

full details of the group's revised history).

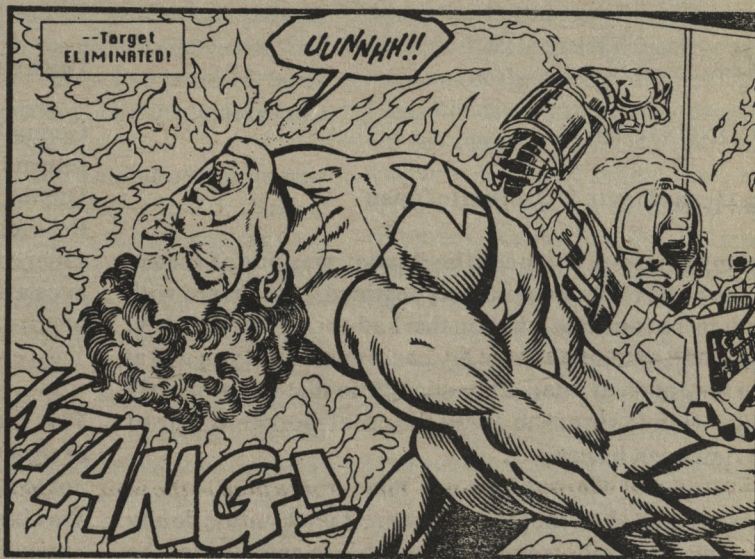
Meanwhile, more recently, Wolfman began a major revamping of the current *New Teen Titans* series (long since retitled *New Titans*). By this time there had already been some changes, like Robin becoming Nightwing, Wonder Girl becoming the demigoddess Troia, Kid Flash leaving the group to become the new Flash after his mentor was killed, and so on, but Wolfman had decided to more totally revamp the book, beginning two years ago with the "Titans Hunt" storyline in which the past and present members of the group were stalked by the mysterious Wildebeest Society. That storyline wound up only a few months ago, but by the time it ended Wolfman had killed off Raven, Jericho, and Golden Eagle, reduced Cyborg to a lobotomized robot, transformed unpopular boy telekinetic character Danny Chase into the mysterious Phantasm, and blown up the Titan's island headquarters in a blast that rocked New York and made the Titans homeless outcasts and the subjects of a zillion dollar lawsuit ... just wasn't their day.

The recent direction of the series has had some good points. The almost constant changes and perils the cast have been subject to have added a renewed sense of suspense and direction to the book, though Wolfman often lays it on much too thick with overdramatized revelations, shocking cliffhangers, and hype-drenched cover copy, all of which becomes predictable and tiresome after a while. A subtler touch would help immensely, as would better pacing. Still, Wolfman remains an excellent character writer, and has nicely followed the development of his protagonists through these crises, not to mention the various new characters who hooked up with the team during the "Titans Hunt", including Pantha (a sometimes amusingly obnoxious cat-woman who prefers disembowelment to small talk), Phantasm (mysterious spirit-type who looks like an animated, floating sheet), Red Star (super strong russian hero). and the Team Titans, (a group of Titans from an alternate future, recently spun off into their own series). Wolfman has a neat cast to work with if he can only take a break from the crises and find some way to settle them a bit, give them some semblance of organization and purpose and find a set direction for his new cast now that he's shaken them up a bit. With such a good cast, though, and excellent art by penciller Tom Grummet (who's wasting far too much of his valuable talents on that deadbeat, Superman), *New Titans* is currently a better-than-average super book.

*The Titans Sell-Out* is a nice introduction to the team in that it's a self-contained story and an entertaining experience (more so than most issues of the *New Titans* itself, in fact). It opens just after the New Titans and their young Team Titans counterparts have saved the universe from a would-be god called Lord Chaos and are looking to relax and get away from the media scrutiny and legal harassment they've been suffering in New York; so,

they get away from it all in the one place where they almost blend into the crowd ... Hollywood. While there, their friend and benefactor, millionaire Steve Dayton, suggests that they try to boost their image and finances by licensing their names and images to be made into toys and a multimillion dollar movie. The epic movie in question quickly degenerates into a deal to produce a Titans cartoon series, and the "Teeny Titans" cartoon-pilot prepared by the studio has to be seen to be believed.

The "real life" events of the story are well written, and drawn



Cyborg and Red Star playing rough... a scene from an upcoming Titans tale in SHOWCASE '93.

capably by various artists (including a gorgeous series of "vacation snapshots" illustrations by Adam Hughes), but the best part of the book is the "Teeny Titans" cartoon story, which is a nifty spoof of not only the Titans but also of animated cartoons and comic book superheroes in general, as the cabbage-patch kiddie versions of the Titans fight the Toyminator, toymith gone bad (batteries included). Along the way there's some nifty spoofing of popular toy merchandising and even TV, with forays into "Star Trash, the Further Degeneration", and your favourite talk show, "Soapra", wherein the Toyminator addresses the topic of "Morons who Become Super Heroes and the Wonderful, Handsome and Dashing Villains who Destroy Them Forever." The whole mess adds up to a complete and total farce with more than a few laughs along the way, and some amusing, cartoony art.

To sum up: *New Titans* itself is a fairly decent series (though its companion series *Team Titans* thus far leaves a lot to be desired), but if you don't want to "Titan" your belt and buy all the Titans comics then the *Titans Sell-Out Special* is a neat self-contained novelty you might want to try as a sampler. There's even a bound-in, fold-out Nightwing poster by Art Thilbert for all you Art lovers (pun intended) out there. With gimmicks like that, maybe the Titans really are going commercial. ■