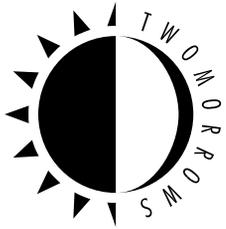


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Brick Journal

Issue 20 • August 2012
people • building • community

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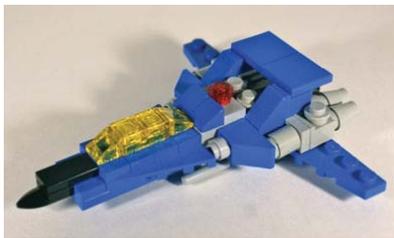
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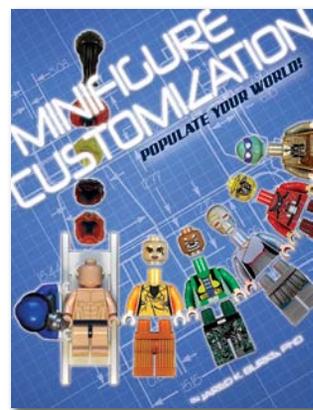
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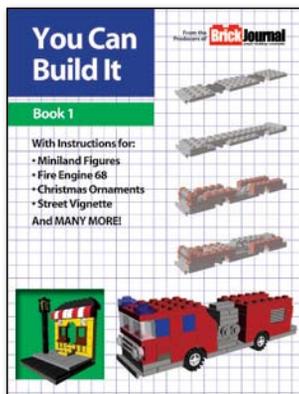


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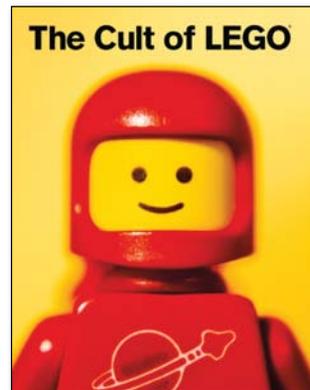


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Brick Journal

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Contents

From the Editor 2

People

Nathan Sawaya: Herobuilder! 4

Alex Jones:

A Comic Portfolio in Bricks 6

Peter Corp: Iron Mecha 12

Building Comic Art with BaronSat ... 14

Evan Bacon: Comic Book Builder 18

From Iron Man to Batman:

Tyler Clites on Building Heroes 20

Greg Hyland:

Drawing AFOLs and More 24

Brandon Griffith Strikes Back 29

Building

Minifigures and New Gothopolis 36

What Happened

to LEGO Universe? 41

Miniland Heroes 50

Minifigure Customization 101:

Sculpting Custom Hair

from Clay 52

You Can Build It:

Mini Batwing 56

You Can Build It:

Batmobile 59

Community

Not Quite LEGO:

Bring on the Bad Guys! 66

Cover Art: Making Issue 20 73

Superheroes Assembled 74

Inventing the LEGO Wheel 76

Community Ads 78

Last Word 79

AFOLs 80

July 2012

Issue 20

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Photo and Model by Olivier Curto.

About the Contents:

Catalyst, a LEGO sculpture of DC Comics' Catwoman, makes an appearance in BrickJournal courtesy of Nathan Sawaya.



From the Editor:

This issue has been something of a rollercoaster ride for me, as it started fast with a lot of interest and contributors, then it got slow with production, then it got fast with more articles and then slow with more production...

The one thing I noticed is that there is a LOT of interest in comic book heroes. It's easy to see who is popular from what is in this issue. Batman® and Iron Man® are in

this mag in at least two forms, and that is interesting for a couple of reasons: 1) There is a universal appeal to them, and 2) There is a universal appeal to build them.

Batman has a lot to draw from to build, from his costume to his gadgets. Iron Man IS a gadget, so it's logical that we try to build him.

What's really fascinating, though, is how many different versions of these characters have been made. There are a lot of Batmen and Iron Men in this issue—not because they are the same, but because they are built differently. Each builder adds their own style to making these, so take a close look and then add your style to building a hero!

Joe Meno, Editor

P.S. Have ideas or comments? Drop me a line at admin@brickjournal.com. I'm open to suggestions and comments and will do my best to reply.

P.P.S... Yes, *BrickJournal* has a website — www.brickjournal.com! Twitter? Yep, there too — <http://twitter.com/brickjournal>. Facebook? Yup — <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=58728699914&ref=mf>. Or you can scan the bottom codes with a QR reader!

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Glossary

AFOL (Adult Fan of LEGO)

NLSO (Non-LEGO Significant Other)

MOC (My Own Creation)

TLG (The LEGO Group)

BURP (Big Ugly Rock Piece)

LURP (Little Ugly Rock Piece)

POOP (Pieces—that can be or should be made—Of Other Pieces)

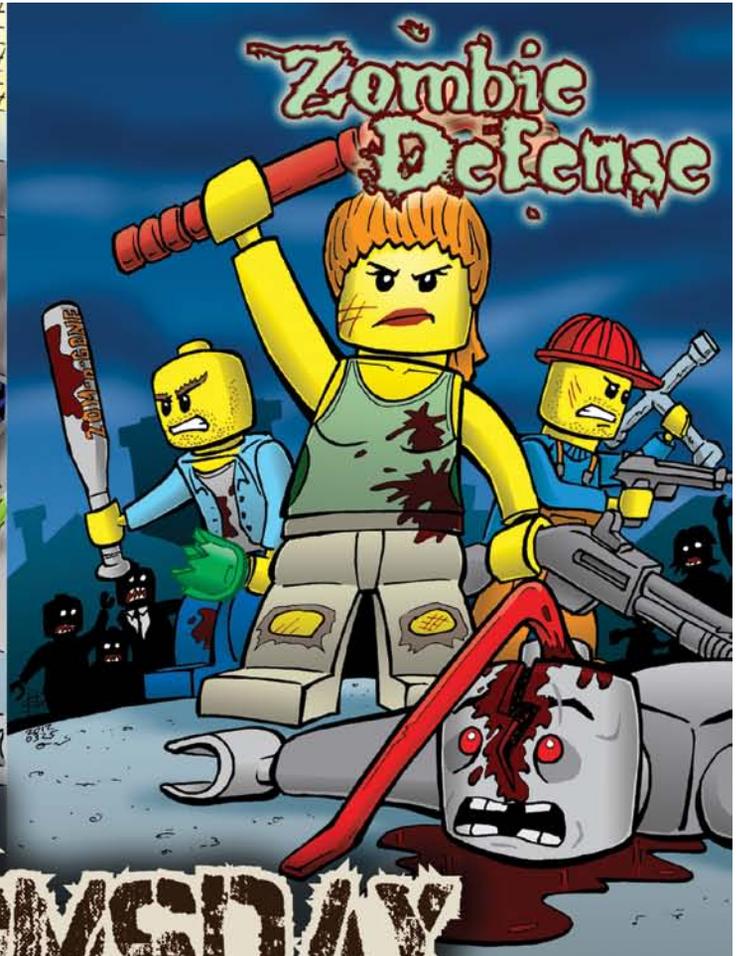
SNOT (Studs Not on Top)

LUG (LEGO Users Group)

LTC (LEGO Train Club)

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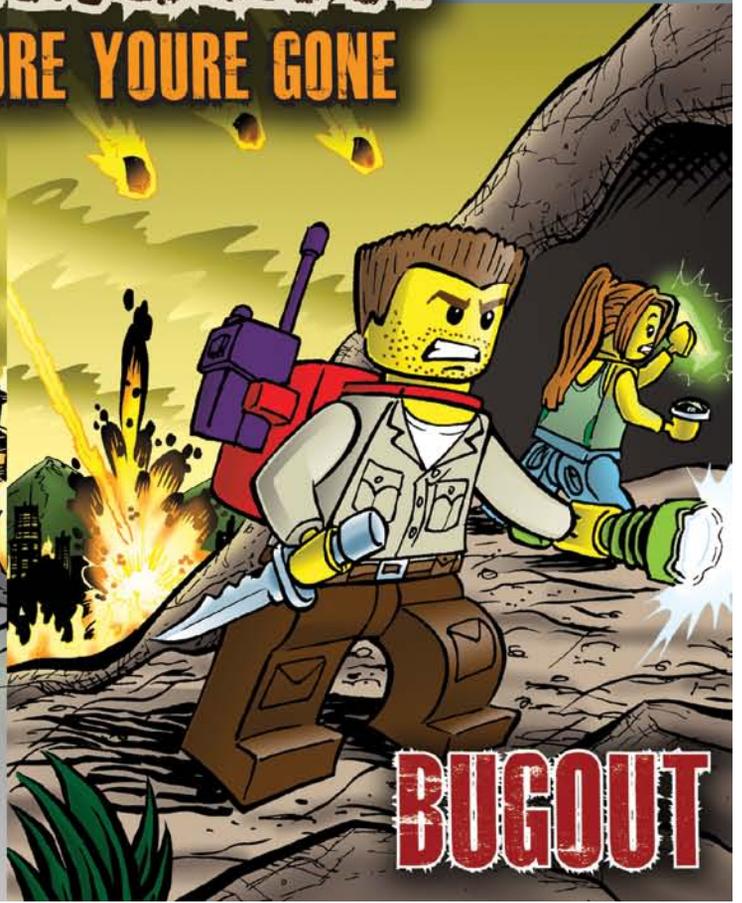
2012

DOOMSDAY

GETEM BEFORE YOU'RE GONE



FALLOUT



BUGOUT

People

Nathan Sawaya: Herobuilder!

Article by Joe Meno

*Photography provided by Nathan Sawaya
and Craig Mathew*

Nathan Sawaya is one of the LEGO Certified Professionals in the US. With this distinction, he has been able to do many different projects, including a couple that have included superheroes. In 2011, he was approached by Los Angeles Times writer Geoff Boucher (writer and blogger of the Hero Complex blog on the Los Angeles Times webpage — <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/>) to create a LEGO sculpture for the Hero Complex Film Festival, an annual event that showcases movies and moviemakers.

As Nathan notes, “Looking over the list of attendees for 2011’s fest, I noticed that Richard Donner, the filmmaker that took Superman to new heights with 1978’s *Superman: The Movie*, was a guest of honor. I thought it would be fun to do my version of Superman for the festival. I also threw in Green Lantern, as that seems to be on a lot of people’s minds these days.”

In 2012, Nathan’s work will become part of a traveling art exhibition, “Darkness & Light: Art Inspired by Heroes and Villains, Hope and Heroism.” Sponsored by Warner Brothers Consumer Products and DC Entertainment, this is a collection of original artwork inspired by the universe of DC Comics and its iconic characters, including Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman.

The collection, which includes more than 100 original works from artists spanning the globe and ranging in various forms, from graphic designers and painters to sculptors, will also raise awareness and funds for DC Entertainment’s WE CAN BE HEROES giving campaign (www.WeCanBeHeroes.org).

The exhibit’s curator, Warner Brothers Consumer Products Vice President of Worldwide Creative Brian Deputy, has been a huge fan of Nathan Sawaya’s work for years and felt strongly that Nathan’s unique perspective and style would add another layer of depth to this incredibly diverse collection. Nathan has



donated a few sculptures, including *Catalyst* (a somber portrayal of DC Comics' version of Catwoman created out of LEGO elements) to the WE CAN BE HEROES cause, as have other artists participating in the "Darkness & Light" collection.

