

**TEEN TITANS: First 20 years**

COMICS  
COLLECTOR

# COMICS COLLECTOR

48319K  
Spring 1984  
\$2.25



**VANDOOM**  
Marvel's monsters

**HORROR COMICS**  
Before there was a Code

10,000+  
LATEST COMICS VALUES

**GASOLINE ALLEY**  
63 and counting

**TOP-NOTCH  
COMICS**



After more than four decades:

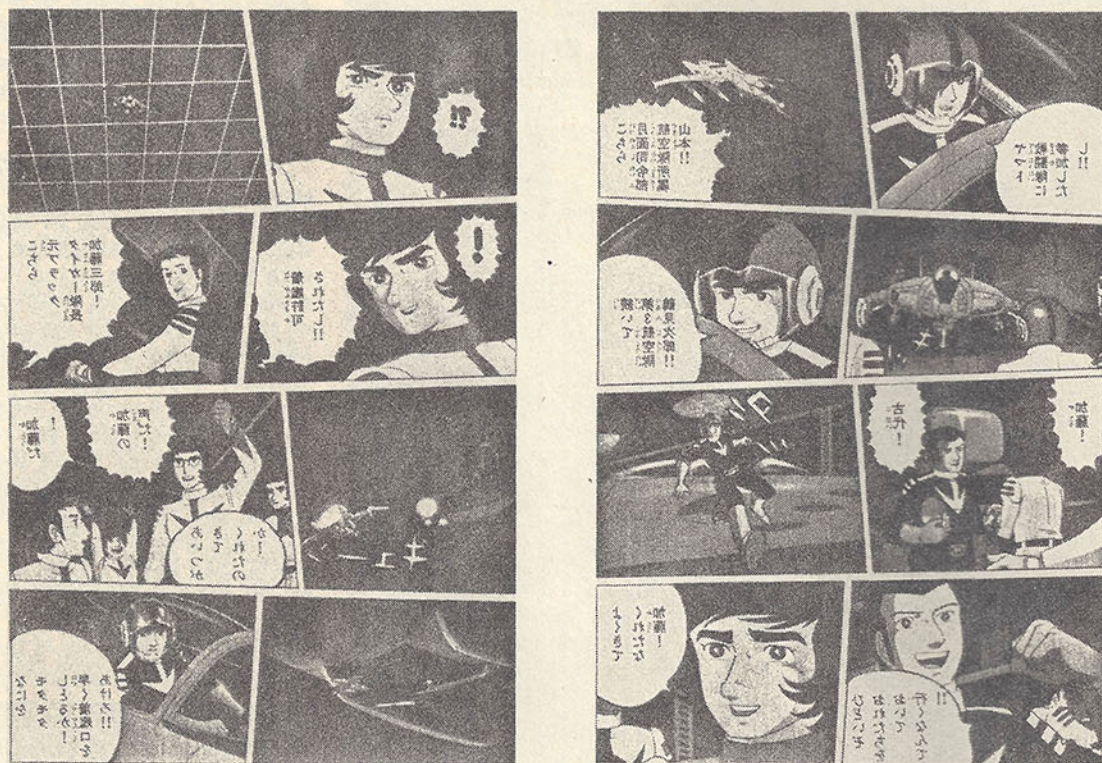
**ROBIN BECOMES NIGHTWING**





# Space Cruiser Yamato

Japanese animated cartoon TV series and movies present rich, if contradictory, space adventures



This two-page spread is from the *Arrivederci Yamato* anime comics set from Akita Shoten's "Champion Graphics" line (1981). The *Cosino Tiger* fighter squad joins the *Yamato*. (Note: The Japanese pages have been flopped for better reader comprehension.)

## By Ardith Carlton

She rose from the depths of the history books, a World War II battleship revived in the year 2199 to save the world from a rather goopy and gruesome end. Borne on wings of Japanese ink and celluloid, the animated *Space Cruiser Yamato* not only managed to rescue Earth, but also earned a half-dozen encore missions in the decade that has passed since she first took to the airwaves of Japanese television.

