

I really want to meet James Roberts. His past five scripts have been, in ascending order, an old school murder mystery, a horror movie, a sci-fi thriller, a psychological war story, and robot dystopia. This month he follows up that odd assortment with a half rebellion/half time travel episode that doubles as a strange love letter to the Uncanny X-Men. One has to wonder what kind of mind not only comes up with that, but makes a brilliant and cohesive series out of it. With Brainstorm's offscreen presence keeping the pressure on, the dramatically named "All Our Parlous Yesterdays" is somewhat more straight forward than many of the series' recent issues. While there's a charm to the mind-bending, more original structures that Roberts has employed, it is nice to have a moment to gather oneself. As ever the action is secondary to the planning and discussion of the ethical considerations, but Roberts proved long ago that he can make that far more interesting than a battle scene. One strength of this story is that, while much of it is plainly plot-driven, everything surges smoothly forward until we hit a set-piece. Roberts has a knack for finding the naturalism in a discussion of temporal theory or the politics of Cybertronian religion. One thing that doesn't quite seem natural is Roberts' voice for Orion Pax. While this sounds pettier than I like, it's very strange hearing the future Optimus Prime talk with a British cadence. Roberts is usually pretty good about delineating who speaks British English and who speaks in the American intonation, but after thirty years of his gravely, precise cowboy cadence, it's weird to hear Orion use phrases like "send you lot packing." It's mostly concentrated on the first page, but Pax never quite sounds like Optimus Prime and it seems unlikely he's going to become the version we see in John Barber's *The Transformers*. A couple of the character moments don't play quite as strongly as the MTMTE standard - a moment between Rung and Roller is perfectly fine but seems unspectacular for Roberts, while an unexpected reunion feels overly simple, largely due to Rodimus' characteristic lack of tact. Nonetheless, when you hit the core of the issue you'll know it. The conversation between the modern Megatron and an unwitting Orion Pax stands out as one of the great interactions of this season. Megatron's longing is so present in this scene. I'm not ashamed to admit that this is a conversation between two transformers that I can't read without feeling it in my chest. The addition of Megatron's implication that he was forced to take up arms by Orion's reluctance is fascinating both as an examination of the pre-war politics and a question of whether it was true in the moment or not. Combined with more than a few quick but lovely character moments - Whirl's glee at Rodimus' orders and Chromedome's appreciation for his wonderful geek of a conjunx endura stand out - MTMTE #36 is a strong but slightly standard issue on the writing front. Alex Milne and Joana Lafuente work particularly well together this month. Lafuente's bright, vivid colors in the past sequences bring to life the optimism and moral certainty of that era as opposed to one where Megatron the conqueror is an Autobot, naturally asking what it means when the Clampdown can be idealized in memory. I feel like this issue is a strong representation of Milne's work. The art is very distinctively his, reminiscent of the artwork in the opening arc of the series, with bold lines and clear signs of his personal quirks. The whole aesthetic is slick and cartoony, but not at all at odds with the tone of the story. Occasionally it doesn't work, I've never liked the way characters look when wide-eyed and this is no exception, but when you can give Whirl distinct facial expressions you can't be too far off. The skill that Milne has shown in injecting drama and emotion into scenes of discussion is plain to see. Milne adjusts his style without ever making an image that feels opposed to the feeling of the book. Much of the power of Megatron's aforementioned conversation comes from the expressions that Milne gives him. Reading this issue, it becomes clear how fitting a pair Milne and Roberts are. Particularly in the face of a character like Rodimus, we can see the sudden swing between dead serious and almost

manically cheerful. It suits this series about the horrors of war and the rare and simple things that make it possible to endure. The issue also features a surprising number of two-page compositions, with panels spilling across pages. It's a nice way to capture the expansive quality of these history making battles and gives Milne's characteristically full pages a little more room to breathe. Unsurprisingly, he takes good advantage of it. The post Transformers: More Than Meets The Eye #36 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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