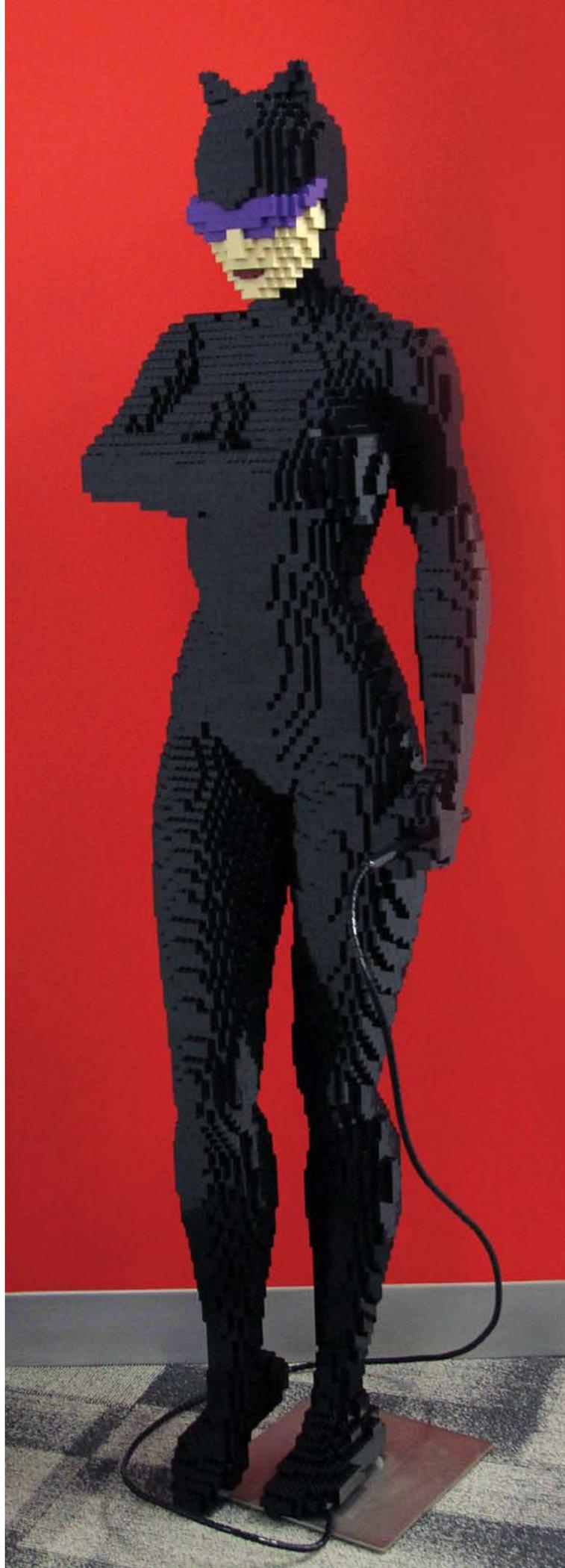
Brian Deputy, when asked about Nathan's work, answers, "I spend my days immersed in creativity and so I find it incredibly refreshing when I come across an artist with a truly unique perspective and style. I have followed Nathan Sawaya's work for years and when I started planning the pieces for "Darkness & Light" I knew I wanted Nathan to participate in the collection. "Darkness & Light" was created to benefit the WE CAN BE HEROES giving campaign and we are so honored to have artists like Nathan donate their work, and the time and energy spent creating that original art, to the campaign, which is now on tour helping raise awareness for the cause."

Nathan's enthusiasm for WE CAN BE HEROES shines through his comments: "I was thrilled when Brian Deputy approached me about participating in the cause by donating a piece of superhero-inspired artwork to the "Darkness & Light" collection. As an artist I was given free rein to interpret DC Comics' characters through my own medium and the result is the Catwoman sculpture which I have titled *Catalyst*. I am glad to be able to add my work to this collection and support such a noble cause and I sincerely hope she is a catalyst to assist in raising awareness to this important cause." 

"Darkness & Light" is currently touring the U.S. (and will be on display at San Diego Comic-Con in the Michael J. Wolf Gallery) offering both comics and contemporary art fans alike the opportunity to see this collection firsthand and learn about the WE CAN BE HEROES initiative and the three humanitarian aid organizations that are supported by this campaign.



You can find out more about WE CAN BE HEROES by going to:
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Alex Jones: A Comic Portfolio in Bricks!

*Article and Photography
by Alexander Jones*

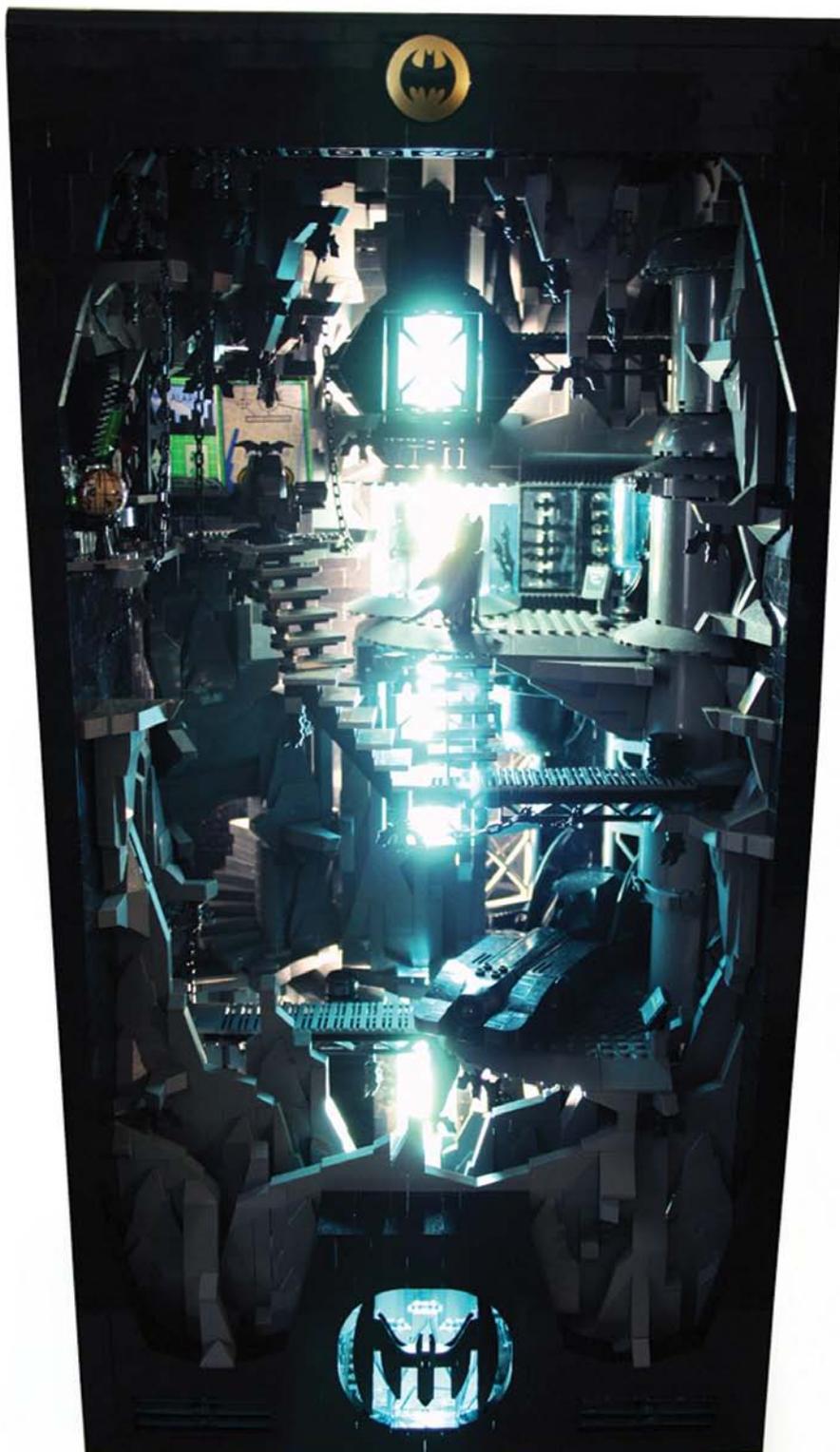
My name is Alex Jones, also known as Orion Pax. I'm a construction toy designer and brick artist from Germany. My focus lies on high-end detailed constructions, models and layouts.

Since my last interview with *BrickJournal* (Issue 2, Volume 2: Summer 2008) a lot of things have changed. I became a professional working freelance for TLG promoting and presenting my creations on exhibitions. I did lots of different projects like *Back to the Future*, Graffiti, and more '80s recreations like M.A.S.K and TRANSFORMERS.

I do urban and street art exhibitions presenting companies like SNEAKER FREAKER. I recently started orionpax.de where you can see all of my projects.

This article though is for another great passion I share with most of you guys.

Superheroes like Batman or Iron Man are always worth a good creation....



'90s BATCAVE

When I did some of my latest Graffitis I worked with lights. I thought it would be cool to transfer this idea into my other creations and the perfect way to create some mystic atmosphere. And what is better then a Batcave to get even more of that?

Also at one point, every decent brick collection has enough Batman parts to make you build something with it. It is the same with Star Wars.

For what is the reason for collecting all these nice figures when they just collect dust? They need to be in a nice vignette or diorama.



Kids want to play, I just want to look at them in the best possible way to present them and put them in a scene. Makes sense, no?

I decided to use 40 x 40 studs as a base to start with. The neon light source is placed centered on the backwall. I used lots of BURPs in all directions combined with pretty much all of my dark bluish-grey slopes I had by that time to get the cave structure done. The biggest challenge was to get a good variation of levels in there.

If you look closely you'll find 40 bats hanging all around the cave. On the right side starting from the Batmobile platform, there is an elevator which leads to the suit/armory room and the stairs up to the Batcomputer and the lab on the left. The armory displays nicely with the light shining from the back.

You see an old Bat and Robin suit in the center which is a homage to the old '60s TV show. All in all, I was aiming on creating the atmosphere you would expect from a Batcave with a real dark and mystic appeal rather than the more high-tech bright action-packed cave.

It took me around one week to get the whole structure to a height of 68 bricks and counts probably something between 8000 and 9000 bricks.

The Batmobile that is featured with the cave is truly inspired by the Batmobile in the Burton movies. My personal favorite after the '60s version.

The part that made it perfect to build for me was the serpent basilisk body segment in black for the front turbine.

The Batman figure is bigger as a normal minifigure because I used the Toy Story Woody legs and arms to fix the scale. Now it actually looks like a figure with good proportions. Also, next to the Batmobile it looks just right.





'60s BATCAVE

"Atomic batteries to power, turbines to speed!" As a kid I used to watch that show and was so amazed by the design of the show, including the angular frames, colors, design on the Batmobile and for sure the Batcave. When watching the pilot movie for inspiration I realized how hilarious the movie actually is — for example, the scene where Batman is attacked by a shark while suspended from the Batcopter. Still, the design of the cave and the Batmobile had the same effect on me as it did before.

