain Dr Armstrong. Unfortunately, no one knows where Dr Armstrong is. Fortunately, his children (kids are a staple part of any Toei sf show) can crew the machine — Steve, Bert, Little John, Mark and Jamie.

And so it goes on, with one unfortunately always being balanced by a clever fortunately . . .

For example, with Super Hornet destroyed, the beastly Bozanians send in the Falcon robot. And this one's pretty good — has its own "chain weight" plus some kind of rod with

splinters. That keeps Voltus at bay. But if Dr Armstrong is missing, his missus is pretty sharp and she destroys Falcon with a single planeload of well-aimed bombs.

Finally, we get to know where Dr A is. Held

Voltus V is heavy metal and the clash of steel against steel.

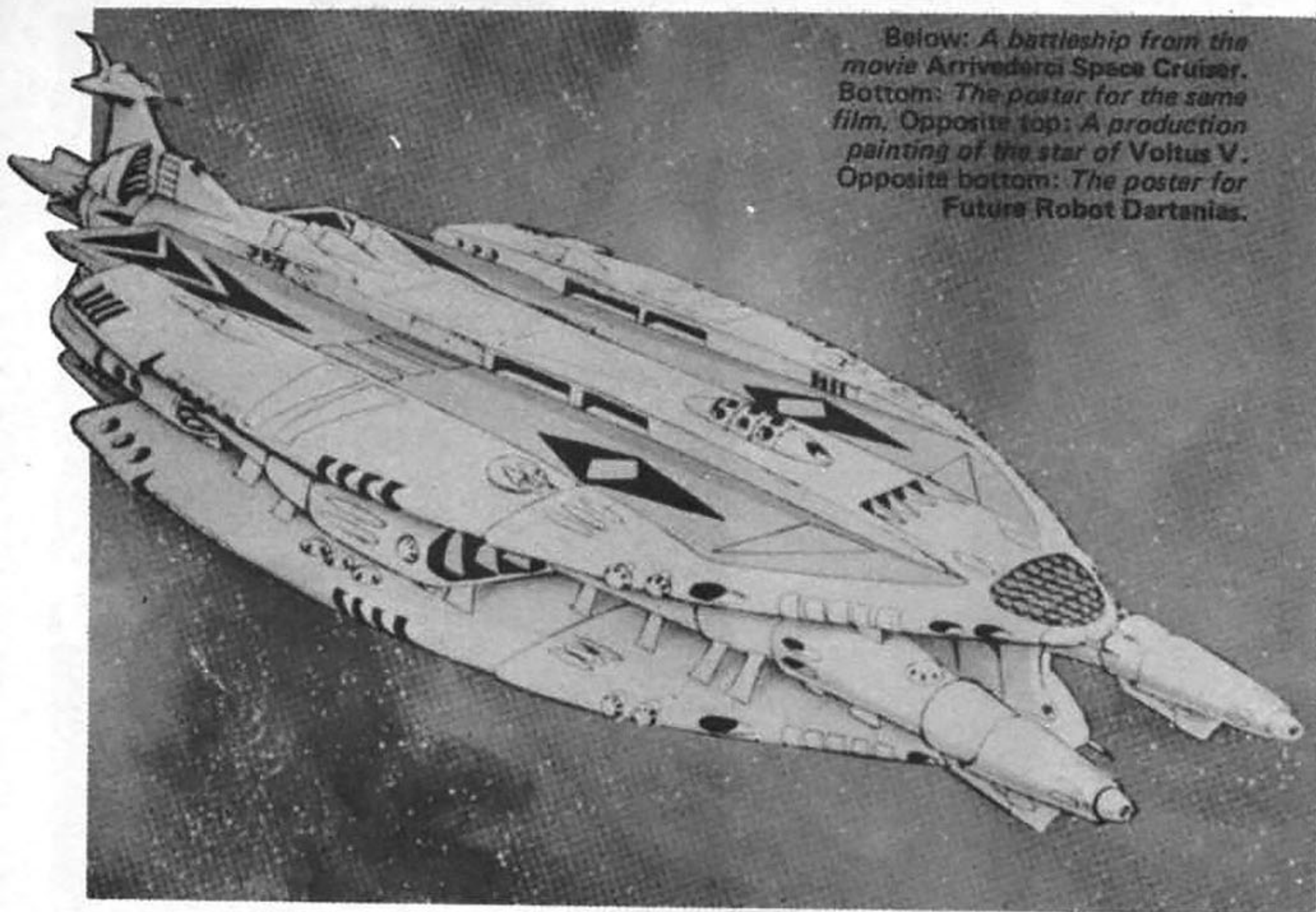
prisoner by the Boazanians, of course — at the Earth Invasion Base on Horror Island. Young Bert heroically sets out to rescue Dad. Unfortunately, while he's away, a new attack on Earth begins. Fortunately, the other kids are left to crew Voltus. Unfortunately, they cannot join Voltus in time. Fortunately . . . well, you can guess the rest.

