





THE DECLASSIFIED REPORT

INTRODUCTION
by Chris "Werecat" Chung

Hi everyone, and welcome to our third newsletter! (In case there's any confusion to our numbering, we started off at #0, so while this is issue #2, this is in fact our third newsletter.)

A lot has happened since our last publication. First and foremost was the release of the G.I. Joe: *The Rise of Cobra* film in August of 2009. As with most long lasting franchise-to-films, there was a polarizing effect among the core fanbase. Some thought it was a great modernization and update into the 21st century---and a good starting point for new fans not familiar with the 28 year history, and some thought it was a betrayal of their childhoods, or a far too drastic change from the core mythology. Both arguments are legitimate, and both can be debated successfully. Ultimately it falls on one's own interpretation of G.I. Joe, and how the film fits within their personal microcosm of the greater universe.

But regardless of what side of the aisle you're on, no one can disagree that the *The Rise of Cobra* film was the largest media blitz G.I. Joe has had since its heydays in the 80's, and it is probably the most important, single aspect of G.I. Joe to emerge in the last two decades to introduce, reintroduce, or reinforce the brand to the general public consciousness. What ultimately comes of this is anyone's guess, but for now, it seems to be working. With official blockbuster status for the movie, merchandise covering everything from toys; to shoes; to notebooks; to bed sheets, and a sequel on the way, the gamble the film took seemed to have paid off, as the franchise is once again being talked about and exposed in the mainstream public, not just in toy stores, between fans, or on 'Joe-themed websites.

With that said, I'm pleased to present a behind-the-scenes look into the mechanics and production of the film from someone who personally worked on it: Josh Eggebeen. Josh not only describes what he did as a Production Assistant, he also details his thoughts and feelings being a G.I. Joe fan in the midst of the largest G.I. Joe production ever done, as well as providing exclusive set photos.

We also have a great selection of other articles covering the wide range of the G.I. Joe:

Patrick Stewart provides us a glimpse into the near-forgotten, short-lived, and usually (but unfairly) maligned Sgt. Savage and his Screaming Eagles line with a presentation of unreleased figures.

Sam Damon takes the reins and showcases not only his massive collection, but also an extremely rare prototype H.I.S.S. tank from Hasbro's former Direct-to-Consumer G.I. Joe line that never made it to the public.

And finally, Roger Taft answers the question of why we should care about (or buy!), the International Action Figure Archive by Derek R. Anderson and Ron Conner.

So without further ado...

Behind the Scenes of *The Rise of Cobra* film: My G.I. Joe Movie Experience

By Josh "Antarctica" Eggebeen

In 2008 I was just setting up a tent for a week-long camping trip along a California beach, when an Assistant Director I had worked with called me. As it normally happens in the film business, it was an afternoon call asking me to be to work early the next day for a film called "Dark Sky." Right at that moment, I knew the camping trip was cancelled, because I had just been called to work on G.I. Joe the movie! (I had prior knowledge that "Dark Sky" was the working codename for the Joe film.)

So after leaving the girlfriend I was supposed to be camping with at the campground, I began a three month job on what I consider to be one of the biggest highlights of my life; and would later help lead to some really amazing access when the movie was released.

As with most film people, I started out volunteering for free on a little independent film called *Kwik Stop*, which turned into another job which turned into a career. I never intended to work in movies. I always loved going to the movie theater to watch them, but I never thought of it as career.

How did it begin? I started in Chicago working as a Production Assistant (PA) on films such as *High Fidelity*, *What Women Want*, and *Spider-Man 2*. After a few years in Chicago, I moved to Los Angeles in 2002 and started working in the independent film world, doing jobs with titles like 'Line Producer', 'Production Manager', and 'Assistant Director' on films no one has heard of; never been released---or if they were, no one saw them. Occasionally, I would still work as a PA, usually on big Hollywood features like *Live Free or Die Hard*, *Invasion*, and *Eagle Eye*.

A Production Assistant is basically the do-everything person on a set. In a big Hollywood feature, the demands are very specific and not nearly as diverse as on an independent film. PA's always report directly to the Assistant Directors (AD), and the AD's are in charge of the entire organization of the physical production (the filming part) of a movie. Basically the production department is one of the non-creative jobs in a very creative film business. So a typical day on set as a PA usually starts with getting there one or two hours early, and staying at least an hour later than the rest of the crew. Throughout the day, the PA is mostly just supporting the AD's needs. There's lots of keeping track of the main cast, helping move actors around on set, information distribution both verbal and paper, handling any background or stunt people, and finally keeping everyone quiet and safe during the actual filming. In addition, there's a lot of familiar yelling of "Rolling!" and "Cut!" every day, all day.

When G.I. Joe had called, I could not turn it down. "Dark Sky" had just allowed a huge Joe comic book fan and the senior editor of YoJoe.com's International and Main Comic Book Sections into their super secret set!

I started working on the 2nd Unit of the production. Most of the time this is the stunt unit, but not always. After 2nd Unit wrapped in America and went to Prague in the Czech Republic, I then started working on 1st Unit, which was the main unit where all of the principle actors did all of their scenes. In total I worked from March to May 2008 on the G.I. Joe movie, all in the Los Angeles area.

My first day on set was in The Pit; G.I. Joe's underground headquarters. The set was about half the length of a football field, and was three stories high. Even for Hollywood standards, that was a huge set and it gave the camera a 360 degree view. It was so big in fact, they could drive Hummers around in it. As I took everything in, I couldn't stop smiling. To be standing in the actual real life Pit---that I have read about and seen Cobra attack in the comic books, was a thrill.



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On day one for me (around day 15 for 2nd Unit), was a fight scene between none other than my favorite figures in black and white, Snake-Eyes vs. Storm Shadow. Since it was 2nd Unit, it was the stuntmen doing flips and falls---mostly on wires as they went sword-to-sword. (This day's work appeared in the film when Snake Eyes jumped up and flipped over the third floor railing, and a little earlier in the scene when Storm Shadow dropped down to attack Ripcord.) Just the wire-work and fight scenes took most of that day to film.