The co-creation of producer Yoshinobu Nishizaki (a former agent for Osamu Tezuka, of *Astro Boy* and *Kimba the White Lion* fame) and cartoonist Reiji Matsumoto (well known on both sides of the ocean for *Captain Harlock*, *Queen of 1000 Years*, and *Galaxy Express 999*), and animated by Office Academy, Toei Doga, and Tokyo Doga, *Yamato* was so popular with the Japanese public that the release of the first *Yamato* feature film in 1977 triggered the huge animation boom that Japan still enjoys to this day.

## The first *Yamato* feature film in 1977 triggered the huge animation boom that Japan still enjoys to this day.

The first two *Yamato* TV series, *Space Cruiser Yamato* (1974-5) and *Space Cruiser Yamato 2* (1978-9), were brought to North America and underwent the scene-snipping and story editing that most Japanese animated series must suffer when they reach these shores. Under the title *Star Blazers*, the combined series began airing in 1979, and found a fiercely loyal audience despite the odd hours at which most stations chose to broadcast it.

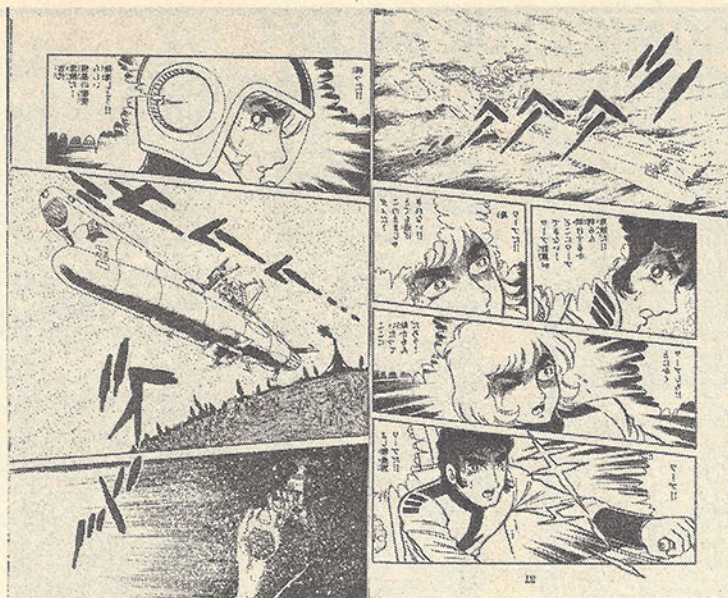
Fan clubs sprang up, enthusiasts made their presence known at science-fiction and comic conventions, and people who had wolfed down the 52 *Star Blazers* episodes and wanted more either overcame or ignored the language barrier and found a wealth of further *Yamato* adventures awaiting them in Japan.

Like most Matsumoto epics, the overall *Yamato* story has different lines of continuity — to date, the saga has had two big finales and a third storyline that leaves the way clear for a sequel.

All three co-existing storylines start with the first series: In 2199, Earth has been well-crippled by radioactive "planet-bombs" sent by the alien Gamilas and their Leader Desslar, who intend to fry mankind and then move to Earth from their own dying planet. The scant remainder of the human race is forced to retreat to a single underground city to escape the radioactivity, but the refuge will only be safe for one year.

Just as things look generally hopeless, a message arrives from Iskandar, a planet 148,000 light-years away: Queen Starsha — a being just this side of a goddess — offers Earth a cure for the radioactivity, if they can come and pick it up. The plans for a faster-than-light-speed "Wave Motion" engine are included, and put to quick use — the hulk of the battleship *Yamato* is renovated into the *Space Cruiser Yamato*, and with the otherworldly engine and a





*Yamato escapes the explosion of the Garuman-Gamilas planet in Akira Hio's two-volume **Yamato — The Concluding Chapter** (Sun Comics, 1983). (Note: The Japanese pages have been flopped for better reader comprehension.)*

young, elite but somewhat addled crew gracing her innards, the warping warship begins the desperate mission.

Little more than half the crew of 114 survive the journey, but Yamato manages to defeat the Gamilas and tote the radiation remover back to Earth, under the guidance of hotshot-cum-necrophiliac Deputy Captain Susumu Kodai and wily, wise old Captain Juzo Okita. Yamato makes it home with seven days to spare, and Captain Okita dies peacefully after getting his longed-for last look at the planet. (The 1977 feature film was a condensation of the series.)