No, not one of Toei's best offerings. Unless you're into heavy metal, the clash of steel against steel, robots clanging together in the night, and eternal big battles going on and on . . .

And on.

FUTURE ROBOT DARTANIAS Report by Tony Crawley

The immaculately-suited Mr Masayoshi Endo, of the Paris office of Tokyo's Toei Company was pleased to see *Starburst* in the flesh — and vice versa — after all our letters back and forth. Mr Endo was also wondering if we could not, maybe, encourage some television network in Britain, BBC-tv, ITV or DEZ-tv (don't laugh, it'll come!) to stop being



Below: A battleship from the movie Arrivederci Space Cruiser. Bottom: The poster for the same film. Opposite top: A production painting of the star of Volturnus V. Opposite bottom: The poster for Future Robot Dartanias.

missiles and its own attack sword — and Future-jet Delighter is a tinier version of the Gunper, with machine-guns and small missiles.

Put that lot together — and you have Dartanias. For where Dr Earl is so clever — and it's almost traditional to have piece-by-piece machines in Japanese sf — is that all these elements fit together. Atlaus, Beralios, Gunper and Delighter all dock into Dartanias, making the robot an almost invincible (certainly weighty) death machine.

Also rather traditional in Tokyo space fantasy is the link with the country's defeat in the last war. In *Space Cruiser*, the Yamato was a World War II battleship, brought up from the sea-bed where the Allies had sent it, and turned into battleship for outer space. Similarly, in *Future Robot Dartanias*, the story is set in 1995 where a lovely city by the ocean has been destroyed by a robot army and life soon resembles the chaos of Japan after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thousands are dead — and a black market prospers in the ruins.

Amid all this hustle and bustle are a bunch of kids, teenage and under, scrambling for a

so silly and actually shell out some cash to buy one of the innumerable Toei animation tv space series.

The rest of the world bought them, said Mr Endo, how come Britain never did. We said much the same, and we had to leave it at that. However, if you're intrigued enough by this particular feature on the Japanese sf shows, why don't you cut it out, attach a letter explaining what we are all missing out on and send it off to BBC, IBA, Thames, London Weekend, Granada, Harlech or whatever station covers your area. You never know.

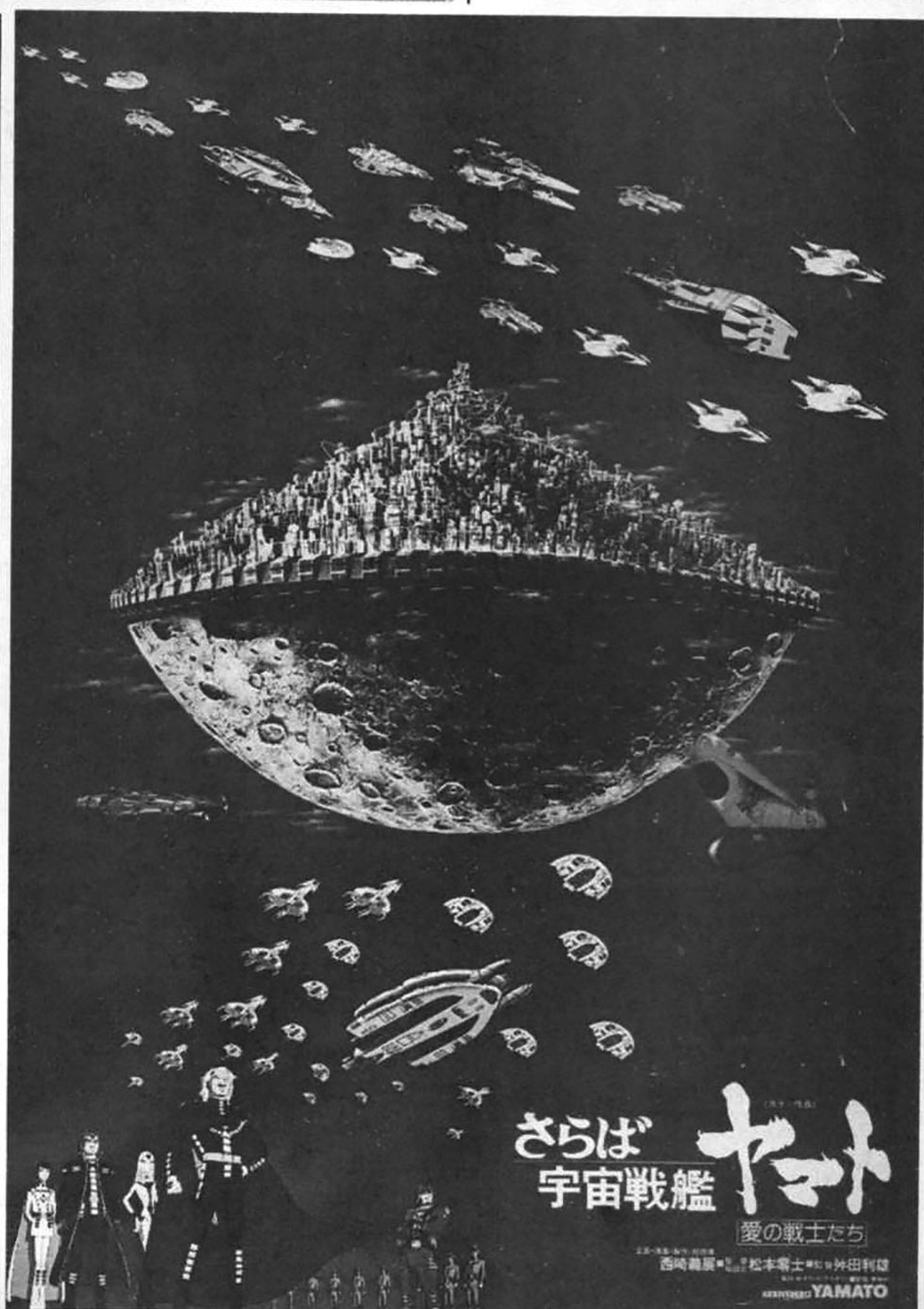
Future Robot Dartanias is a sort of super fighting machine, a one-robot Three Musketeers. And it's some weapon. Fifty-six metres high, 678 tons in weight and capable of moving at 600 km per hour on land. Its weaponry includes a double-knuckle, a giant spinner, a sigma beam, a ray-thunder and something known as a supermagnetic eraser...