I was so excited seeing that fight, that I actually had to sneak away to compose myself because the fan in me was going crazy. At first I couldn't stop talking about my first day on set, but I soon realized that I had to be professional and control the fan in me who wanted to take pictures of everything, steal props, and ask actors for autographs. However, on huge, super-secret big-budget Hollywood films, that's a big no-no. So I had to switch off the fan and just work. (But this would be a constant struggle with me throughout the rest of the filming...)



Days later, we had moved to shooting the night exterior scenes of the convoy attack up at a location in Simi Valley, California where they shot the *Little House on the Prairie* television show. Although 1st Unit had already done a good job of destroying a lot of things, it was our job to really blow-up the convoy vehicles. I basically worked the next four weeks at night on the scenes that happen during this attack. In the behind-the-scenes featurette on the DVD; *The Big Bang Theory: The Making of G.I. Joe*, much of the convoy attack work can be seen---especially the cranes used to flip and destroy the vehicles and helicopters. Additionally, many of the Downey Studios sets where I would later work, could also be seen in this featurette.

During the filming of convoy attack, there were a few side-stories regarding the production of the scenes: we shot the Neo-Vipers walking down the hill toward the destroyed convoy for at least a week. It was very difficult for the stunt actors to see out of the helmets, so we PA's had to be very aware of our surroundings when we helped them walk around in the dark on bumpy ground. Later on, I saw a cool special effects moment when the Neo-Vipers were hit by return fire from Duke's team. The bullet strikes you see on film were actually special paint balls loaded with spark charges, fired at the actors off-camera by several people with paintball guns. In a sense, the movie armor was working. Well, kind of.

Later, we moved onto filming the vehicles being destroyed. At the time they were called Grizzlies and Cougars. (They were actually based on the U.S. military 4x4 "Cougar", and the 6x6 "Cougar HE".) Up close, they were huge. Just tires alone were taller than me, and I am 6' 2"! One of them had dual operating .50 cal. machine guns (similar to Roadblock's gun) on top. The guns where real, but the ammunition were blanks. But it was no less impressive. Since it was my first time seeing those guns being fired in person, I was completely surprised at how loud, impressive, and scary they were.

During the convoy attack we had two versions of each vehicle: a real, operating one that could drive around, and a prop one that was basically an empty shell with no engine. They were all customized, and I was told that each vehicle cost nearly \$300,000 to create or modify. Obviously the prop vehicles were the ones used for flipping/destroying. During one scene, we had to flip a Grizzly. The unit to be flipped had two cranes with chains on each side, and they used pressurized ratchets to jerk the Grizzly up and over,



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of the underwater base scenes which included the control room that Breaker and Scarlett were in, numerous tunnel walkways, Destro's office, and the Doctor's room where Destro gets burned. All of the underwater sets were evidentially flooded with water.

By being on 1st Unit full time, I had to really put the fan in me in check and remain professional. But I was still all smiles. As I said earlier, part of the job of a PA is to move actors around. We would

just as a fire ball explosion was set off under it. It was supposed to be a one-time deal, but we ended up doing it twice. (This is the scene where Scarlett [Rachel Nichols], is fighting with the Neo-Viper, and the Grizzly explodes behind her.) For this specific scene, it was the first time that one of the main cast members came to work with us on 2nd Unit.

Towards the end of the four weeks of my nights on the prairie, another cast member showed up to do some additional scenes: Sienna Miller, aka Baroness. (They were shooting the scene when she is walking down the hill with the Neo-Vipers). I knew she was on set that day, but I had been working away from the actual filming and missed most of what she shot in person. But I did run into her at base camp, and she was of course, in her full black leather costume. Quite frankly, I was speechless and just stared. Since she and Snake Eyes were the only characters that had their traditional uniforms, the total fan-boy in me had a composure meltdown, and I was caught staring. Thankfully she just smiled and went into her trailer.

It was around the middle of April when we finished up the convoy attack scene and 2nd Unit was wrapping up its American part of the movie. Afterwards they were headed to Prague nearly a month ahead of 1st Unit to begin work on the Paris chase sequence. After filming had been completed on our last night shoot, it was around 10:00 AM the next morning when I got home and crawled into bed. I had just turned off the lights and was about to fall asleep, when the phone rang. Reluctantly I answered it. It was one of the AD's from 1st Unit calling to see if I could come in immediately because they needed more PA's. I explained that I had literally just wrapped with 2nd Unit not more than two hours before, and I couldn't do 24 hours of G.I. Joe. So the following morning at 6:00 AM, I was on set with 1st Unit.

We were now exclusively filming at Downey Studios. The buildings that are now movie studios were originally constructed to help build the Space Shuttles, so you can understand the sheer size. We had six buildings housing over fifty sets---all devoted to *Rise of Cobra*. Some of the sets included The Pit and its headquarters room, the workout room where Ripcord hits on Scarlett, Destro's MARS factory at the beginning of the movie, young Snake Eyes & Storm Shadow's kitchen fight set, many of the vehicle interiors from helicopters, submarines, Ripcord's Night Raven jet, and Grizzlies, the entire exterior and interior arctic base where the Joes arrive on the Rockslide snowmobiles, and all



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move the actors from base camp; which included makeup/hair, wardrobe, and the actor's trailers, to the different sets in and around the Downey stages in golf carts all day long. I was able to interact with the cast a lot as we drove them around.

My prior staring notwithstanding, with Sienna Miller around nearly every day, I was getting used to seeing her famous black catsuit and glasses, and I was actually able to operate like a real PA. (It's amazing what one gets used to looking at!) On one occasion, I had just read a list of the best female villain characters (not just in comics), and the Baroness was listed in second place. I told Miller about it, and she was surprised that the Baroness was ranked that high on the list. At the time, I don't quite think she understood how iconic her character really was. In fact, most of the cast didn't seem to really grasp the scope of just how truly iconic the characters they were playing were, and the effect they would have on us fans. This was the spring of 2008, more than a year before the release date in August of 2009, and long before the insane world-wide press tour the actors would later go on before the film opened.

The one exception to this, was Ray Park; who through his role as Darth Maul in *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, really understood that Snake Eyes is truly one the one of most iconic characters ever created in toy/comic book history. Snake Eyes is consistently in the Top 10 best character lists, and Ray spoke many times about trying very hard to make sure he did everything right to properly portray his character.