The enormous success of the first *Yamato* feature was followed in August 1978 by a second movie that many still consider to be one of the finest Japanese animated films ever made — *Arrivederci Yamato*. One year after *Yamato*'s return from the voyage to Iskandar, the ship has been retired — already out-dated by Earth's newly rebuilt fleet. Kodai and the veterans of the first mission steal *Yamato* from drydock, and take off to investigate a garbled call for help from distant planet Telezart. There, Teresa — the spirit of universal love, in the form of a luminous, naked woman — warns *Yamato* that the White Comet Empire is on the warpath and begs the crew to stop it so peace in the universe can be restored.

Kodai ends up pitted against his arch-nemesis Leader Desslar, the last of the Gamilas, in a death-duel — Desslar driven to avenge his destroyed Gamilas Empire, and Kodai trying desperately to just save *Yamato* so she can protect Earth from the approaching White Comet Empire. Kodai's fiancée Yuki

Mori is mortally wounded in the showdown, and Desslar suicides in the finest science fiction-samurai tradition — he steps out an airlock and dies instantly, finding peace at last.

In quick succession, every Earth ship but *Yamato* is destroyed, all but 18 of *Yamato*'s crew members are killed, and only a miracle can prevent the White Comet Empire from annihilating Earth. Captain Okita's ghost appears and tells Kodai what must be done, and as the spirits of *Yamato*'s entire crew fill the bridge, reunited forever, Kodai kamikazes *Yamato* into the enemy. Earth is saved, Kodai and Yuki's marriage is sealed, and "in the year 2201, *Yamato* began her eternal journey."

Two months later, the *Yamato 2* TV series began serializing the same general story, although with a few twists — a romance between a now-clothed Teresa and *Yamato*'s chief navigator Daisuke Shima was added and, by the final episode, Desslar, Kodai, Yuki, and *Yamato* all survived for a comparatively happy ending. The contradictions to the highly popular and emotional *Arrivederci* cost *Yamato* a number of fans, but most accepted the new continuity line.

*Yamato — The New Journey*, a 90-minute tele-feature that was first broadcast in July 1979 to a 30.6% share of the audience, picked up the narrative where the *Yamato 2* series left off: After *Yamato* and the handful of her surviving crew members are patched up, the ship is recommissioned, and a new crew of exceptionally inept cadets are recruited. *Yamato* sets off on a training voyage, the rookies wreak havoc and nearly wreck the ship as well, and all

Kodai can do is realize how Okita must've felt back in the beginning — "Yamato isn't a kindergarten!" he groans.