Future Robot Dartanias is four robots in one.

Dartanias is the invention of 60-year old Dr Earl, member of the House of Elder Statesmen of the Elios Empire. He built the robot to help his emperor save Elios from the Zaar Star Forces. But it takes time and patience to create a super-machine like Dartanias. Suffice it to say that the war was over—and lost—before Dr Earl finished the job.

No matter. He still finds plenty of other uses for Dartanias—well, the same use, really, fighting the Zaars.

The aged scientist with the Santa Claus beard is not alone in these endeavours; nor, indeed is Dartanias. Future-man Atlaus, for example, is a mini-Dartanias (280 tons), and comes complete with hand-slicer, boomerang cutter and shredder punch. Future-lion Beralios is smaller still (195 tons) and therefore faster (750 km per hour), a golden metal lion with built-in Beta missiles and beams. Future-machine Gunper is a star-fighter craft, with



jet Delighter is a tinier version of Gunper, with machine guns and small missiles.

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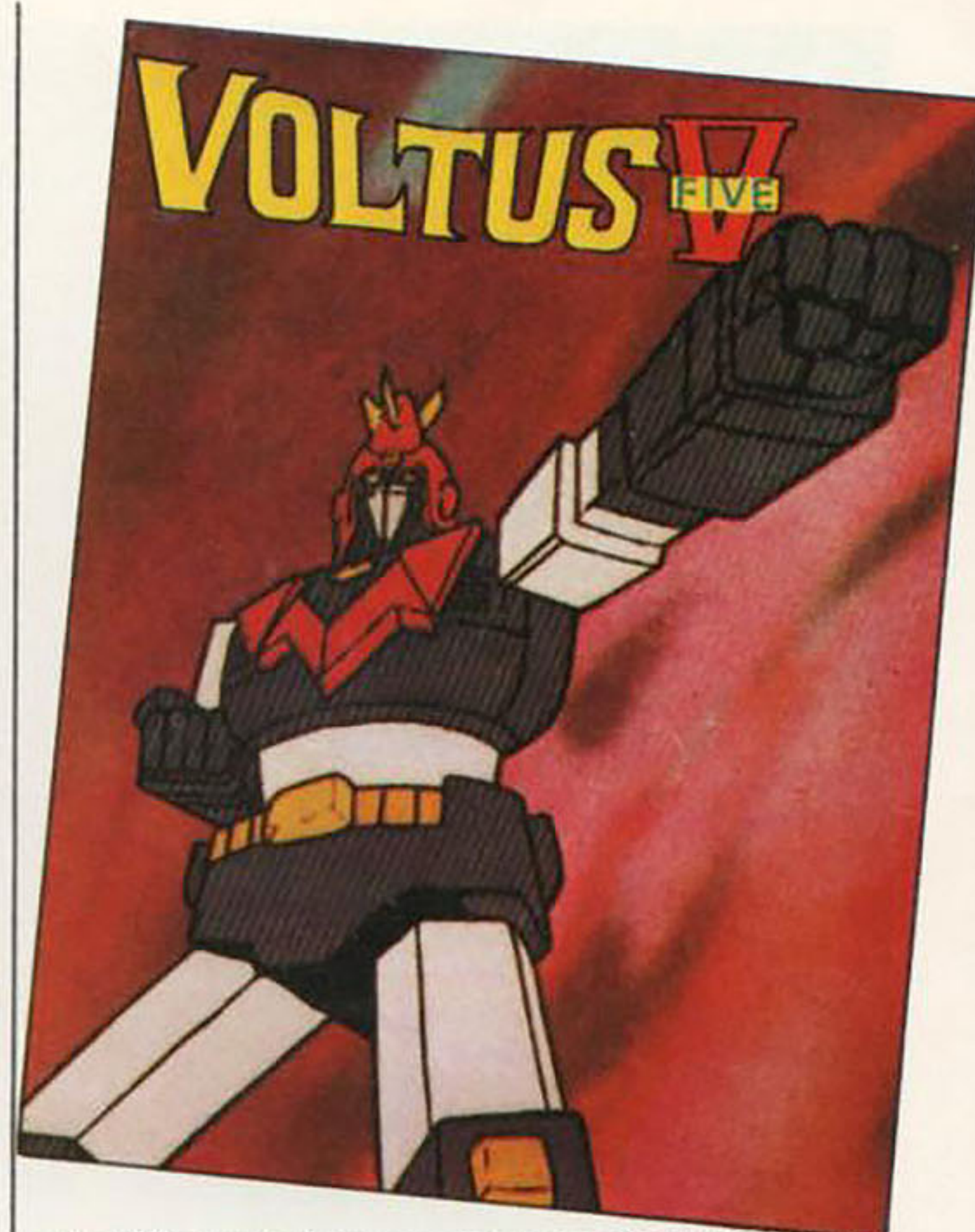
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Also rather traditional in Tokyo space fantasy is the link with the country's defeat in the last war. In *Space Cruiser*, the *Yamato* was a World War II battleship, brought up from the sea-bed where the allies had sent it, and turned into a battleship for outer space. Similarly, in *Future Robot Dartanias*, the story is set in 1995 where a lovely city by the ocean has been destroyed by a robot army and life soon resembles the chaos of Japan after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thousands are dead—and a black market prospers in the ruins.

Amid all this hustle and bustle are a bunch of kids, teenage and under, scrambling for a living—for food, in fact. They fight the black marketeers and cling to each other for support . . . under the leadership of 16-year old Kento Tate.

And it's while searching for some new form of sustenance that these children find a cave—filled with consoles and instruments. They press a few buttons and the machines begin to stir. An old man with a white beard awakes. Our heroes have stumbled into Dr Earl's spaceship Adals, from a thousand years ago.