The actors were all generally very happy to be there, which is nice, because this is certainly not always the case on many big movies.

Ray Park in general, was super friendly, and I got to talk with him the most out of the entire cast. On one memorable occasion, when he was in his full Snake Eyes costume with his visor on and sword and pistol in hand, we were having a normal conversation. Now, Ray is Scottish, and he speaks with the corresponding accent. So here I was literally talking to Snake Eyes, and he was not only talking back to me, but it was also with a Scottish accent. This was one of the fan moments where I totally lost it. I just wanted to scream: "Stop talking to me! Snake Eyes doesn't talk! You're ruining my childhood!" Of course that was just in my head, but I walked away from him in mid-conversation and went off by myself to try and forget that moment. (Park wasn't offended, and we talked many more times later, although most times without his mask on.) Ironically, now in retrospect, it is one of my best stories from the set that I tell all the time, but at the time, I hated it.

Channing Tatum and Marlon Wayans, as expected, were always in great spirits, good for a laugh, and seemed to be really enjoying themselves being Joes. Christopher Eccleston always walked to set when we weren't in hurry to get him there. I didn't have much interaction with Rachel Nichols, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Byung-hun Lee, Said Taghmaoui, or Joseph Gordon-Levitt, and I never meet Dennis Quaid or Arnold Vosloo.

I also had no interaction with Director Stephen Sommers, which is typical on such a



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big movie. Directors are routinely put in bubbles of protection by the AD's to help focus the movie. For such a huge production, it was run smoothly and we had short days. (Well, a 12 hour shooting day in the film business is considered short). And I never once saw Larry Hama on set as an advisor, and I wasn't working there the day they shot his cameo.

Aside from the main actors, I also met and got along really well with a lot of the stunt men and women working on the film who were mostly dressed as 'Green Shirt' Joes or MARS/Cobra personnel. They had wire systems pulling, yanking, and throwing them all over the place, and I really found a new appreciation for how tough stunt people are. Not only would they perform complex stunts, they would do them day after day, multiple times a day, and rarely complain.

Moving on, I was very impressed by the wardrobe on the film. The costume department was huge---probably the largest I have ever seen on a film. They had a factory churning out tons costumes, as every character had multiple costumes, and each costume had multiple versions of it usually related to the type of use. For instance, Snake-Eyes had a fighting one, a close-up one, and a regular one. As for his most controversial aspect; the sculpted lips on his mask, I don't remember noticing them. Up close and taken with the full costume, it just seemed normal in person. One thing I

noticed with Storm Shadow's main costume, was where its inspiration came from. The look was taken directly from the Devil's Due alternate comic continuity series, 'G.I. Joe: Reloaded'; a very well received but short run comic series. It was a very pleasant surprise to me as a huge comic book fan, to see this look, as it was proof that the Costume Designer took her inspiration from all parts of the G.I. Joe world.

The swords the actors used had many different types ranging from real metal ones for close-ups (they were dull, but looked sharp), super hard plastic ones painted to look real for the actual sword-to-sword fight scenes, super short versions for them so they could put them in the holders on their back, costume styled ones, and they had rubber practice versions that were literally very beaten up. On several occasions, I got to hold and swing the swords. But the props guys were like security guards guarding Fort Knox. They wouldn't let anything out of their sight even for a moment.

We were filming a scene (that was later cut out) in a bathroom where Duke looks at his dog tags. I went up to the prop assistant and asked to see the tags, as I wanted to verify they spelled his name right. It was. Needless to say, he was suspicious of me from then on.

The only costume I was disappointed with, was Cobra Commander. I got to watch in-person the final climatic moment of the movie where Cobra Commander and Destro have the big reveal of their final masks. When Joseph Gordon-Levitt walked on set with his mask (Destro's mask was all digital), I was totally surprised and very disappointed. Remember, this was long before any leaks showed up online, and before the toy figures with masks had shown up in the news. In fact, most of the crew working that day who were familiar with G.I. Joe, were wondering where the blue mask/hood was. All of us fans are still asking that same question today...

Another cool thing, was, I got to help out with was the digital scan-



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ning of the actors. The visual effects (VFX) companies were scanning everything--the props, the costumes, parts of vehicles, and of course, the actors. They would do a complete, very detailed, digital high resolution head scan of the actors and a separate scan of the full body. It was funny to watch the actors go through just about every expression a person can: laughing, frowning, smiling, anger, yelling, etc. in the span of like ten minutes. Additionally, they would do a full body scan of the actor in their costume. In *The Big Bang Theory*; another behind the scenes featurette on the DVD, this scanning unit can be seen. It has Channing Tatum in his accelerator suit, surrounded with lights going in a circle around him. With good reason, the VFX crew members are a very important part of this type of film, both on set and off. This scanning lasted over a week.

One day, we received a surprise. At lunch, the VFX department had set up a huge HDTV where they played an animatic of the Paris chase sequence. (An animatic is rough CGI version that is a pre-visualization of a sequence that requires huge visual effects work. It's an imperative step to creating this type of sequence.) This was the same animatic I later saw shown in parts of the DVD featurette *Next Gen: The Amazing Visual FX & Design of G.I. Joe*. I remember after watching it for the first time, I was thinking I had never seen a chase scene like that before. And quite frankly, after watching the final movie, I found it to be one of the best action sequences of the film.

I was also there the day Hasbro/Paramount's photo crew came to take the promo photos of the actors in full costumes. These are the pictures that are on all of the boxes, figure cards, magazines, posters, comics, and every other piece of merchandise you see them pictured in with their costumes on.

Perhaps the biggest thrill in my lifelong hobby, was when I was able to put on a Elite-Viper costume. They were short on tall background actors that day, so they hurried up and put me in the costume. I was almost in the movie, but much to my disappointment, I wasn't shot that day. But it was never-the-less, very cool to be a Elite-Viper, even for a couple of hours.

On the last day of principle photography in the United States, Hasbro showed up and passed out 25th Anniversary toys, crew T-shirts, and hats to the team that wasn't moving on to Prague. It was mid-May 2008, and the film still had over a month of production left, as well as the entire Paris chase sequence still to shoot. At this point in time I thought my experience with G.I. Joe had just reached its most amazing limit. But one can never underestimate what will happen in the future...