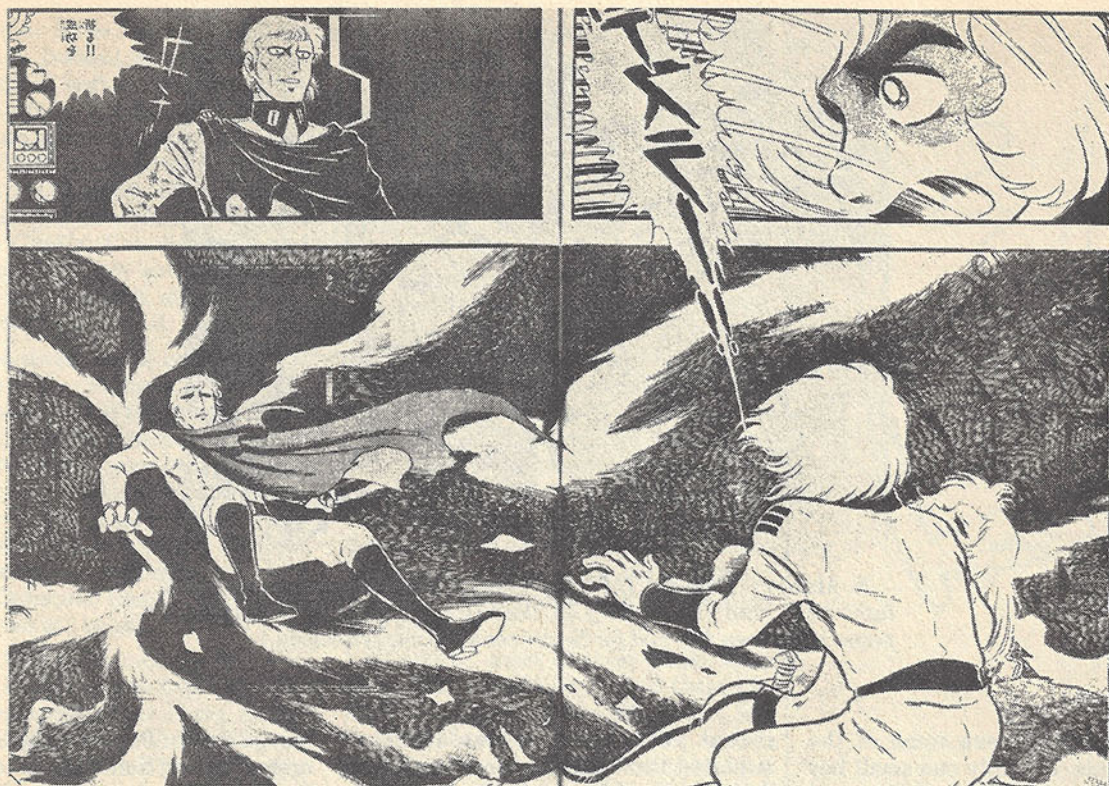
Later, *Yamato* is abruptly pressed into an alliance with former foe Desslar — planet Iskandar and its sole inhabitants, Queen Starsha and Kodai's older brother Mamoru (who was discovered living with the Iskandarian queen back in the first series), are under attack by an advance fleet from the Dark Nebula Empire and need help fast. But even *Yamato* and Desslar's fleet combined can't save them, and in the end Starsha tricks Mamoru into boarding *Yamato* with their newborn daughter Sasha, then blows up planet Iskandar (and herself) to finally destroy the Dark Nebulan fleet. Desslar and his own fleet leave to continue their search for a new planet to rebuild the Gamilas Empire on, and *Yamato* returns to Earth with Mamoru and baby Sasha in tow.

One year passed in both worlds, and in 2202 (and August 1980), the film *Be Forever Yamato* began. The Dark Nebula Empire has traced *Yamato* to Earth and occupies the planet, planting a 10-story-tall bomb and threatening to blow away half the world unless *Yamato* is delivered to them. Fortunately, Chief Mechanic Shiro Sanada thought to have *Yamato* hidden away within the asteroid Icarus, where he, his niece Mio, and a small crew tend the ship.

Kodai and most of the main bridge crew manage to escape from Earth to Icarus, but Yuki is wounded, left behind, and taken prisoner by the Dark Nebula's hot-to-trot Second Lieutenant Arufon. The Commander of Earth

(Continued on page 91)





These panels are taken from Akira Hio's three-volume adaptation of *Arrivederci Yamato* (Sun Comics, 1978). It shows a traditional SF-samurai way to go. (Translation: **Dessler**: "I wish you success!!" **Kodai**: "Dessler!!") (Note: The Japanese pages have been flopped for better reader comprehension.)

## YAMATO

(From page 63)

Defense escapes captivity when Mamoru kills himself (blowing up an impressive pile of Dark Nebbies in the process), contacts Icarus, and dispatches Yamato to the Dark Nebula Empire's homeworld for a counter-attack.

Much of the next two hours is spent with Yuki turning down perpetual proposals from Arufon, and Kodai trying to ignore Mio's dewy-eyed attentions — especially when Mio turns out to actually be his own niece Sasha, grown to physical maturity in one year — an Iskandarian trait. After a tense showdown between Yuki and Arufon, the bomb is defused, and Yamato finally is able to destroy the Dark Nebulans' automated planet, but at the cost of Sasha's life. Sasha is reunited with her parents Mamoru and Starsha, and Yamato returns to Earth. Mercifully, the end credits roll before Kodai and Yuki start gilling each other on what has gone on during their separation...