I built a '60s Batmobile earlier which I thought could use some review and work. New elements are always a good excuse to revisit some of my older model, and in this case it is the transparent bubble part from Toy Story Buzz Lightyear minifigure that forces me to return. Two of those parts were just perfect for the two windcreens. A nice detail is that it is 6 wide in the front and 7 wide in the back which gives you a 'wing' effect. The Batman figure is scaled up too which looks nice next to Robin.

For the cave the neon lamp in the back is horizontal. The base is 48 x 32 studs and 28 bricks in height. Again I used a mix of BURPs and slopes in reddish brown to create the cave structure.

The most fun I had was with the interior, such as detailing the lab table with transparent parts. I love the new flask with the green liquid. The instant costume changer poles is probably my favorite detail, but there is a lot more stuff to discover.

What was really helpful was my collection of old printed tiles and slopes. It adds a lot of detail to every creation if you use these parts or stickers.

Working with real light sources is not easy. You have to be careful that you leave enough space around the source and it is important that no brick has contact to it. With the '60s cave I sometimes have the feeling that it gets too warm in there. You don't want to melt down your brick, that's for sure. The safest way would be to use LEDs which usually don't get too warm.







SPAWN

What Todd McFarlane delivered to the world of comics was and will always be the best comic line I can think of. When I started my design career, I was a lot into drawing and he was probably my biggest source of how to do it the right way.

Like I mentioned earlier in the article sometimes only one element gives you the inspiration for a whole creation.

In this case it was Toy Story Zurg's big cape. I used three of those with a bit of scissor customization to get the fringe look right. For the head I spraypainted big Buzz Lightyear's head black.

The painting on his face is custom too. I think a great detail of the sculpture is the base with the cross in the back. It always adds a lot to your creation too if you build it into a small diorama or vignette. Gives it a better presentation.

A big challenge on the body was to find the right proportions and the right elements to keep it as organic as possible. I still have him watching over my models in my cabinet of creations.

IRON MAN

During all my art exhibitions I had the pleasure to present together with the famous ARVO BROTHERS. It was the STROKE 2 event in Munich where I met them and their fabulous Iron Man sculpture.

After talking to them I mentioned that I had wanted to build a standing version of our favorite superhero for a long time. So you can see it as a homage to ARVO and as another of my obsessions that I created this 25 inch tall standing Iron Man sculpture with working powerfunctions light sources in the hand, the chest and the eyes.

The muscle structure wasn't easy, but lucky for me yellow and red aren't rare colors, so most of the shaped parts are available. It took me a while to figure out the right scale for every body part. The internet helps a lot to find the right sources to solve that.

At the end of the day no matter what the model you'll always find me giving you the best visual dedication to detail on a theme you can get. And when it comes to my own ideas and visualizations, somebody once said that sky's the limit! 



You can see Alexander's work at <http://orionpax.de/> or you can jump to his webpage by scanning this QR code!



People



Peter Corp: Iron Mecha

Interview by Joe Meno

Photography provided by Peter Corp

Peter Corp is a mecha builder that built an Iron Man model after receiving a custom headpiece. The model was seen online and BrickJournal talked to him about his building style.

BrickJournal: Why do you build?

Peter Corp: A need to be creative—it fuels the soul of our very existence as humans.

We humans are naked inventors. We were born with neither LEGO wings, nor claws, nor color changing camouflage. Our existence is dictated by our ability to adapt through innovation. If we do not have it, we build it. Is that not LEGO in a nutshell?

Often times, we humans are too much in a hurry to stop and smell the flowers. I was once told, “If you look at something long enough you will see details that you never realized were there before.”

Thus, the outcome of a MOC (My Own Creation) is actually nothing more than just the culmination of one’s ability to observe the environment with greater detail. It is as if the builder telekinetically grabbed your head and forced you to take a second look through a magnifying glass at what was once one small fact about life that you never realized was worth exploring. Van Gogh painted shriveled up old sunflowers. Arguably the subjects are not fancy but they are emotionally powerful because of his simple ability to make one stop and actually see the flowers as he saw it, through his eyes, and in a split second see what the creator spent a lifetime studying. Is that not us when we show off a creation?

The intellectual stimulation of creating LEGO MOCs equilibrates the vapid mundaneness in this world with some sanity. As a Border Collie was bred to herd livestock, humans were bred to create. A Border Collie in captivity would literally chew a hole in the wall out of boredom, as do humans that would do destructive things like crime or drugs when they are not given the chance to channel their inherent and primordial need to create. “I object to power without constructive purpose,” as Spock would say.

Why do I build? Because I would destroy if I did not.

BrickJournal: Any tips on posing mechs?

Peter Corp: Look closely at the hips of any good-looking mech on Flickr. The one thing that most people rarely notice consciously is if the hips are tucked in. By pointing the hips forward it gives the figure a much more powerful stance. Leaving the hips flailing equates to an awkward hunched-backed teenage boy in a bad prom picture.

Oddly enough I learned this technique from my iaido sensei who would hit us with a kendo stick if we didn’t tuck in our hips. “Imagine a beam from heaven to earth. Your head should be aligned with your hips,” he would say. This is why I always build extra hip joints into my figures, to give them that extra bit of chutzpah. Sometimes posing a creation is more important than the creation itself. Most of my creations are just a handful of common parts; it is the pose that breathes in a life spirit and brings emotional connection to the viewer. Try it — swing that pelvis like the end of an Elvis



Iron Man poses above and below, with a War Machine action figure.

Presley impression and your mech too can greatly improve its posture.

BrickJournal: What is your LEGO ethos?

Peter Corp: “We are given challenges in life so we may overcome them,” as they often say in the manga [Jin](#). The way I approach building a MOC is similar to how I approach a problem in life.

First I identify what is I want in life, even if the pieces do not fit yet. I have a clear picture in my mind of the final goal, then I set out to connect the bricks. Many times people tell me, “No, that’s not possible.” That is when my brain will sit down and view the connections from different angles, try different scenarios, and through trial, error, and a little luck, create a solution, sometimes with fewer bricks than expected. The best answer is an elegant one. And I think there is always a better way to do something. Learning the rules, then “break” them while maintaining purism. That is my LEGO Ethos. (Yes, I switched the Iron Man helmet after the official LEGO one was released.)

Yes, I have a small amount of LEGO. Yes, it hinders what I can build. But that is what makes LEGO fun. Limitations: it is what makes us mortal. It is how we define who we are, by the choice in bricks we use in life. Ingenuity and creativity are my tools of choice, further strengthened under pressure.

We are given a finite amount of bricks in this world; some builders get more than others. But ultimately to be truly magnanimous it is the contentment in what I built with what I had that alludes to my greatest creation — happiness.

Now excuse me while I go pursue my happiness on Bricklink. 





A selection of Batmobiles, from movies and animated shows.

Building Comic Art with BaronSat

Article by Joe Meno

Photography provided by Eric Druon
(BaronSat)

Eric Druon, also known as BaronSat, is a computer graphic artist, working on images and arranging them on pages, mostly for advertising leaflets. He has always loved LEGO bricks and started to make custom models in the '80s; then when internet exploded he found great websites and discovered he was not alone. That was in the late '90s, early 2000s. He builds mainly playsets, displays or dioramas, as people want to name them and of course characters, then unusual vehicles. Sci-Fi is of course a favorite theme and as an ex-Star Wars collector he always enjoys building models based on this universe.

Eric built a selection of superhero creations, so BrickJournal interviewed him on those models and how he did them.

BrickJournal: What got you into building superheroes? "It's because of the comics!" ... not my fault. Like many people I read comics since my teenage years so it was obvious to combine with LEGO bricks.

The Marvel & DC Minimates and Hasbro Super Hero Squad products somehow started the fire.

BrickJournal: You have built a lot of Batmobiles—what inspires you so much about the vehicle?

I may love to build dioramas, but like other guys I enjoy powerful cars. A hobby, in my opinion, can take you to another world, so building real cars from everyday life seems boring to me. Some people do that with a lot of talent but by myself, I just can't. On the other hand, the Batmobiles are "extraordinary" and constructing such models is pure pleasure. Forget traffic, gas cost, etc. — "ride like the wind" with your brick Batmobile.

BrickJournal: What led you to build a unique Batcave? Some of the elements are from the comics, but it is more your design.

For the Batcave as for all my other models, the first thing I do is gather documents from all eras and types. Then I mix them (just can't help it, my brain is where the chaos takes place), make some very rough drawings, and finally, when I start to build I just follow my mental picture... or build something totally different at the last moment because I think it's the thing to do.

BrickJournal: With the other sets you built, like Wayne library and the villain hideouts, you made play-friendly sets—is this something that you work on in your models, or do you like making display only models?

I prefer display models but as I'm excited by the work of TLC designers (for decades), I try to put a little bit of action too. We all started to build with regular sets so we are imbued with this particular spirit. Also most other playsets toy brands also include action features.

Wayne Manor and the Batcave, done as a playset.



Wayne Manor as a facade.



Eric's Batcave.



The Joker's Liar as a playset, complete with opening mouth and traps!



Batman built in "moodscale," a scale created that is larger than miniland scale. You can download instructions from here:

<http://www.baronsat.net/baronshop/instructions-Batman-Figure.htm>



BrickJournal: How did you build Galactus, as he is a large-scale figure that is a challenge to build?

Galactus came just after the Sentinel (another large-scale figure) so it has benefited from the experience of the construction thereof. Nevertheless, since he is bigger, the real challenge was to make it strong enough to support itself. The model that I posted is actually the third version (not counting versions during construction), as the other two did not hold and collapsed under their own weight.

BrickJournal: Why did you build him?

That's easy to answer—on the shelves just behind me I display two boxes of Super Hero Squad toys: Galactus & Human torch and Sentinel & Wolverine. That explains a lot of things.

BrickJournal: What's your favorite model?

Currently my Bantha (seen on his website). Since I built it, I kept it assembled in a box as I just can't demolish it.

Back in the days, it was my first *Star Trek* bridge, it was more a door to another universe than a simple model.

BrickJournal: What was your hardest model?

The first Valkyrie (the VF-1S from *Macross*) I built. This thing needs to transform from any side but should have a shape! It was a nightmare to make, and when I look at it now all I see are defects, that it's outdated and would need a complete overhaul...

BrickJournal: Any other heroes you planning to build?

Not really but as I'm currently in a moodscale mood—can I say "moodscale mood"... sounds like a song for kids—I may want to have some figures of this type. The Batman I just made is a good example; now I need some Marvel.



Poison Ivy's greenhouse, with Killer Croc in the sewers below.