More than a year went by, in which I probably worked on ten other projects. Then, July 2009 came upon me. First, I made my annual



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trip to the San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC). During the five days I was there, I received special advanced access to the Joe comic book information that IDW; the current publisher of the G.I. Joe comic, was going to present. I was able to meet for the first time many of the creators of the G.I. Joe comic books, including artist Robert Atkins, Mike Costa, Christos Gage, Editor Andy Schmidt, and Marketing Manager AnnaMaria White. At the Hasbro booth, I met many of the G.I. Joe toy creators and designers. At the Electronic Arts (EA) Games booth, I ran into Ray Park (he was playing the Snake Eyes character in the video game), who gave me a hint about the upcoming sequel. I stayed at my friend Nok Nov's house, and I finally met in-person Sam "Nomad" Damon, one of the creators of JoeDeclassified.com.

Because of my status with YoJoe.com, and because I had worked on the movie, I was given some amazing pre-movie access by Paramount marketing. On July 30th, I screened the movie on the Paramount lot in a screening room earlier than almost anyone in the country, ahead of all the major newspaper and magazine critics. My review posted the next

day was one of the first official reviews of *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*. This screening was very special to me for two reasons:

First off, it was ironic timing. Originally I was planning on seeing another movie with my dad at the exact time Paramount called, so he got to see it with me. And frankly, I can directly attribute my love of movies to him, because he took me to tons of movies all my life, including *Star Wars* in 1977 when I was five years old. We still try to see films on a weekly basis. Plus, he and my mom had to put up with all of those trips to the comic and toy stores so I could buy my G.I. Joe toys and comics with my allowance and lawn mowing money.

My second reason, is, when the credits rolled, my named appeared in the 2nd Unit Production Assistant section. As I said, working on G.I. Joe was a highlight of my life, and seeing my name roll by as I was sitting next to my dad was just awesome.

A few days later I was given access to press row for the Red Carpet Premiere at Mann's Chinese Theater in Hollywood. On the red carpet, I was able to interview many of the actors, Hasbro CEO Brian Goldner, and producer Lorenzo Di Bonaventura. I then had the footage edited together into two segments which are available to view on YouTube.com at YoJoe.com's Antarcticajoe YouTube page. (Search: YoJoe.com G.I. Joe Premiere Red Carpet Parts 1 & 2.) Never having been to a red carpet premiere, much less as press, this was by far my most unique involvement with the film. Then a few days later, I attended the crew screening with many of my friends from the movie, again on the Paramount lot, but this time in their big theater. The producers thanked us for all of our hard work, and said that they were already beginning to plan a sequel.

Finally, in mid-August at the G.I. Joe Collector's Club Convention in Kansas City, I got to meet more of the creators and executives from Hasbro that make my favorite toy. I was also able to screen the full 17 minute version of the YoJoe Red Carpet Premiere to a



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large audience of just Joe fans before they went to a screening of the movie. And courtesy of Paramount, I was able to give away movie posters at the JoeDeclassified convention booth, as well as display many of my unique and rare international G.I. Joe and Action Force comics. This lead to a very cool moment when I was able to show those international comics to Larry Hama. For the first time he saw his stories in eight different languages, and he gave me some brief information on several of them that I didn't know.

The JoeCon is also where I meet many of the best and knowledgeable Joe collectors on the planet. There is nothing like talking about G.I. Joe until 3:00 AM in a hotel bar!

When I first discovered Marvel Comic's 'G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero' comic issue #5 in 1982, it started a hobby that has lasted my lifetime. (Well, I did take break from 1995 to 2001 when they stopped releasing G.I. Joe comics). When Image/DDP started up G.I. Joe again in 2001, I was fully back into buying every Joe comic that was released. And every time I thought that I couldn't get more involved in the Joe world, more opportunities came my way. I do have to thank Jeff Bohn for passing on to me the comic editor position at YoJoe.com. If it wasn't for this position, much of the post-G.I. Joe movie production opportunities would never have happened.

My G.I. Joe movie ride was amazing from that day on that beach when I got the initial call, to the day it was released. Working on that film was the high point of my ten year film career. I had spent 27 years waiting to see Snake Eyes fight Storm Shadow on the big screen, and I was one of the lucky few who not only helped to make it a reality, but I actually got to see it in person as a fan.

Movie set work has an interesting way of passing out of memory quickly, but I will always and forever remember that first day in The Pit watching Snake Eyes and Storm Shadow in action, just as I remember discovering that comic oh-so-many years ago. My G.I. Joe movie experience is something that I will be talking about for all my life.



Sgt. Savage: Frozen in Time

By: Patrick "Notpicard" Stewart

In 1994, the International G.I. Joe Collectors' Convention heralded the arrival of a new G.I. Joe line: "Sgt. Savage and his Screaming Eagles." This was intended to recapture the imaginations of children (an area where the brand had been slipping), and to carry the torch passed on by the 3 3/4" A Real American Hero brand. Unfortunately Sgt. Savage was not well received, and even now, it is dismissed by many collectors. A closer look however, reveals the Sgt. Savage line had a lot to offer, including items that never saw time on a retail shelf.

While it was indeed the burden of Sgt. Savage to carry on in the footsteps of his successful 12" and small-Joe predecessors, it is a common misconception that the line was designed to replace the 3 3/4" figures. Instead, Sgt. Savage was originally intended to supplement the other two size formats. This is evidenced through compatibility with the 3 3/4" line. Weapons were easily interchanged, and backpacks attached with identical pegs. But when the A Real American Hero line was canceled, marketing decisions were made to push the new, taller designs, and Sgt. Savage quickly became the face of opposition to many disappointed 3 3/4" collectors. As a result, Sgt. Savage and his Screaming Eagles did not hold the place in G.I. Joe history that it could have, especially when looking at the specific details and potential it offered.