The third Yamato TV series — entitled, aptly enough, *Space Cruiser Yamato III* — had originally been planned as a 52-episode epic, but somebody changed his or her mind early in production, and the series was squashed to only 25 episodes when it hit the Japanese airwaves beginning in October 1980.

What survived of the story is this: In the year 2205, Desslar has successfully rebuilt his realm into the Garuman-Gamilas Empire and is now at war with the Bolar Commonwealth. During one of their battles, a proton missile is accidentally fired into our Sun, enlarging it until Earth is in danger of being fried in one year (sound familiar?). After taking on still more clumsy cadet crewmen, Yamato sets off to try to find a new planet to which mankind can migrate. (She isn't alone in her quest — space battleships like Germany's Bismarck, Britain's Prince of Wales, and the U.S.'s Arizona are searching in other directions. Not surprisingly, the Arizona is found by Yamato later, demolished quite thoroughly...)

Yamato becomes entangled in the war situation and is captured and mistakenly given to Leader Desslar for a birthday present. Suitably outraged, Desslar helps Yamato try to find a planet, but all they find is Queen Luda. Yamato returns her to her home planet Shalbart, and she turns out to be the incarnation of the goddess Mother Shalbart. She gives them the Hydro Cosmogon, and, as Desslar defeats the Bolar in the decisive battle, Yamato fires the cosmic cure-all into the Sun just in time, saving Earth yet again.

After so many years, the "Dreaded horrors! Something terrible is going to happen to Earth, and only Yamato can

save us!" plot was wearing thin, and other animated series had long since become more popular with the Japanese public. The decision was made to retire Yamato, and the send-off was the March 1983 film *Space Cruiser Yamato — The Concluding Chapter* (also billed by the Japanese in English as *Final Yamato*).

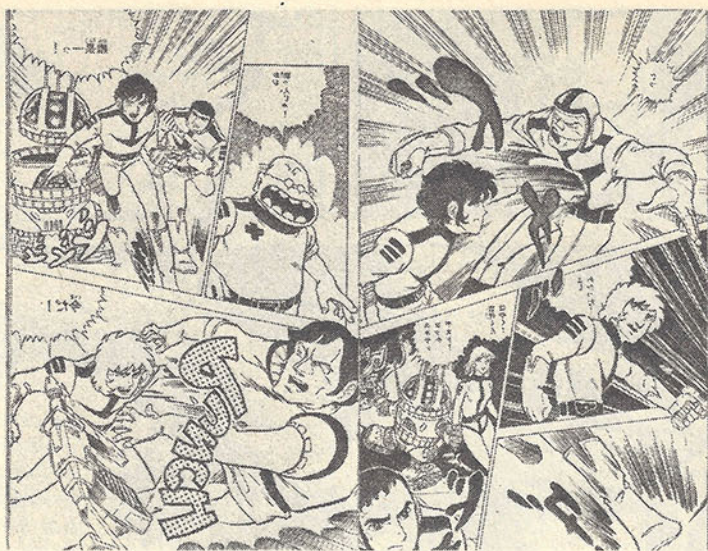
---

**After so many years, the "Dreaded horrors! Something terrible is going to happen to Earth, and only Yamato can save us!" plot was wearing thin.**

---

Another alternate ending to the saga, creating yet another line of continuity as *Arrivederci* had, it takes place in 2203 (following *Be Forever*) and contradicts the entire *Yamato III* series. Another galaxy has warped over the top of our own, causing all sorts of messy phenomena in space. Yamato is sent to investigate, finds the wrecked remains of the Garuman-Gamilas planet, and Desslar is thought to be dead. Later in her wanderings, Yamato comes across the planet Deingil, which is being drowned by a vast column of water from a huge water-planet called Aquarius that is orbiting past it.





R. Masuo's *Yamato III* (Sun Comics, 1981) shows Kodai (with light hair) and the cavalry to the rescue. (Note: The Japanese pages have been flopped for better reader comprehension.)