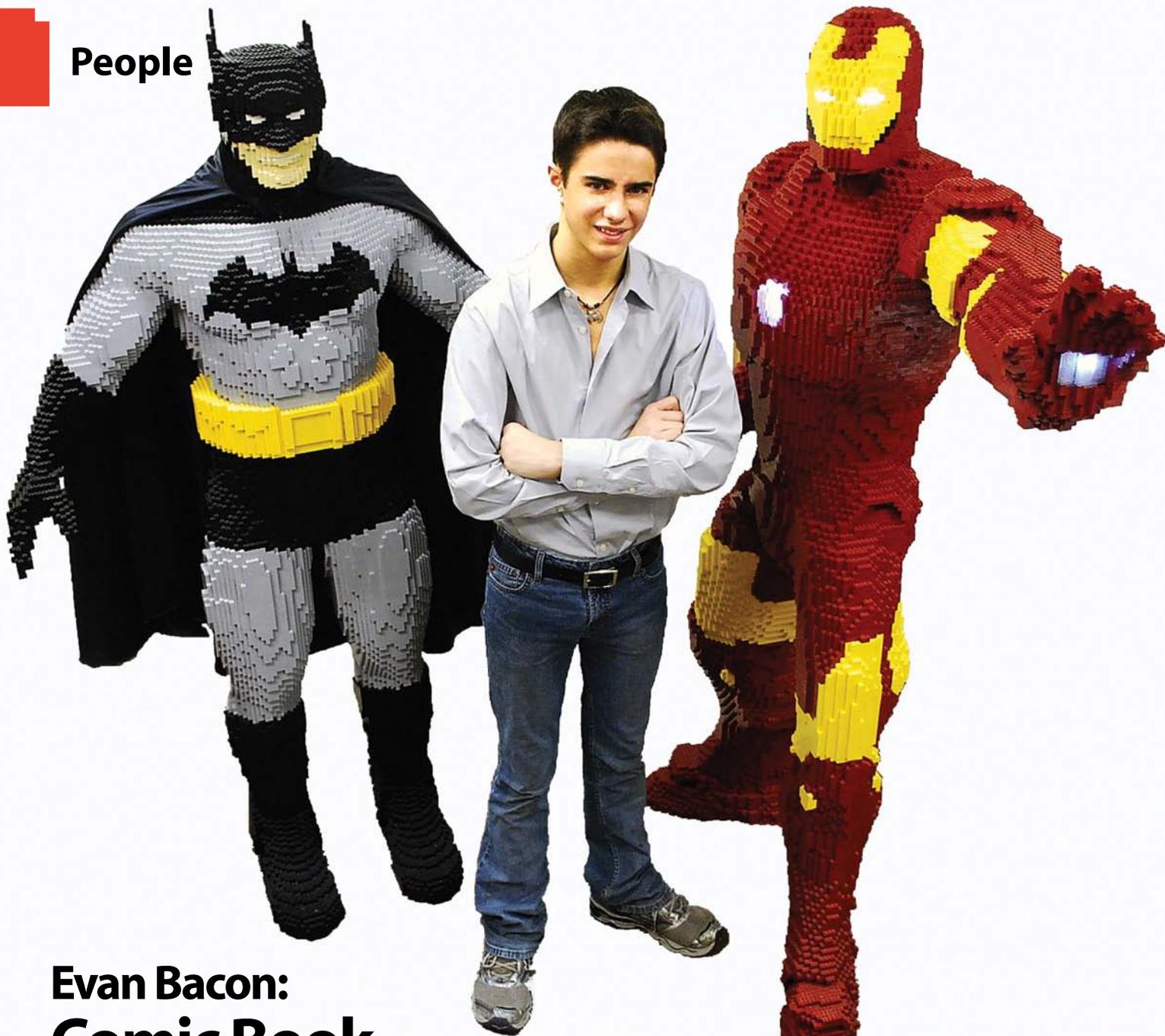
Galactus battles the Fantastic Four.



The Fantastic Four



You can see Eric's work at www.baron-sat.net or you can jump to his webpage by scanning this QR code!



Evan Bacon: Comic Book Builder

Article and Photography by Evan Bacon

One of the surprises of Brick Fiesta 2011 was the life-size model of Batman. Built by teenager Evan Bacon, this model won three awards at the event. Here, Evan talks about building both Batman and now Iron Man!

My love of LEGO bricks began at the ripe age of four when my parents started buying me C3 Batman kits which were quickly replaced with LEGO Batman kits when they were released. I loved putting them together and playing with them for hours and kept them all nice and neat and recreated scenes from the Batman cartoons that I would watch. As I got older, my parents continued to buy me additional Batman kits and minifigs which were used in making cool stop-motion movies. After many years, my LEGO collection became quite substantial and I liked putting together the kits as quickly as I could. I also loved building with the MINDSTORMS sets and would build robots to perform isolated tasks. I built a Disney WALL•E robot, and ones that would turn on and off lights, as well as security system robots!

Being home-educated has given me the opportunity to explore many facets of being creative with LEGO bricks. Friends have said that even when I was 6 years old, I would take paper



and tape and create three-dimensional art that was very elaborate! I love to freestyle build with a box of miscellaneous bricks—my father would ask me to build a certain kind of car. So to up the ante I would not only build the car but also make it a Transformer. I would show him the car and then transform it!

I do love Batman and know everything there is to know about him. A fan of the Batman Facebook site, I will watch for the occasional errors that pop up and inform the page admins. You would be hard pressed to ever find me without something Batman on. This led me to my first big project.

About two years ago, I began building body parts out of bricks in early preparation for building a life-sized Batman. I was new to it, so I kept building and revising them until it was perfect. Once I felt confident, I went all out and permanently glued the pieces together to create Batman. It was great timing, because I was able to take him to the Brick Fiesta and show him off. Later that year, I displayed Batman at the Day of the Bat event in Austin at the Paramount Theater. It was awesome getting to see the original Batman, Adam West and to sit in the Batmobile.

I immediately was excited to build another sculpture and wanted to do something unique. I developed an Iron Man in a unique pose that would allow me to work on creating a way to have an unsupported arm coming out of the sculpture and still create a balanced figure.

I am anticipating my next two sculptures that I hope to have completed before the next Brick Fiesta. I have studied anatomy to make sure that my sculptures look smooth, yet defined and proportionally correct. I also have been working on my programming skills and 3DSMax (a 3D rendering program) so that I can potentially create some applications.

A lot of my inspiration has been derived from comics, cartoons, movies, the internet and just playing around. I love to draw and make sure to sketch at least once a day. I am a Boy Scout, working on my Eagle Scout project and I am also a member of Order of the Arrow. I am one of six children in my family with my mother and father. I love to cook—as our family owns a bakery/catering company, Toot Sweet Cupcakes & More.

My parents believe in hard work, and I do my share of helping out around our home and bakery when I'm not building, studying or having fun! 



You can see Evan's blog at <http://baconbricks.com/index.php> or you can jump to his webpage by scanning this QR code!

People



**From Iron Man
Tyler Clites on**



to Batman: Building Heroes

I'm not a big super hero fan. Comic books hold no interest for me. Most super heroes are just muscle men with super human abilities running around in tights. So why did I decide to make two super heroes in LEGO if I really do not really like them? Okay, I confess, there are a few exceptions like Batman and Iron Man. Instead of being given a supernatural ability or gaining powers by some scientific accident, Batman and Iron Man made a conscious decision to become a hero. They have no supernatural abilities, but instead, they create tools to help them fight evil. Without these tools, they are simply ordinary people. To me, that is what makes them super.

Now we have that cleared up, let us talk about LEGO. The idea for these figures started when the new Iron Man figure was announced along with the new Avengers sets. I saw everyone complaining about the Iron Man helmet and how it was too big and how LEGO did a terrible job and that they would now be scarred for life...or something like that. I personally do not think that the Iron Man helmet is any worse than the Batman cowl, or Stormtrooper helmets. Of course, all these helmets are way out of proportion, since the whole LEGO minifigure is grossly disproportionate to a human body. A cartoon-like LEGO figure is well suited with a cartoon sized helmet. Sure, LEGO could have potentially made a solid helmet which would replace a regular head, but I think many kids would confuse him with a robot if he did not have a helmet that was removable. I am not sure why the Iron Man minifig became the focus of everyone's hatred since oversized helmets are nothing new for LEGO. So suck it up, you are adults whining about toys made for kids.

After the sets were released, I saw a few people putting the Iron Man helmet on brick-built figures. I thought they looked good, but still the helmet seemed out of proportion with the bodies that I saw being built. I had just bought a few Avengers sets and thought I would take a stab at a brick-built Iron Man. To my surprise, it turned out better than I thought.

From the beginning, I knew that a brick-built figure in this scale would not be able to have full body articulation. There is obviously a bit of play in his hips and in angling his feet and arms, but knee and elbow joints would have been impossible. Without any articulated joints, I had to come up with a pose to build him in. There are numerous scenes throughout the Iron Man films when he strikes a similar pose to the one I built him in. Being the arrogant, narcissist that Tony Stark is, this pose seems to capture his personality well. It seems to say, "I know I'm the best, and I know I'm going to win." I initially did not have the energy bolt in mind when I started building, but when it came time to photograph him, I knew that I needed to have some sort of excitement beyond the Iron Man crossing guard pose. For added effect, I used Photoshop to add the lit eyes, illuminated chest piece and energy bolt. Iron (or ABS plastic) Man was now complete.

After I built Iron Man, I got to thinking again about the helmet size and remembered that Batman too had a rather large cowl that was comparable to the new Iron Man helmet which everyone seemed to despise. I made sure that I had the appropriate colored parts to do a Batman figure, and started building. It did not take long since Batman is essentially a duplicate of Iron Man in a different color scheme. However, Batman would need a cape and the Batman insignia on his chest. I thought about using an official LEGO Sticker for the emblem, but it seemed like cheating since I wanted a true brick-built figure. Also, the yellow of the stickers did not seem to go well with the pearl gold belt that I already had on the figure. Sure, I could have just made the belt yellow, but I really liked the look of the pearl gold much better. I think Batman would approve of a blinged-out utility belt. Finally, I decided to use the batarang part as the insignia. I wish I could have had the batarang sit a bit closer to his chest, or perhaps build the chest out to meet the batarang, but unfortunately with such a small figure, it was not possible.

Unfortunately, I did not photograph the Batman figure until I was contacted about doing this article. I like the Iron Man figure so much more and I did not really want to go through the trouble of photographing and editing a model that seemed inferior to what I had already done.

Since I also mentioned Stormtrooper's helmets being too big, I did think about doing several of those as well. Some scout troopers or clone troopers could also easily be done with a figure such as this. However, due to my short attention span, and several commissions that I needed to work on, I abandoned the idea of doing any more of these style figures.

I had a blast making these figures and they make wonderful desk buddies. They were a quick and fun departure from some of my other projects. I definitely encourage others to try their hand at making figures like these; especially if you are one of the Iron Man helmet haters. 



You can see Tyler's Flickr gallery at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/legohaulic/> or you can jump to his gallery by scanning this QR code!

Like Iron Man, I needed to find a good pose to build him in. Being that he is the Dark Knight, I figured a stealthier pose was appropriate. By building his cape draping over his shoulders, I did not have to build any arms for him. It may seem rather odd to not have arms, but I feel that they are implied well enough. By angling the cape, I was able to achieve the scalloped bottom edge of his cape. This also seemed to make the cape look a bit more fluid.



People

Greg Hyland: Drawing AFOLs and More!

Article and Art by Greg Hyland

Photograph by Joe Meno



Greg at work on a sketch.

Greg Hyland has been a fixture in the LEGO fan community—not for building, but for cartooning. As the cartoonist for BrickJournal’s “AFOLs” comic, he has become something of a jester for the community, pointing out the humor and sometimes the foibles of the LEGO hobby and its people. Joe Meno, BrickJournal Editor, talked to Greg about how he started drawing for the community and the LEGO Group. Here’s Greg’s story...