At its core, the Sgt. Savage roots were based on the 3 3/4" line in terms of design and inspiration. Prior to the 1982 re-release, concepts for a revitalization of G.I. Joe included a series of World War II inspired action figures. Many of the early ARAH Cobra characters had a design aesthetic indicative of the era. (In fact, the European predecessor to Cobra, called the Red Shadows, used the body of the Action Force German Stormtrooper with only a newly sculpted head.) Brand manager and comic book fan, Kirk Bozigian, had often noted his childhood appreciation for the WWII themed Sgt. Rock. (This fondness is the likely motivation to a puzzling choice of code names within the ARAH line. For instance, the code-name "Ice Cream Soldier" was used on a G.I. Joe figure, but it was also the name of a character in the Sgt. Rock comics.) It is very much to Bozigian's credit that Hasbro sought the assistance of seminal Sgt. Rock artist, Joe Kubert. Adorned

with Kubert's art, the Sgt. Savage packages created a new chapter for the brand while also bringing along a classic feel. Kubert's contribution is, in itself, enough food for thought when pondering where the Sgt. Savage line could have gone if it had been given more of an opportunity to continue...

When enjoying a line for its energy, offerings, and potential, it is often important to look at pre-production pieces and production level items that were not released. The Sgt. Savage line is no stranger to canceled items. Commando Sgt. Savage with VHS tape was released, but three additional figures created for release with other video pack-ins were not:

Admiral Blitz was a gray repaint of the General Blitz figure. Air Force Sgt. Savage would have shared the figure mold released with the P-40 Warhawk, but would have had a yellow vest and tan pants. Jungle Patrol Dynamite is quite similar to



Admiral Blitz



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the prior-released Dynamite figure, but with brown/black tiger stripes and a tan bandolier.

While the produced VHS tape was always intended to contain the pilot episode of the cartoon, Hasbro released two very different descriptions of the other three tapes. The 1994 program indicates these figures would have included "a videotape detailing non-combat scenes of military hardware, equipment and other technology." To the contrary, the 1995 Hasbro Pre-Toy Fair catalog only solicited Sgt. Savage and Dynamite (with others possibly included but not pictured) and states "Other videos feature exclusive figures and exciting live-action battle footage!"



Frogman SGT Savage

It is currently unknown why Hasbro decided not to release these three VHS figures, but the two very different content descriptions seem to indicate these items were still changing between the convention and Toy Fair, possibly leading to the decision to cancel.

Interestingly, another trio of unproduced Sgt. Savage figures would surface years later on the collector market. These figures are Frogman Sgt. Savage, Cyber Armor General Blitz, and Grill. Because they never appeared either in a Toy Fair catalog nor a Pre-Toy Fair catalog, very little is known about these figures. Furthermore, with a change to the style of articulation, these figures took on a new design style more similar to items produced at Kenner; with shoulders and hips that pivot in one direction only. The drastic change in figure design hints of changes to G.I. Joe from a corporate structure standpoint. In 1996, the G.I. Joe: Extreme toy line was produced

by Kenner, where the division had been moved to by the parent company Hasbro. (It is also interesting to note while the entire Sgt. Savage and his Screaming Eagles line was cancelled, Sgt. Savage himself survived the transition and popped back up as a core character in G.I. Joe: Extreme.)

Frogman Sgt. Savage featured twelve points of articulation, including the ankles to allow a realistic swimming pose. Undoubtedly, the line would have continued to include various Sgt. Savage figures and this set would have been an excellent way to feature the character while providing a worthwhile new figure.

The unproduced Cyber Armor General Blitz featured an excellent new head sculpt with a removable hat. Several cyborg details were present, while the facial scars were downplayed compared to produced figures. Blitz would have included a plastic harness that attached via two peg holes on the figure's shoulders. This harness made it possible to attach an intricate sci-fi accessory, which seems appropriate considering the character's depiction in the cartoon pilot episode. The harness was designed to include a targeting visor, mounted cannon, and spring-activated blast shields. With ten points of articulation, this version of General Blitz was the least articulated of the three later unproduced figures. However, the striking character design and many accessories made it a crucial loss to the struggling Sgt. Savage toy line.



Sgt. Savage: Frozen in Time

By: Patrick "Notpicard" Stewart

The third and final figure pictured in the unproduced set, is Grill. Of the three, Grill is the only character who had not already been produced in some form. Because he appeared in the cartoon, it seems that this was a character that had been planned in the early stages of the Sgt. Savage series. Aside from his normal weapons, Grill would have included a working parachute much like the ones familiar to 3 3/4" collectors. He is also the only one of the three to feature swiveling biceps (a.k.a. swivel arm battle grip). The inclusion of this figure indicates that given more time, other cartoon-only characters such as Mouse, Head Banger, or Tank may have eventually been released.

These final figures contain only a small hint of where the Sgt. Savage line may have gone if it had continued. But due to many changes occurring at the time; not only at Hasbro, but also in the toy market, this part of G.I. Joe history has been left largely ignored. Yet, a great deal of talent and thought went into it, creating an enjoyable segment of what may have been for those collectors who had chosen to give it some of their time.



Pictured Clockwise:
Airforce SGT Savage, Admiral Blitz,
Jungle Patrol Dynamite, Grill

Unreleased Direct-to-Consumer H.I.S.S. Tank

By Sam "Nomad" Damon

Since the inception of the modern line of 3 3/4" G.I. Joe toys, there has been a fair amount of letdowns in the vehicle department, as well as some rare gems that meet, or even surpass, the standards of the 1982 - 1995 line. Many of those gems; the R.H.I.N.O., Night Ops Hummer, and Night Attack Chopper, have all been newly introduced concepts that augment gaps in the original line. Amazingly, one of those, the DTC H.I.S.S., has been a tried and (sometimes) true concept.

The Joe line has enjoyed (or not) a long line of H.I.S.S. tanks. We've gotten them in 1983, 1989, 2000, 2002, twice in 2005, and an upcoming 2010 release have all had mass-market H.I.S.S. tanks available at retail. In addition, add in convention exclusives, retailer exclusives, or online availability, and it's safe to say that every G.I. Joe collector of the smaller scale likely has at least one H.I.S.S. tank in his collection. Furthermore, depending on the collector in question, you'll likely receive as many responses to a favorite version. (There are 14 if one counts the impending 2010 release.) Some favor the sleek design of the original, likening it more to its stated name and purpose, the **High Speed Sentry**. Others like the troop carrying capacity and firepower of the H.I.S.S. Mark II.