Kodai tries to rescue some of the planet's people, but only one small boy can be saved, and a dozen of Yamato's crewmen are killed in the fiasco. Yamato is then attacked by the Deingilan fleet, and limps back to Earth with two-thirds of her crew dead. Planet Aquarius is headed towards Earth, and the Deingilan survivors plan to take Earth for themselves after mankind is drowned.

As usual, after the battles with the villains, Yamato is the only Earth ship left, but with so many deaths on his conscience Kodai resigns the captaincy. A quick search for a new captain turns up old Juzo Okita, who is miraculously brought back to life after he'd died three years earlier, surprise! Desslar, too, appears at an opportune time to help Yamato defeat the Deingilans, and Earth is saved from the waters of Aquarius — the deadly column of water is dispersed when Yamato, with only Okita aboard, blows herself up. The bits of space battleship sink into the resulting ocean in space, and on Earth, Kodai and Yuki are finally married to end the epic.

In Japan, a series or movie will rarely be animated unless it can be merchandized to the fullest possible extent — a practice that provides the animation industry with a constant source of income to keep building on, while keeping fans satisfied — and *Yamato* was no exception. Millions of dollars' worth of models, posters, toys, candy, clothing, record albums and singles, board-and-tactical games — you name it — featuring the Space Cruiser and her crew have been sold, and that's not including *Star Blazers* marketing in countries other than Japan! Currently there is none in North America, but more and more in

recent years, various dealers have imported the Japanese merchandise on their own to sell to collectors and fans on this side of the ocean. And some of the most notable *Yamato* items available — the dozens of Japanese-language comics and pictorial reference books on the saga — are now finding their way to these shores.

At about the same time the first *Yamato* series was beginning its run on television, Reiji Matsumoto's comic-book version of the story was being serialized in a weekly manga magazine. "Manga" is the Japanese word for "comics," and millions of copies of the various manga magazines sell each week. Like most of the more popular serials, *Yamato* was collected and reprinted in black-and-white paperback form, taking up three volumes and nearly 650 pages.

The first book is Matsumoto's rendition of the first series' story, including appearances by his space pirate Captain Harlock (who had originally been planned to figure prominently in the animated series as the alter-ego of Mamoru Kodai but disappeared in the final draft of the storyline). The other two are an as-yet-uncompleted mixture of *Arrivederci* and *Yamato*, along with an original tale of Leader Desslar, his daughter Jura, and her mother Mera. The three-book set was published as part of the "Sunday Comics" manga book line by Akita Shoten and may stay in print forever. Since its first appearance in 1975, Vol. 1 has been reprinted more than 60 times.

While many Japanese animated series get their start as popular manga serials, the *Yamato* movies and serials pulled a switch by being the inspiration for

manga books. Published by Asahi Sonorama in its "Sun Comics" paperback line, the 14-volume adaptation of the *Yamato* saga spans 2726 pages and covers everything except *Yamato 2: Space Cruiser Yamato* (three volumes), *Arrivederci Yamato* (three volumes), *Yamato — New Journey* (two volumes), *Be Forever Yamato* (two volumes), and *Yamato — The Concluding Chapter* (aka *Final Yamato*; two volumes) were all drawn by Akira Hio, a manga-man also famed for his mechanical designs in the animated *Toward the Terra* and live-action *Message from Space* movies.

---

**While many Japanese animated series get their start as popular manga serials, the *Yamato* movies and serials pulled a switch by being the inspiration for manga books.**

---

*Yamato III* (two volumes) was handled by R. Masuo and bore little resemblance to the original series. On the other hand, Hio's manga often followed the actual animation scripts line for line (with the exception of *Space Cruiser Yamato*, which was scripted by Keisuke Fuhikawa) and even corrected technical mistakes that had marred the original animated versions at times. Like the Sunday Comics and many other lines of manga paperback books, the Sun Comics list for 380 yen each.

In Japan, animation-related manga books face stiff competition from the first cousin of the photo-novel, anime



comics. (*Anime* is the Japanese word for "animation.") Instead of drawings, the panels of these soft-cover comics are full-color animation stills, with speech balloons and sound effects superimposed. Production of anime comics for movies has really taken off in the last three years, and nowadays films like *Cagliostro Castle*, *Crusher Joe*, and *Mobile Suit Gundam* are covered in four or five volumes each, allowing spectacular graphics and detail.