Beginnings in Comics and Bricks

I have been working as a cartoonist and freelance artist since 1991. I went to school in animation, so I learned to be an animator for about a year and a half in Toronto and realized that it wasn’t what I wanted, so I focused on comics, which was what I really wanted anyways.

I was involved in a lot of the self-publishing movement in the ‘90s and got relatively well-known. It all kinda crumbled though—selling comic books is, even for Marvel and DC, incredibly difficult now. In 2000, I switched to doing my own comic which was called *Lethargic Lad*, and I switched it from doing a comic book to an online comic which I still do.

In 2002, I was on the From Bricks to Bothans (www.fbtb.net) message boards and the guy that ran it then recognized my name and asked, “Are you the Greg Hyland that does *Lethargic Lad*? And if you are, would you like to draw comics for us?” I said yes, because I was pretty sure the LEGO Group followed the website. So I started doing comics and it wasn’t too much longer that I got a call from someone from the LEGO Group in Enfield (Connecticut), asking me if I wanted to start working as an illustrator primarily for the LEGO Magazine. So that’s how I started getting professionally involved with LEGO.

Star Wars brought me back into building. I always liked LEGO but had, as the kids called it, the Dark Ages. And I remember doing a lot of comic book conventions with friends and we’d stop at Toys R Us because a lot of us collected action figures and we were in Canada, so the American stores were a lot better. I’d always end up looking at the LEGO aisle and going, “Oh, I can’t buy this”—though I did buy a lot of the Islanders pirates sets. I bought that complete line because these guys were cannibals!

But then *Star Wars* came and I bought the X-wing and it got me back into the hobby. I originally said this is the only one I will buy and after I put it together I thought, *I MUST HAVE THEM ALL*. It was about six sets in the series at that point and I thought *I MUST HAVE THEM ALL* and *NO MORE ACTION FIGURES!* I thought I couldn’t buy action figures and get into LEGO because it was too expensive at the time.

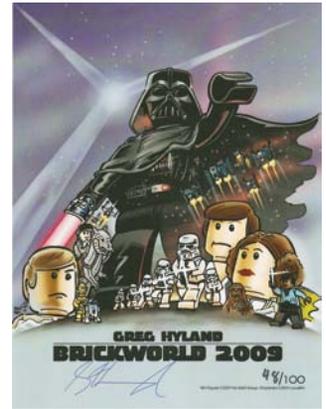
Getting on the Drawing Board

My first assignments were nice because they (the LEGO Magazine) asked, “What do you like? And draw what you like!” They used me for spot illustrations that they could use anywhere cause there were versions in American, German, French, and British, so they would put together a rough magazine and every language could put together their own thing and rearrange it. So they just wanted spot illustration so any language could put a caption on it. Right then, the Studio Monster sets came out and I loved the Studio Monsters, so my first job with them was drawing Studio Monsters. I was pretty happy with that.

My second job with them was not as interesting because they had their NBA sports sets and they had sportscaster figures that were on the boxes and so I did a lot of sports spot



Original art from a BrickJournal article.



Star Wars prints from fan events.

illustrations with those guys! It was not that interesting to do. But who cares? It was work and it was awesome.

In 2003, I went to BrickFest (a LEGO fan event) in Washington, DC. I was sorta involved with a local LUG (LEGO Users Group) that was going to the event. I heard about it and thought it would be cool if I could go there and set up the way an artist would at a comic convention where they would draw sketches and commissions and sell prints. It would be unique and you know, people seemed to really like that. Here it is almost ten years later and here I am in Chicago at Brickworld just doing the exact same thing. BrickFest was a show that was within driving distance so I wanted to do that.

As a result, I was asked to do things like help illustrate the programs so I got to be active in the fan community too. Illustration was a thing that no one else was really doing so I felt that a good way to help and make things different and stand out.

Creating "AFOLs"

This led to the "AFOLs" comic which was something that the LEGO Group actually wanted to do. At the time, I was approached by Jake McKee, who used to be the LEGO Community Coordinator. There was a lot of stuff going on that people may remember, like the gray color change and 9-volt train being discontinued. Fans were not understood by the LEGO staff because they did not understand why people were so upset by grays changing. They didn't understand why people were upset with 9 volt trains going away. LEGO also didn't seem to understand a event like BrickFest and what it was really about and what these people were doing it.

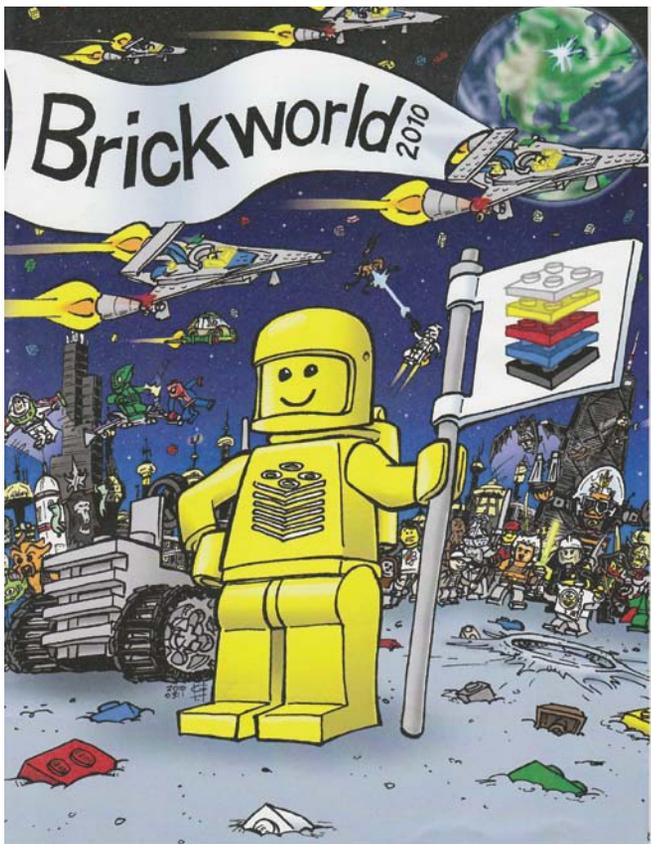
Jake's idea was: Comics convey a lot of information really quickly and people tend to remember them too. He wanted me to write and draw a comic book because he liked my

Lethargic Lad comic. Jake said let's approach these issues, let's talk about fans are, what they do, and why they don't like what they don't like. He thought I would have the right editorial tone so he wanted me to draw a comic book that would be printed up and distributed internally at the LEGO office to educate employees.

So I did "AFOLs" and they looked at it and it was distributed through the company and they liked it so much, they said, with a bit of tweaking they could do a fan version that could be given to LUGs to give out at their events to the public. And then the public might go, "Hey, we can get involved in this!"

So I rewrote a lot of the strips, but we used a lot of them and then they printed up 10,000 of the comic and gave them away. They sent out cases to LUGs to distribute. The one thing that sorta happened was a lot of LUGs said, "Yeah, I want 3 boxes," or, "We want 2 boxes for events." Then they got kinda weird with them and said, "Oh, these are collector's items!" and they didn't open them or give them away.

A few years later, they would be like, "We got these stupid boxes of comics that we are lugging around. Who would want them?" **Greg Hyland would want them.** So a lot of clubs gave me all the cases that they didn't bother giving away. Now I have probably less than ten copies left because I ended up giving away so many. I am sure that there are still LUGs that have them or hopefully did give them away but I know of some that withheld giving away the comics. It was funny the amount of cases I was getting back. I think I only got one case from LEGO. I think a lot of LUGs got two or three. At one point I had six or seven cases of them that were given back to me at events. I know that LEGO gave them away at San Diego Comic-Con that year and that burned through a lot, so that was that.



Program cover from Brickworld.

Joe Meno then asked me to continue doing “AFOLs”, and it continues in *BrickJournal*. Now the nice thing is that I can hit topics with *BrickJournal* that I couldn’t really with the LEGO Group comics. I think I can be a little more acidic than what LEGO was comfortable with. But I still try and keep it very accessible and not too out and out mean.

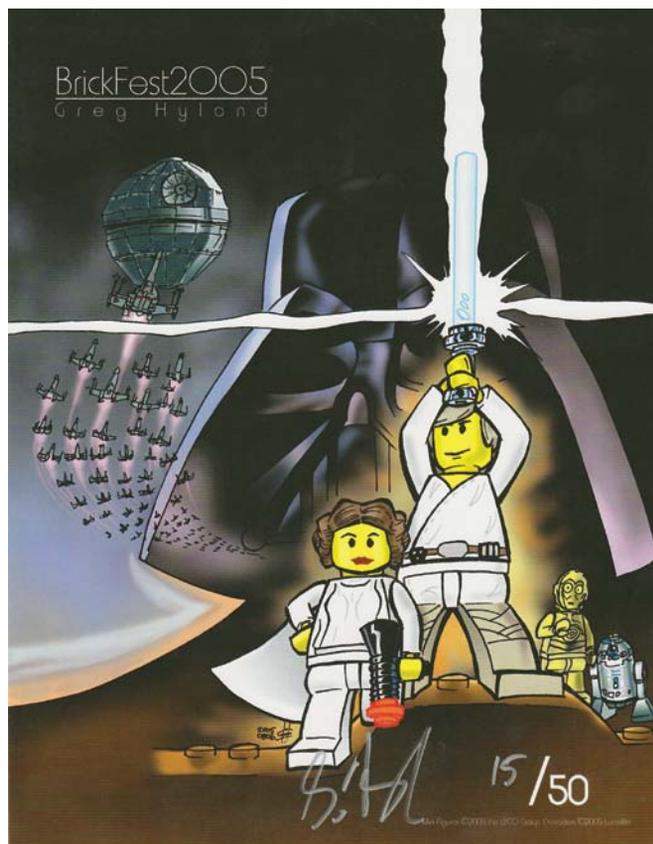
For “AFOLs”, I don’t know how I come up with ideas. I think about stuff and sort of think about the topic of the moment. Like, unfortunately, I did two or three comics about LEGO Universe but it got cancelled... oh no, these are irrelevant. So I try and think about things and try and come up with a joke or a gag to it and try to apply it. Writing them is the most difficult part. I try and keep things going in the back of my mind for a real long time. I drew one that dealt with something on *Lord of the Rings*, so that was relevant, and keeps it current.

You want people to understand “AFOLs.” If it’s all in-jokes, I don’t even know what to say. A joke about a very specific brick, I don’t know, the public isn’t going to get it. Or if I start harping on Galidor, no one is going to remember what that was... or Jack Stone.

I did one about events because I thought, well, we’re coming up on summer and that’s when a little more events happen, so making something event-related was a good idea. Even a weekend like this (Brickworld) will give me ideas.

Building Characters... and Not Building

Wendy and Marvin are the two main characters. I just wanted to be the generic minifigure yellow head, red torso, blue pants — his name is Marvin. There’s a girl named Wendy and since the beginning I added in sorta a more cranky character because Marvin is pretty good-natured. Wendy questions things sometimes so I have a more cranky character named Calvin. He’s the one that is sorta the slightly angrier fan. And those are the mostly recurring characters.