Well, that takes some explaining of course. Earl tells his tale: How troops from the planet Zaar, and those planets it had conquered, made Elios its new target. How he tried to finish the robot in time and failed, loaded Dartanias and the rest of his spaceship and took off from his conquered homeland, vowing to restore it some day. And how, by some freak mishap, he made a forced landing on Earth all those years in the past. There was nothing on Earth at the time to help the old scientist repair his ship, so he went into cold sleep until such time as Earth's



scientific techniques caught up with his own.

The kids have woken him up. And what does he find on his computers but that Earth is the latest target of the Zaar Star Allied Forces—the robots which had wiped out the kids' home in Kainan.

The old fellow is determined to keep his vow—and wipe out the Zaars. The kids are only too pleased to join in and help avenge their dead families. And so the various adventures and battles (and some heavy-handed Japanese attempts at kiddy-humour) begin.

Kento Tate, leader of the children's band, turns out to be a descendant of the old Elios emperor—therefore the cyborg lion, Beralios, obeys his every command. Kento also proves to be the best pilot of the Delighter jet which can constitute the head of either Atlas or Dartanias.

The rest of this kids' army includes a stone-throwing loner caller Danji, a doctor's daughter who tends the youngsters, Jiro and Ochame;

Leader of the bad-guys is Cloppen, a dead-ringer for Darth Vader.

a mammoth 12-year old called Tanosuke possibly related to Asterix the Gaul's Obelix; and a bespectacled bright lad who assists Dr Earl—and faints every time he sees a cockroach.

On the other side is a motley-looking crew of nasty Zaars who might have strolled out of the Cantina sequence in *Star Wars*. These are generals picked up along the way from allied planets. They comprise one jellyfish, a dinosaur, a rock-like creature, a beetle and a female who is half plant, half woman.

They're led by Cloppen, the latest dead-ringer for Darth Vader, hiding his lights under a bushel of masks and accompanied everywhere he goes by a wicked black leopard, attacking anyone who dares refuse his master's orders.

And I wouldn't be averse to seeing any of that lot on my television once a week. How about you? If we can't persuade our British tv Zaars to buy the series, maybe someone will buy the movie version . . .

