

TOTALLY TUBULAR '80s TOYS

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Prehistoric Power

Dino-Riders harness dinosaurs



Dino-Riders action figures: Deinonychus with Antor, and Quetzalcoatlus with Yungstar.

The back story of Tyco's Dino-Riders toy line, whose tag line read: "Harness the Power of Dinosaurs," pitted the noble Valorians (a play on the word "valor") against the sinister Rulons (i.e. "rulers"). The fourteen-episode animated program, airing as part of the Marvel Action Universe on USA, and its resultant toy line was concocted at the beginning of America's resurgent infatuation with dinosaurs.

In the 1980s, dinosaur-mania and the fascination with these "terrible lizards" held the attention of many American children, and Tyco capitalized on this by creating some of the best-sculpted and designed toys of the decade. So excellent were the designs of Dino-Riders, that Tyco was contacted by the Smithsonian Institution to create the National Museum of Natural History's "Dinosaur and Other Prehistoric Reptile Collection" of toys. Tyco went to great lengths to establish a dinosaur-themed toy line that smacked of authenticity, and this allowed the company to tap into the seemingly endless variety of pre-historic dinosaurs on which the company

based its designs: from Valorians' leader Questar's defense force of Diplodocus, Stegosaurus, and Woolly Mammoths, to the malicious Emperor Krulos' Rulon army of Triceratops, Ankylosaurus, and even the fierce Tyrannosaurus Rex, the premiere piece of the collection.

Yet Dino-Riders was not simply a line of 2-inch action figures that rode atop well-sculpted and accurately detailed 1/24th scale dinosaurs; each toy, even those offered at the smallest retail price point, included a complex and intricate array of futuristic accessories. Saddles, harnesses, bridles, laser cannons, and even a set of generic weapons for each figure packaged with their respective dinosaur.

Unfortunately, even though initial sales of the Dino-Riders were exceptional, the high production costs of such quality items (let's not forget the excellent packaging) was restrictive: the toys were simply too costly to produce while maintaining high quality standards.