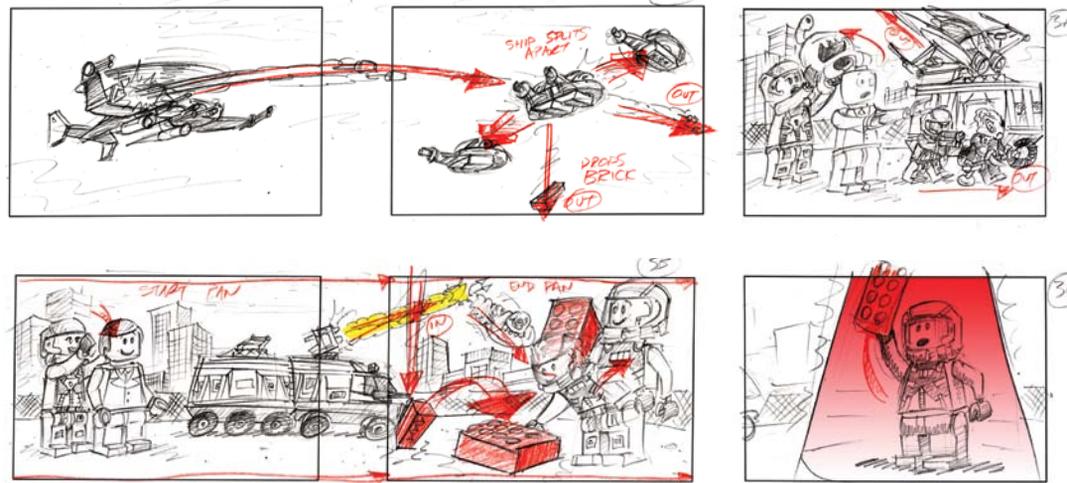
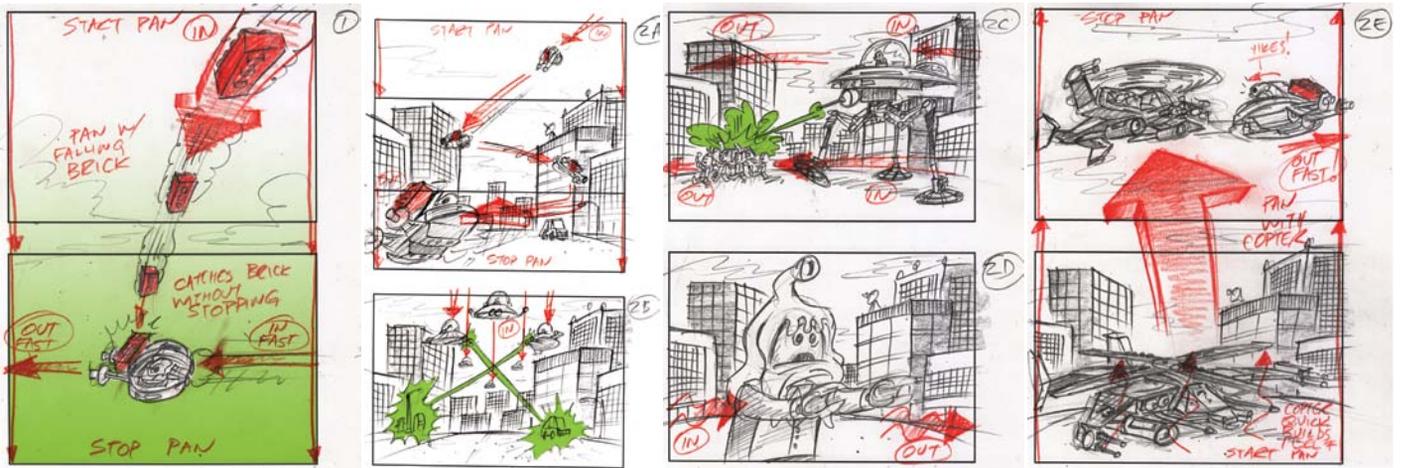


A Star Wars print.

Wendy and Marvin came from characters from the *Super Friends* TV show. Calvin is someone I once knew in a LUG and he actually recently confronted me... well, he spotted his character in an issue of *BrickJournal* (The Amazing Calvin and His Psychic Hands). It was about feeling the bags of minifigures to figure out what they were. He asked, “Is this me?” Cause it’s close to his name and he’s wearing a shirt that’s the color of a LUG shirt that used to be worn and I said, “Yeah.” The character was also in the AFOLs comic in 2004 and I remember showing it to him and saying, “This is you!” I remember him saying at the time, “Yeah, but my glasses are round you draw them square.” I’ll keep drawing them square anyways because I don’t want them to be round, but anyway, that’s where that name came from, just cause it’s close to this person. Otherwise, those are really the only three characters I think that are ever recurring.

The other characters they tend to relate to are either LEGO store employees or Toys R Us employees or Wal-Mart employees. I’ll put a blue apron on someone and that’s a Wal-Mart employee with a name tag. I’ve done strips where Marvin the fan knows more about the products than the store does, which has happened to a lot of people who ask, “When is this coming out?” “Oh, that’s not coming out or not happening.” or “I know for a fact that this is coming” and “I don’t know anything about Monsters Fighters” and “I saw it at Target!” That’s something we all have been through in the fan community.

I go to these events and I never have anything on display as I am not big into building. I did have a Batmobile and a *Star Trek* bridge at one time. Generally, I have a lot of sets that I keep as sets. That’s the way I approach the hobby. I have a separate collection of bricks that is for building. I’m a collector, but I build the sets and play with them and my daughter plays with them. And we take them apart and put them away, get



Storyboards from the Red Brick Saga Episode 3, which spotlighted the Alien Conquest theme. You can see the spot at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffwKRq3voQI&list=PLD0F8978A88A0DC01&index=3&feature=plpp_video or use this QR code:



out another theme and put that together and play with it. A lot of times, these things I need together, or have together, for reference for work that I do. So I like working with models rather than pictures, so if ever I can get things, I like having the stuff I have worked on around me, as I tend to keep that stuff.

I like toys as toys. I like LEGO sets for what they're intended to be, as a toy. Years ago, I built a haunted house, but I built it as if it was a LEGO set. For instance, it only had three walls, and in the back you could play with it and it had storage containers. My ultimate goal would be a set designer. If I was to build a car, I would want it to have a top that would open, doors that would open and a hatch to store things. That's just me and I don't have time to build a lot of stuff.

Behind the Seen

I do very little work now that the public actually sees. Things I have drawn? I have done comics for the original *Batman* line, which was cool to have those in the boxes cause that's going to be there forever and people are going to want those sets. The collectors anyway are still going to have those so that's going to live forever. Whereas the LEGO magazines... how many of those go in the recycling bin? Recently they wanted me for more of that sort of stuff.

But they have also wanted me to develop very preliminary designs for sets. There are a few *Star Wars* sets that I came up with the preliminary design for and they wound up as finished sets, which is cool. Sometimes I get asked do things like design the boxes, so I'll do an illustration and the photographer may copy what I've done. It's sorta nice because

there's a set coming out at this point that I can't talk about that I came up with the preliminary art for. I came up with the idea for this, drew it up and how it would be and now it's done and they asked me if I could design the box too, and I think the people forgot that I came up with the design. I get to do a lot of different things, which is nice, as I get to know things in advance.

I've also done a few other things that are either for TV or wound up on DVDs or on the website. I had storyboarded a whole bunch of the bonus features on the *Padawan Menace* DVD but they were things that were also online for a while too. It was cool to have them there.

I haven't worked on LEGO Magazine for years. Recently what I have been doing is a lot of storyboards. They discovered that I have an animation background which finally paid off. Pretty much, I've ended up storyboarding all the TV commercials that they do in the US. Seems to be that all the licensed stuff is done over here and all their old themes are done in Denmark. I do all the *Star Wars* commercials, *Lord of the Rings*... I recently did many of those. I also get asked to do special projects so sometimes it's like storyboarding the red brick animations that were done that I thought were fabulous!

This year I boarded the *Monster Fighters* stop motion spot. I didn't know really what it was for but it's — oh it's *Monster Fighters*! — and it's coming out in June — that's six months from now. I can't wait! I can't wait to get those sets and build them the way they are supposed to be built... and then take them apart and put them away. But that's just me. **b**

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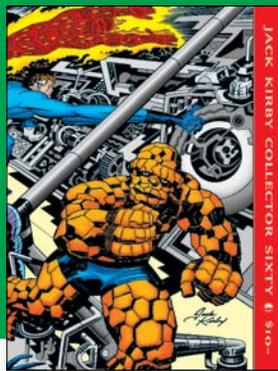
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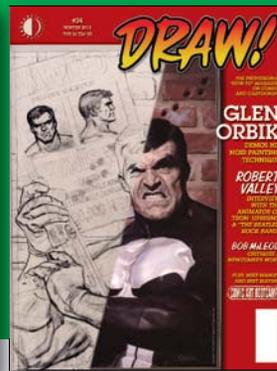
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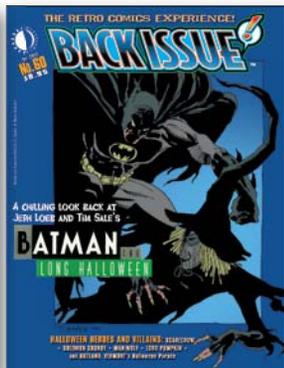
BRICKJOURNAL #21
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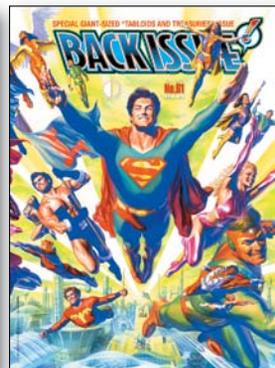
BACK ISSUE #59
 "Toon Comics!" History of Space Ghost in comics, **Comico's Jonny Quest** and **Star Blazers**, **Marvel's Hanna-Barbera** line and **Dennis the Menace**, behind the scenes at **Marvel Productions, Ltd.**, and a look at the unpublished **Plastic Man** comic strip. Art/comments by **EVANIER**, **FOGLIO**, **HEMPEL** and **WHEATLEY**, **MARRS**, **RUDE**, **TOTH**, **WILDEY**, and more. All-new painted **Space Ghost** cover by **STEVE RUDE!**

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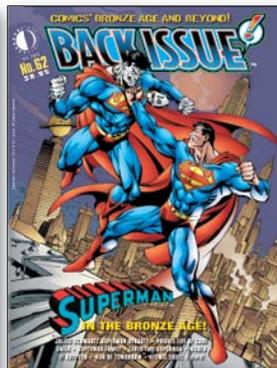
BACK ISSUE #60
 "Halloween Heroes and Villains!" **JEPH LOEB** and **TIM SALE's** chiller **Batman: The Long Halloween**, the **Scarecrow** (both the DC and **Marvel** versions), **Solomon Grundy**, **Man-Wolf**, **Lord Pumpkin**, **Rutland**, **Vermont's Halloween parades**, and... the **Korvac Saga's Dead Avengers!** With commentary from and/or art by **CONWAY**, **GIL KANE**, **LOPRESTI**, **MOENCH**, **PÉREZ**, **DAVE WENZEL**, and more. Cover by **TIM SALE!**

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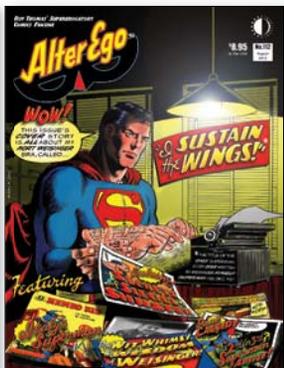
BACK ISSUE #63
 "British Invasion" issue! History of **Marvel UK**, **Beatles** in comics, DC's '80s **British talent pool**, **V** for **Vendetta**, **Excalibur**, **Marshal Law**, **Doctor Who**. "Pro2Pro" interview with **PETER MILLIGAN** & **BRENDAN MCCARTHY**, plus **BERGER**, **BOLLAND**, **DAVIS**, **GIBBONS**, **STAN LEE**, **LLOYD**, **MOORE**, **DEZ SKINN**, and others. Fold-out triptych cover by **RON WILSON** and **DAVE HUNT** of **Marvel UK's** rare 1970s "Quadra-Poster"!