Sadly, the three sets of anime comics done to date for *Yamato* films were published before all of this progress had been made, but they're still the next best thing to owning your own copies of the movies. Two-volume anime comic sets for the *Space Cruiser Yamato* feature, *Arrivederci Yamato*, and *Be Forever Yamato* were published by Akita Shoten's "Champion Graphics" line and list for 750 yen per book.

*Yamato* film stills, character and mechanical design sheets, fold-out posters, and theme song sheet music, as well as story details and all kinds of data and information, can be found in the flood of magazine-sized soft-cover books produced for anime fans in Japan. Most animated shows and movies have at least one book of this type dedicated to them, and *Yamato* has a whole cascade of them to its credit.

One of the latest entrants in the *Yamato* book bonanza, Shogakukan, has put out two of the nicer books available as part of its "This Is Animation — The Select" series: #2, an overview of *Yamato* up until *Final Yamato*, and #4, which deals just with *Final*. Both books have sections of original paintings and analyses of Gamillas history and battle strategies, along with parody cartoons and beautiful color pages, and list for 780 yen each.

Shueisha's "Roadshow Special Editions" have been done for each of the *Yamato* features, although the *Final Yamato* issue is apparently the only one still in print. In addition to glossy color pages of stills, it has no fewer than three fold-out posters and the movie's shooting script and lists at 590 yen.

The most widely distributed of all the books, both in Japan and among North American buffs, seem to be Tokuma Shoten's "Roman Albums." This long-running series of books (with 57 volumes published to date) all began with the Roman Album #1 *Space Cruiser Yamato* — a scrawny little 88-pager, mostly monochrome but with a few color illustrations and a fold-out poster of Starsha by Matsumoto as its saving grace — which had nowhere to go but up. And up they went ... #11 *Arrivederci Yamato*, #31 *Yamato 2*, #36 *Be Forever Yamato*, and #43 *Yamato III*, all 680 yen apiece, are progressively bigger and better, as is #56 *Final Yamato*

(890 yen). All have about 120 pages and a good mixture of color stills, design sheets, and overall information.

But even they pale next to Roman Albums #53 and 54, the two massive *Yamato Perfect Manuals* — perhaps the finest *Yamato* books available today. With coverage up through the *Yamato 2* series in *Perfect Manual 1* (212 pages, 1200 yen) and *New Journey, Be Forever*, and *Yamato III* in *Perfect Manual II* (244 pages, 1300 yen), this pair covers nearly every imaginable detail, from pre-production story-stumblings to the design for the dreaded *Yamato* toilet. The only bad thing about these books is that their publication put every *Yamato* Roman Album but #56 *Final Yamato* out of print. Fortunately, there seems to be a large stock of them left all over Japan, so the older *Yamato* Roman Albums should still be available for a while.

Of course, most of these books read from right to left, and *all* of them are written in Japanese (usually with a few English headings tossed in for style). But for those who don't relish the idea of becoming Japanese-to-English dictionary jockeys, at least the pictures and stills are in a language we all can understand.

All of the *Yamato* books mentioned here (and many, many more) have made it to North America and right now are being sold by specialty dealers and Japanese book stores, some of whom will special-order the books for customers. Expect to pay at least 1¢-per-1 yen for books, what with import duty and mark-up heaped on them.

Right now, *Space Cruiser Yamato* is on the threshold of another feat to add to its decade of distinction. This October, the first English-language Japanese anime comics — a three-book set detailing the first *Yamato* feature film, under the title *Star Blazers* — will be distributed by Books Nippan, the North American branch of Nippon Shuppan Hanbai. The set is tentatively priced at \$12.50 a volume, and can be ordered through Books Nippan:

Books Nippan  
ATTN: Yuji Hiramatsu  
532 West 6th St.  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90014

The books are being produced by West Cape Corporation, the Japanese company that currently owns the rights to the *Yamato* feature films. If these first English-language anime comics are successful, that could be just the encouragement needed to bring more translated Japanese animation and comics to North America ... And *Space Cruiser Yamato* will have begun another mission!