For my money, the DTC (Direct-to-Consumer) H.I.S.S. was the best possible blend of the two concepts. It retained the sleek look of the original---that of a lightly armored, high speed treaded component, with the troop-carrying capacity of the H.I.S.S. II, as well as some additional firepower that many found lacking in the original design. At the time of its release, it was also the first time Hasbro dipped back into the original color scheme, going with the much revered black (not counting the bizarre black with blue spots combination that covered the re-release of the H.I.S.S. IV). It almost seemed like a tailor-made product, designed from start-to-finish to satisfy every Joe collector's toy desires.

The DTC H.I.S.S. was first revealed at the 2005 San Diego Comic-Con, alongside the R.H.I.N.O., R.O.C.C., and Night Ops Humvee. It was as if it was one of the cornerstones of the upcoming Direct-to-Consumer model of the G.I. Joe brand. Or was it?

At the 2005 International G.I. Joe Convention in Minneapolis, was the announcement of the Direct-to-Consumer model for Hasbro. Earlier that year in February, it was said that the transition to the 8" Sigma 6 line that would continue as the brand's retail store presence, while DTC was announced as an internet-direct retail system from HasbroToyShop.com to give limited-run 3 3/4" toys the consumer. In addition to the presence of the DTC and Sigma 6 toys at that show, was also some artwork that alluded to a missing piece of the design puzzle---one that would eventually come to surface in an unproduced form.

Amongst the images shown at the Minneapolis convention for the purposes of showcasing the upcoming Sigma 6 cartoon, was animation cell of the DTC style of H.I.S.S., except in classic Cobra crimson. (Not quite as classic as the blue, but-oh-so-close by now). This image was the first indication to collectors that we might indeed be getting a new H.I.S.S. tank. Sure, it was red, and it had missiles, but... it was a H.I.S.S. tank! (I should note, there seems to be a significant portion of the collector and fanbase that imagines the H.I.S.S. as the Holy Grail of vehicles. If you are one of these folks, right on!) The only possible downside was, at the time, it looked to be a Sigma 6 venture, and it was inconceivable that we as collectors were going to get vehicles in



Unreleased Direct-to-Consumer H.I.S.S. Tank

By Sam "Nomad" Damon

proportion to Sigma 6 figures. As the 2.5" Sigma 6 line had yet to be revealed, it seemed as if this offering might be nothing more than a cartoon presence.

Back to the 2005 Comic-Con: The DTC vehicles were revealed, and the H.I.S.S. was embraced by the fandom. And it was black! All was well and good with the world of G.I. Joe. Well, at least for the moment. Except for the fact that they wouldn't ship outside the U.S., DTC was well received. The figures were good, the vehicles were golden (see the first paragraph), and having figures delivered to your door was a pretty nice deal. Yes, there were also downsides, but that's not the subject of this article.

Several months later, a red version of the H.I.S.S. was released in the 2.5" scale. More months after that, a red and black version of the DTC H.I.S.S. surface on eBay and some online shops. Collectors naturally assumed this to be a re-deco of some sort, and would likely follow in a later production wave. No worries there. Except, such was not the case.



The red DTC H.I.S.S. was the first version done up by Hasbro.

Yeah, yeah, big deal. Except, it sort of is. Very rarely do finished paint scheme vehicles not make it out to market and still come up for sale. Very rarely do mold changes occur in vehicles and not make it out to market. Most importantly, very rarely is there a finished, different version that fails to see release, and which actually is the first version of the toy, the one that fails to make it to retail.

So what makes this version different? Glad you asked.

First and foremost (or at least most obvious) is the paint job. I believe we all tend to think of the H.I.S.S. as being classically black, but as stated above, we went nearly 25 years between black releases.

Contrary to that, this H.I.S.S. version was to sport a

crimson hue, much in line with too many other versions. The Sears', 2002 Convention's, Operation Crimson Sabotage's--- the list of crimson H.I.S.S. tanks goes on and on. Much has been made in the online fandom over the years of the maligned and contradictory crimson color used in Cobra. As a color that was supposed to highlight a level of the Elite; dating back to the classic Crimson Guard, it now seems to have evolved into "the color for Cobras when we can't think of a better color". I won't go into depths or details of the protracted argument, suffice to say that I agree with those who believe it has been overexposed.

In addition to the crimson base color, are some long, abstract, black lines that could only be construed as some form of camouflage. What kind of camouflage, I'm not particularly certain, as it seems to fit no known environment or any previous Cobra deco pattern. It should also be noted the similarly designed and released 2.5" Sigma 6 H.I.S.S. was devoid this bizarre camo pattern. It's completely understandable why the change was made to a black paint for the actual release. I, for one, am glad.

More importantly and less obvious, is the mold. Overall, I like the design aesthetic of the DTC H.I.S.S.. I fall in the camp that views the original H.I.S.S. as too lightly armed. As such, the H.I.S.S. II made me salivate. However, there is a vocal portion of collectors who feel that while yes, the Mark II's heavy firepower is nice, its very bulk is contradictory to the essence of a unit which is designed to be a high speed patrol vehicle. In the DTC version, I believe Hasbro truly made the attempt to address both arguments. While I miss the enormous top cannon of the Mark II, the DTC one does at least

Unreleased Direct-to-Consumer H.I.S.S. Tank

By Sam "Nomad" Damon

appear formidable. It features multiple side-mounted missile launchers, a missile turret on top, and removable chin guns beneath the driver's seat. All together, this make the DTC vehicle capable of more damage than the original in any type of play scenario.

The troop carrying capacity in the rear is a great feature, and a good carryover from the H.I.S.S. II. Its presence modifies the unit from a strict high speed patrol vehicle, to that of a mechanized infantry position. A few of these H.I.S.S. tanks can provide decent firepower support, in addition to deploying an entire platoon into combat. That added versatility also dramatically increased the toy's play value.