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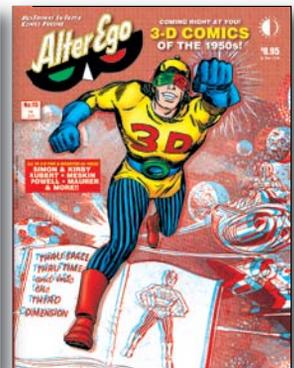
ALTER EGO #113
MARV WOLFMAN talks to **RICHARD ARNDT** about his first decade in comics on **John Carter**, **Teen Titans**, **Captain Marvel**, **John Carter**, **Daredevil**, **Nova**, **Batman**, etc., behind a **GENE COLAN** cover! Art by **COLAN**, **ANDERSON**, **CARDY**, **BORING**, **MOONEY**, and more! Plus: the conclusion of our **LEONARD STARR** interview by **JIM AMASH**, **FCA**, **MR. MONSTER**, **BILL SCHELLY**, and more!

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BRANDON STRIKES BACK



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MAKE-UP
ERIK TROPPE

MODELS
AMANDA GIST
ROBERTA SETZU
CHELSEA SPIRITO
WALL ART
DAVE FLORES
(DAVIDFLORESART.COM)

People



Take one of the best film trilogies of all time, smash it together with one of the oldest games of all time, and build it out of one of the greatest toys of all time. RESULT: Star Wars LEGO Chess!

Brandon Griffith, visionary builder, has done just that! He has built a variety of different BrickJournal featured models in the past including the ships of Star Trek (*BrickJournal* #6) and OneLUG's "The Last March of the Ents" (*BrickJournal* #19). One of his most recent projects showcases three themed chess sets built of LEGO bricks celebrating the Original Star Wars Trilogy!

At first glance, one can't help but notice how attractive women flock to the beautifully crafted sci-fi sets. On closer inspection, subtle details begin to jump out, recreating the cinematic excitement that came from watching those now classic scenes. The combination of functionality and design make these Star Wars themed chess mash-ups some truly impressive work.



We caught up with Brandon at his favorite rib joint in sunny Burbank, CA where—between hefty bones of beef ribs—he was kind enough to answer a few questions about his incredible creations.

Cleave Chutney: Hello, Brandon. My name's Cleave.

Brandon Griffith: Nice to meet you. Your name is Cleave?

CC: That's right.

BG: Cleave, as in Cleveland?

CC: No, Cleave as in to split or divide by a cutting blow.

BG: Okay.

CC: My parents were butchers.

BG: Sounds good.

CC: Thanks for letting us talk to you. I'd like to know a little bit about these amazing Star Wars Chess sets and you, in general, as a LEGO builder. How long have you been building?

BG: I started building when I was two years old. Like most people, I played with LEGO until I became a teenager and entered my 'dark ages'. When Star Wars LEGO came on the scene in 1999, I started buying LEGO again but it wasn't until 2002 that I started building My Own Creations.

CC: So, other than your love of the Star Wars films, what was your motivation in building these sets?

BG: Actually, my first MOC coming out of those teenage 'dark ages' was a Star Wars chess set. It was very basic and contained figures from all three movies in the original trilogy. Several years and MOCs later, I had the idea to



revisit the chess set and make it better. At this point, LEGO had switched licensed figures from yellow heads to flesh heads and they'd released a bunch of new sets with a larger variety of figures. So, I decided, instead of updating what I'd already done, I would start over and create a new one from scratch.

CC: So, were you always planning to do a chess set for each of the films in the original trilogy or was it a case where, once you'd finished the first set, it just made sense to continue?"

BG: Well, as I said, when I decided to rebuild the first chess set, I quickly realized that there were a huge amount of new Star Wars mini figures available. Enough so I could depict almost every major character from every major scene in the original trilogy. I decided the best way to do that was to build a different set for each film.

CC: So, why chess?

BG: It's strange how little things in life can affect your future. Let me tell you three quick stories.

CC: You bet. I'm here all day.

BG: First of all, I learned how to play chess at an early age when I got my first computer. It came with Windows 95 and one of the free games that came with it was chess. I quickly learned the name of the pieces and how they could move and attack. It wasn't until college that I started

playing it a little more seriously. My best friend took up chess and we began playing each other.

Secondly, one day while walking through a used video game store, I came across an old Sega CD Game called Star Wars Chess. I looked at it and thought it was cool because it combined two things I loved Star Wars and chess. Unfortunately, I did not buy the game because I did not have the system to play it on.

And finally, Star Wars LEGO hit the market in 1999 and I started collecting every set that came out. Around 2001, I was looking at all these Star Wars sets and decided it was time to make something of my own using the parts and minifigures. Why not take the Sega CD game a step further and combine three things that I like!

CC: That's great. You know, I once built a Dino Riders themed backgammon board using an Erector set.

BG: Yeah? How did it play?

CC: It gave me tetanus.

BG: Oh, sorry.

CC: That's okay. I'm better now. Anyway, explain more about how you designed the layout of the pieces on the board. How did you choose which characters would fit into each position?



BG: When I first began designing these sets, the first and most obvious decision was making Rebels the traditional light, white side and the Empire the traditional dark, black side. By doing this, pawns became the fight figure choices because it is made clear in the films what characters are filling the roles of foot soldiers (i.e. Stormtroopers, Ewoks, Hoth Rebel Troopers). Of course there are characters that don't fall into either of those factions (i.e. Jabba the Hutt, Boba Fett, Jawas, Wampa), so I took it a step further and separated them into protagonist (white) and antagonist (black).

CC: Makes sense.

BG: Once I had the characters broken up into factions, I began arranging them by their power and importance in the films. The more Force sensitive characters—Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Yoda—would play the role of the King or Queen. When I didn't have enough force sensitive characters to go around, I moved down to other main characters such as Princess Leia, Han Solo or Chewbacca. Once the king and queen were decided, I simply moved down the line of each piece and assigned appropriate characters.

CC: After you began working on the sets, did you have to make any character/piece changes?

BG: As with any of my other LEGO creations, I was getting new ideas all the time. For instance, on the 'Return of the Jedi' chess set, I originally had Luke Skywalker as Queen and was going to try and pull off a ghost Obi-wan and ghost Yoda. Once I realized LEGO would never release the official figures and after many failed attempts at building a trans-blue haze around normal figs, I gave up on that idea. I decided to build a Wicket and Leia scene. It turned out so well that I made that piece the Queen and moved Luke to the King position.

CC: In constructing the boards, you've picked an iconic theme or setting for each set. That must be difficult. What made you choose Endor for the 'ROTJ' set?

BG: Well, I did consider using a Tatooine theme for the ROTJ set, but Ewoks make such good pawns that I had to go with Endor. The sets for 'A New Hope' and 'Empire Strikes Back' were easy choices. So much of ANH takes place on the Death Star, black and bluish grey pieces seemed like the best choice. When people think of ESB they think of Hoth and Cloud City. Cloud City would have been cool, but Hoth is so iconic to the Star Wars universe, I could not pass on it.



A NEW HOPE®



CC: I have to ask: any chance of you doing sets for the prequels?"

BG: I thought about it but, truthfully, I just don't have enough passion to do a prequel set. As of right now, I don't have any plans to make any of them.

CC: How about 'Clone Wars'?

BG: Again, not a huge fan.

CC: Sorry. Now that all of the chess sets are completed, looking back, which one was the most difficult to construct?

BG: The most difficult was the ROTJ. Using the color palette of dark green and brown was a challenge. Dark green has such a limited part palette.

CC: And which is your favorite?

BG: The 'Empire Strikes Back' set is by far my favorite. I spent a lot of time and extra care on it. Not only is it my

favorite movie of the trilogy as a viewer, it also has my favorite planets, locations, scenes and moments to recreate as a builder.

CC: So, you've finished the *BrickJournal* photo shoot, what happens to the sets? Storage? Potential sales? Will you use the pieces for parts?

BG: I would love to have a display case big enough to house them—each is 25"x25"—so the footprint is quite large. After the shoot, they'll go into storage. I won't ever take them apart.

CC: What's next for Brandon Griffith? Are there any other ideas for new sets?

BG: 'Lord of the Rings' would be cool, especially with the new sets coming out. I'm a little burned out on making chess sets at the moment. I don't know, maybe a 'Marvel versus DC' chess set if they release enough mini figs.



THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK®



You can see Brandon's Flickr gallery at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/brandongriffith/> or you can jump to the gallery by scanning this QR code!

CC: The chess sets look as if they require a lot of planning. Do you ever just start cold and improvise as you build?

BG: Great question, Cleave. It can vary depending on the project. The chess sets required a good amount of planning and research. I wanted to make sure each piece represented a scene from the classic trilogy and captured details from the movie that everyone remembers.

CC: Well, they are amazing. Finally, do you have anything in the works right now that you can talk about?

BG: I have a few things in the works based on Marvel characters but I'll have to leave it at that. I don't want to spoil the surprise.



RETURN OF THE JEDI®



For most people, mastering chess is enough of a challenge, but Brandon Griffith pushes himself further. In assembling these elaborately themed, beautifully constructed chess sets, Griffith has added a layer of complexity to an already difficult game. With each move he makes, he is countered by the limitations of his chosen medium but, instead of backing down or making easy choices, Brandon looks at things from a different angle and finds inspiration at every turn. In this game of LEGO Star Wars chess set construction, Brandon Griffith's opponent is himself and, at the end of the match, we're all winners. Check and mate. [b](#)



Building

A LEGO® Master Builder's First Project: Minifigures and New Gothopolis

Article and Photography by
Erik Varszegi

Deep within the LEGO Model Shop in Enfield, there is a model that sits on a shelf. The model is actually more of a layout, and if you're a comic book fan, you will recognize some of the landmarks that occupy this space: the Daily Planet, LexCorp Headquarters, and the Daily Bugle. What you may not know was that this model was a project by Erik Varszegi, one of the LEGO Master Builders that he did for fun. Here, he tells BrickJournal the story behind his comic book models and minifigures.

This was really my first (substantial) MOC, built years before I knew what a MOC was or meant or even before I knew there was a LEGO Fan community. I put it together when I started as a model builder for LEGO back in '95 and built it over a period of maybe 18 to 24 months. I'd take time during an odd lunch break here or there and sometimes after work to put it together. As to why I built it? It's really nothing more than a elaborate pencil holder. As a model builder trainee, my personal workspace was limited. I had my lift table and two rolling caddies that held all my sorting trays of LEGO brick but I needed something to store and organize my tools, glue bottles and paperwork.