The real difference between this early version and the final release, lies in a mold change on the rear quadrant of the vehicle. Unlike the final product, this early version has a closed back to its troop compartment. When it was initially released, this open compartment was one of the flaws collector's found in the design. Certainly, troops ensconced in the rear of the vehicle weren't as protected with a large, gaping hole in the rear of the armor! The explanation given by Hasbro, was, the cutout was made in order to facilitate the ability to manipulate figures in the troop compartment. Having both in hand, I can only say this: It makes no difference.

It can be also argued endlessly whether or not the G.I. Joe brand is carried in sales by young children who play with their toys, or adult collectors. To pick a side in this argument is not my intent. However, with advent of the DTC line, the purported intent was to cater to the adult

collector. The online-only sales plan, the retro-styled card art, and the re-visitation of classic characters were definite signs of this intent. And while it's entirely possible that young children in play testing focus groups had difficulties without the modeling change - it shouldn't have been an issue. As recently as the molding change had to have occurred in the design process for a closed canopy version to exist, it had to be late enough that the DTC marketing model was going to be sold to the intended adult audience. I should point out in Hasbro's defense, they did have the good sense to add a foot-peg to the rear of the vehicle in the released version.

On the figure side, my crimson DTC H.I.S.S. also came with a Night Creeper driver like the retail version. Apart from the tinting of the figure's armor from silver to a faint gold, there is no other difference. Again, much has been made about the choice of a ninja as the driver of a fast attack tank, but it is what it is. It is painful, however, to see what a spectacular job Hasbro did with the 25th Anniversary H.I.S.S. drivers in comparison. (That's why I purchased enough of them to man all my DTC H.I.S.S. tanks.)



Unreleased Direct-to-Consumer H.I.S.S. Tank

By Sam "Nomad" Damon

Overall, I'm a pretty big fan of the DTC H.I.S.S., and I sure bought enough of them to make me happy. I consider the unreleased crimson version as one of the precious, distinguishing pieces in my collection. Given how few of these are floating around (three to my knowledge), I put it on the short list of "Items the wife must grab in cases of fire or earthquake." While I prefer the coloration of the final release, I think the removal of a portion of the rear bulkhead was unnecessary and diminishes the overall coolness of the toy.

I'm holding my opinion of the upcoming 2010 H.I.S.S. until I have one on hand, but if they make a repaint in "Elite Crimson!!!!", I won't be salivating for it.



"Hey Roger, why do I need the International Action Figure Archive book?"

by Roger "Goofateer" Taft

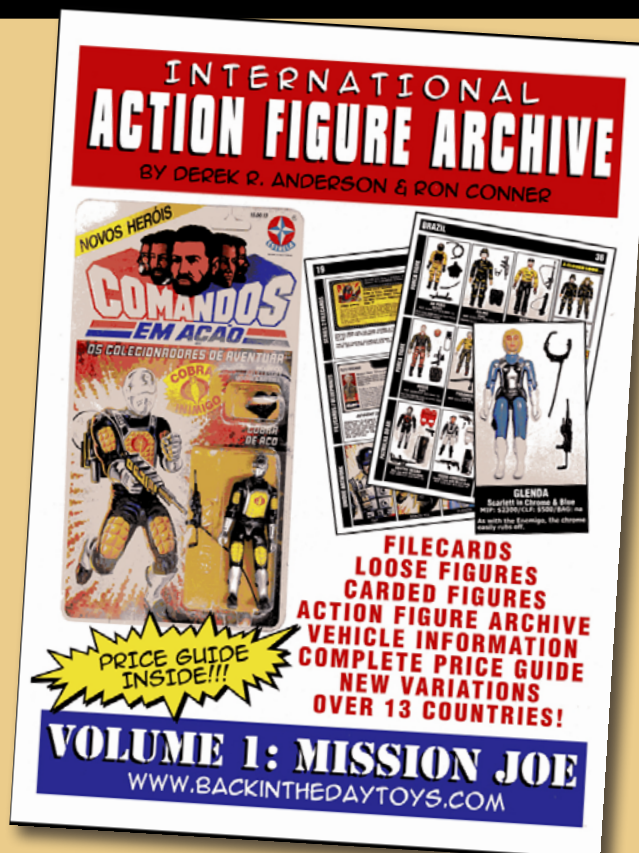
Admit it, that's the only question you really want me to answer for you, isn't it? The book is titled International Action Figure Archive by Derek R. Anderson and Ron Conner. Well, if you're reading this article, then odds are that about 50 percent of you need this book.

Let's face it, there is not much information out there on 3 3/4" international G.I. Joe figures. And what little information there is, tends to be scattered about in little bits 'n pieces. This book makes a Herculean effort to gather all of those obscure tidbits and little known facts into one easy to access packet of information. While I can't say that this is the first time such an undertaking has been attempted, I can say, without a doubt, that it is the most complete such volume on the subject.

Even if you ONLY collect American G.I. Joe figures, this book can still be an invaluable tool. With the proliferation of the internet, and sites such as eBay opening up the world to collectors on an unprecedented scale, you need this book. No longer are you limited to your local toy stores, comic shops, or flea markets. You can go online anytime, day or night, and literally shop around the world. As a result, who knows what you might get?

Say you want a Duke version 1, and you find one from a seller in Hong Kong. Which version will you be purchasing? Will it be an American Duke with rolled cuff sleeves, or the one from China with short elastic sleeves, or the Japanese version with long elastic sleeves? This book will tell you exactly what you need to know.

Another effect the World Wide Web has had on the collectors' market, is, no matter where you buy something, you have no idea where it could have been bought in the first place. We can no longer rely, as we once did, on geography for our item's provenance. The item's mere location can no longer tell us for certain about its origins.



"Hey Roger, why do I need the International Action Figure Archive book?"

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On this point, I can certainly draw from direct, personal experience. A few years ago, I walked into a local Goodwill to check out the toy bins. (A practice I'm sure a number of you, my dear readers, practice on a regular basis. After all, you never know what you might find at a Goodwill, right?) On this particular trip I had done pretty well. I found a fairly nice Skystriker, and something ...well, something a little out of place for a Goodwill store in the middle of Kentucky. I found a Funkskool Street Hawk motorcycle, originally produced in India. For those that are unfamiliar with the Street Hawk, it's an all black version of the normally green 1982 RAM motorcycle (minus the gun sidecar), perhaps based on a short-lived 80's show with the same name and theme. How exactly an exclusive toy from India made its way to a central Kentucky thrift store, I was not certain. But I was sure the internet figured into this story at some point.

So you see, if you want to keep those pesky international items out of your all American G.I. Joe collection, here's the perfect resource to help you do that. However, if you want to dabble in the international market like many G.I. Joe collectors, then this book is still the guide for you.

No other book on the market covers as much international information as this one does. Few books touch on it, and while some might even focus on it, those are all pretty much out of date. While it's true that a few interesting pieces have surfaced since the publication of the International Action Figure Archive, most of them are rare enough that they will not impact the average collection.

At this point you might be wondering what exactly the book covers? Well, let me tell you. First and foremost, it covers loose G.I. Joe figures from at least 13 different countries. I say "at least" because for the purposes of this book, all of Europe is taken as a whole. Technically, that brings the count up to around 20 countries or so. Of course it covers all of the generally known countries; Argentina, Brazil, India, Japan, China, Mexico, and Europe. But it also covers the lesser known countries; Australia's brief Action Man line, the rarely seen Korean carded figures, and the near-impossible to find Nilco figures from Egypt. Not only does it cover all those, it also uncovers valuable information on obscure counties such as Venezuela, South Africa, and Russia. I bet you had no idea that there were ever G.I. Joe figures available in Russia. That is, unless you've read the book.



"Hey Roger, why do I need the International Action Figure Archive book?"

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But the fun doesn't end there. There is a brief history on the subject, several figure comparisons, grading scale, identification guide, and all of the other good stuff you would expect to find in a collectors' guide book. It even touches on some of the vehicle releases from the various counties, it gives several examples of carded figures, and even included a few bootlegs, as well as other unusual releases.



On top of all this, the International Action Figure Archive offers you something that few guide books do. In the grand tradition of *Toyfare* magazine, it is genuinely funny. Reading it cover to cover will keep you giggling, and sometimes even outright laughing. There are gags, and in-jokes throughout the book. There is even a running joke that would seem to indicate the Snake Eyes/Scarlet/Duke love triangle is a moot point, as it now appears that Grunt has won that particular battle.

So in closing, I would just like to say that the International Action Figure Archive is a fun read, and full of valuable information for both the casual, and advanced collector. It's a resource that will pay dividends each time you need to use it.

Collector Spotlight: Sam "Nomad" Damon

Who are you?

My name is Sam "Nomad" Damon.

Please tell us a little about yourself:

I'm 32 and live in San Diego. I served 13 years in the U.S. Navy, on the best Team in the service. Outside of Joe collecting, I'm into RPG games, comics, and art. (I was once an RPG artist by profession). I'm also an avid fitness nut.

How long have you been collecting?

I started collecting in 1982. Even at an early age I tried to get every figure I could put my hands on, although I didn't have much in the way of vehicles. I quit buying in 1992. In 1998, I hit up a Toys 'R Us with some Navy buddies and discovered Joes were back on the shelves. I immediately picked up the habit again, and have been with it ever since.



Collector Spotlight: Sam "Nomad" Damon

What's your favorite piece in your collection?

That's one seriously tough question. My red DTC H.I.S.S., my 1992 Wet-Suit hardcopy, and my unpunched MOC 1986 Wet-Suit are all pretty highly prized possessions. Comic-wise, any and every copy of 'Special Missions: Antarctica' is near and dear, as well as the highly limited copy of 'America's Elite' #36 that was given to me by Mike O'Sullivan for the work I put in on the Devil's Due Press World War III yarn. (And if it makes you feel better, you can blame me for Billy's death.) Similarly, the Guillotine figure is treasured for like reasons, as well as my complete set of original design art for the Plague by Rob Atkins. However, I have a really deep appreciation for all the figures in my collection that are still originals that I bought as a child.

What was your first Joe figure?

The 1982 Breaker. My anti-gun mom decided that I should have the one Joe figure that didn't include any weapons. Next after that was Snake-Eyes.

What kind of Joe items do you collect?

Anything. I'm well known for the enormous army-building. (I army-built my first figure, the Laser-Viper, in 1990). As of this writing, I've finished a deal to complete my domestic Joe collection (minus more troops). I now have a heavy interest in foreign figures. As far as things that are unique to me, anything related to Wet-Suit or Torpedo are high on my list. I have an unopened pair of children's swim fins from 1983, and Tim Seeley and I traded sketches at a convention wherein I walked away with a Torpedo original.



Collector Spotlight: Sam "Nomad" Damon

What's the primary focus of your collection?

Now that I'm done completing the domestic collection, I'm mostly focused on foreign figures and vehicles. Oh, and that troop building thing - gotta have that.



Collector Spotlight: Sam "Nomad" Damon



What piece was the most difficult to acquire?

Honestly, nothing has been all that difficult. As fellow collector Kevin Watts is so fond of pointing out, it's nothing more than a little bit of patience and the willingness to shell out the right amount of money. If I had to pick something headache-inducing, I'd say my Defiant. It's taken me about four separate Defiants to build the complete one I have in my collection.

What's your favorite Joe related memory?

The conventions are usually a good time for me, more for the people than for the toys. I've made great friends in the fan community and at Hasbro over the years that make the trip worth it every year. The only competitive times are those spent helping out with the fine folks over at DDP, and being a staff member of the various Joe websites.





DECLASSIFIED

Phew!

This issue was cutting it close. Without some tremendous help from some key individuals, I'd still be staring at my keyboard, wondering what in the world to fill these pages with. We're not up to our goal yet of quarterly issues, but we squeezed this one out in eight months. Luckily, I've got a great team that worked their hearts out to bring you this latest copy. Go team.

If you're a new reader, you may not realize that Joe Declassified is a non-for-profit, volunteer driven project. Everyone involved contributes solely out of love for the hobby and fans. If you'd like to be involved, please contact me at www.joedeclassified.com. We'll continue to run collector spotlights every issue, so if you'd like to be included - simply follow the format you saw in this issue. Answer the questions and e-mail us some good, comprehensive photos.

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