Some of the other builders had built organizers out of brick. Most were simple affairs with a couple sliding drawers. I took it a step further and themed it around the custom figs another builder and I were putting together at the time.

That's the real story here in my opinion. We created dozens and dozens of custom minifigs from DC, Marvel and a few other super-hero types like Space Ghost and The Tick. You name the character and we had built it.



The Flash.



The Joker.



Iron Man Mark I.



Two-Face.



Dr. Octopus.



The Scorpion.



Ghost Rider.

They're really crude by today's standards, but they were a whole lot of fun to make. No custom molded parts or water-slide decals like today's customizers. We were cutting and pasting adhesive vinyl to create the character emblems and hacking apart elements to make new parts. Ha! As an experiment I even cut two figs down the middle and glued them together to create a "Two-Face". I had no idea then, the lengths that customizers today to create new figs. Like I said... crude, but fun.



Avengers Assemble! From left to right: Black Widow, Ant-Man, Black Panther, Thor, Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch.



The Fantastic Four! From left to right: Invisible Woman (seated), Mr. Fantastic, the Thing, and the Human Torch.



The Fantastic Four fight Galactus on Four Freedoms Plaza.



The Dynamic Duo! From left to right: Robin and Batman.

I had all these figs but no where to store them, so I created the City. Like all the figs I created it from a mix of sources. Lots of famous landmarks from both DC and Marvel and a few others sources. If you want a list... let's see:

1. The FF's Baxter Building or as it was currently called (at that time in the '90s) Four Freedoms Plaza. It's distinctive "4" roof was a nice little puzzle to figure out in brick. It features a pullout drawer (that held my rubber mallets) at street level. The front door of which opens into the lobby and houses my minifig version of the FF's mailman Willie Lumpkin. Mid way up the exterior wall slides back to reveal one of Mr. Fantastic's labs. I tried to make the gizmos in it Jack Kirby-esque and on the back wall is the vault like doorway to the Negative Zone. Lastly the roof lifts off to store pens, pencils or Pez dispensers.

2. The Daily Bugle. Most of the lower floors is a facade hiding the drawer from the Baxter Building. The upper stories flip back to reveal the penthouse office of my minifig J. Jonah Jameson.

3. The Evil Eye Cafe from the cult classic '90s cartoon The Tick. Again just a facade so the baddies will have to get their frapuccinos elsewhere. How frustratingly evil of me. Right upstairs though is the walk up one room apartment of Arthur and the Tick.

4. Around the corner from the cafe is Wayne Manor. Right now this is just another facade. At one point, the whole city was two blocks with this and Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters occupying the "burbs", but I had to scale the whole thing back because of space constraints. The plan was to have both the Manor and School facades to swing open to reveal the Batcave and the Danger Room respectively. Since I shrunk it down I scrapped the X-Mansion as it was the least developed. The only thing special now about the Manor is you can open the front door where there is a little space for my custom minifig Alfred Pennyworth and facade hides the Daily Planet hidden drawer.

5. Getting away from the Burbs again there is a small bank because we need a place for all the super-villain to rob. You can't enter the bank due to the Planet's hidden drawer but there is an ATM out front that holds a couple \$100 1x2 tiles.

6. Above and behind the bank rises the LexCorp tower as it appeared in



The City, or New Gothopolis.

the comics circa the mid '90s. Appropriately its tallest structure in the city matching Luthor's ego. This was a later construction phase add-on and almost didn't survive the city downsizing. It comes apart at a couple different layers, one secrets another pencil box type space and the other Lex's penthouse office complete with shark tank and kryptonite safe.

7. Around the corner again and we come to arguably the most iconic building of the lot, The Daily Planet building. The front of the Planet pulls out to reveal the afore mentioned hidden drawer and the drawer itself holds the revolving door where, with a quick spin, you can switch between Clark Kent and Superman custom gigs. The upper stories have break away damage walls (really... just how many super battles have trashed that building over the years? A very dangerous place to work) to reveal the newsroom and a custom Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen and Perry White. Finally, the Planet's planet lifts off exposing another storage space.

8. Next door is Dr. Strange's Sanctum Sanctorum. The brownstone wouldn't be complete without its signature attic window which lifts up to reveal the Doctor's library. Inside you'll find the Orb of Agamotto and a host of other peculiar artifacts. Up the stairs behind the front door you'll find minifig Wong, Strange's man servant (Is that term PC anymore?). The lower floor facade houses another hidden drawer. Unfortunately I had a glue bottle accident a number of years ago which permanently sealed this drawer and whatever it held inside. Kind of fitting due to the spooky nature of the place.



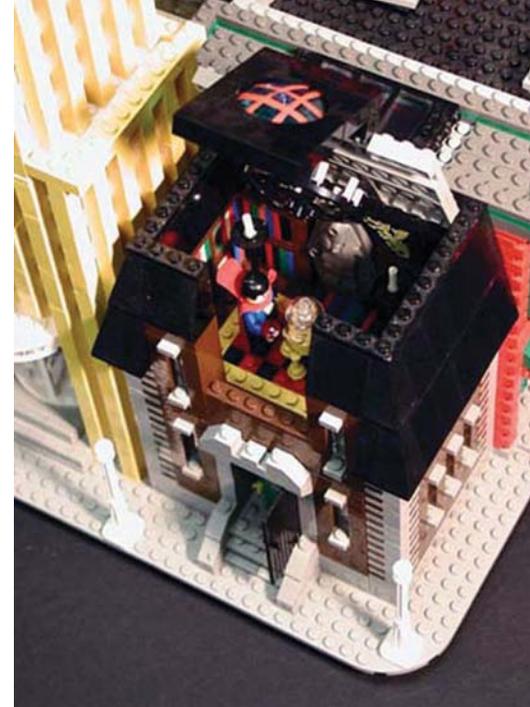
Another view of the City.

9. Probably my favorite of the buildings is next down the block from Strange's. It is a simple six-stud-wide pawn shop where all the heroes hock their stuff.

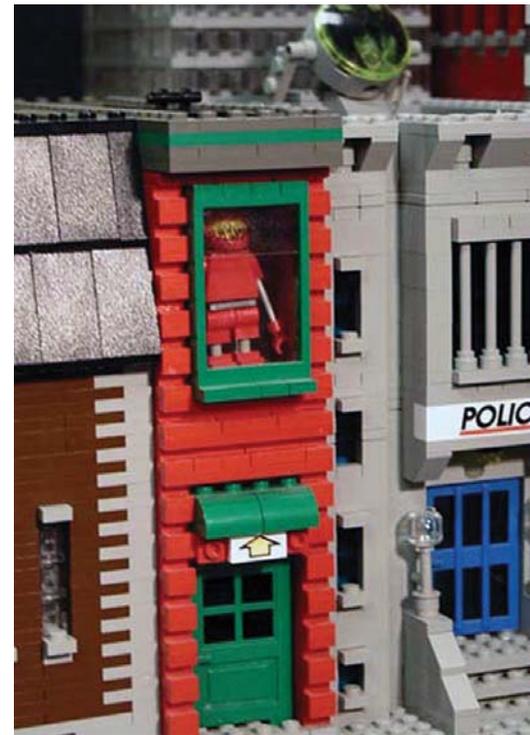
The second story of this walk up pulls out to reveal all the pawned merchandise. There is the Green Goblin's original Goblin Glider, the one that looked like a broomstick from his first appearance. Also we have, the Fantastic Four's faithful robot H.E.R.B.I.E. The Human Torch must have pawned him when he got his spot back on the team after that late '70s cartoon. Next we have the Golden Age Green Lantern's power battery, Loki's helmet, the X-Men's Cerebro device, a Phantom Zone Projector straight from the Fortress Of Solitude and lastly, the Cosmic Cube. Or are we just calling it The Tesseract now because that name is less corny? Oh, how can I forget in the store front window display a minifig Machine Man with telescopic limbs and fluorescent eyes.

10. The last of the remaining buildings is Gotham PD crowned by the Bat-Signal. The lower floor hides the forever entombed Dr. Strange secret drawer but the upper story pulls out to a jail cell where a couple dozen bad guys are locked from the Joker and Captain Cold to the Scorpion and Galactus. Talk about prison overcrowding!

In some of those drawers are super vehicles like my version of the Batmobile, the bathtub shaped Fantasti-car and the Punisher's War Wagon. That MOC has racks to hold knives, shotguns and a bazooka. The side panel also flips down into a rocket launcher.



A look at Dr. Strange's Sanctum Sanctorum.



The entrance to the pawn shop, with Machine Man at the top display.



The City opened.



Erik with friend.

I mentioned briefly Xavier's and how I got rid of it. Well, also built but now dismantled were an abandoned warehouse building where the upper floors held a bad guy hideout, a simple walk up apartment for Peter Parker with a hinged skylight for Spidey to wall crawl out of, and lastly an exposed girder under construction high rise, the perfect spot for super battles.

After I built the piece it got some notoriety by parts of it being featured on the cover of the Spring 98 Shop At Home catalog. Years later when I first met Sean Kenney during a visit to my office he spotted my City on a shelf and remembered seeing it in the catalog. He told me that this was, in part, one of the things that inspired him to start building professionally. Honestly... that felt pretty good to hear that. 



If you go to <http://universe.LEGO.com>, you will see the following screen, complete with a video explaining the history of the game.

What Happened to LEGO Universe?

Article by Geoff Gray

On January 30, 2012, after only 15 months of operation, The LEGO Group officially shut down the Internet servers that hosted the online game LEGO Universe.

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LEGO® Universe had been in development for more than four years and had been open to the public for a little over one year. The company had put a great deal of money into the project (it is the single largest investment the company has ever made, according to a National Geographic special Ultimate Factories: “Building the LEGO City,” which aired January 21, 2012). Many AFOLs and kids were dismayed at the shutdown. This did not appear to be due to a lack of prior success in the video game industry, as the LEGO Group has released a number of different games on several platforms. For instance, The LEGO Group teamed up with LucasArts and Travellers Tales Games to release LEGO Star Wars, the Video Game. To date, the LEGO Star Wars game franchise has sold over 30 million copies, which sets it up in a very high place. This alone indicates that The LEGO Group can succeed with gaming. However, that success did not help the company keep LEGO Universe alive.

“My 13 year old was a beta tester, and worked quite a bit to find bugs. He was stunned when it was taken down. His first and only question was ‘But it was only live for a year. Why so soon?’”

This comment is typical of the questions I would hear from fans and from parents.

So, what caused the company to pull the plug on their most expensive venture to date, and what can people expect to see in the future? On June 7, 2012, I posed these questions (and a few others) to Jørgen Vig Knudstorp, the CEO of The LEGO Group.

Geoff Gray: Welcome and thanks for taking the time to talk to me today. I wanted to briefly talk to you about LEGO Universe. I’m sure you’ve been asked a lot of questions about the lack of success with the program. What do you think caused LEGO Universe to not be as popular as the company would like it to have been?

Jørgen Vig Knudstorp: I think the group of children that were engaged in this kind of play and also at the same time willing to play simply turned out to be too small. It’s interesting because just this afternoon as I came back to Billund I was fortunate to meet yet another group of visitors on the LEGO Inside Tour and there were quite a few of them, adults as well as children, that were requesting the return of LEGO Universe, and we do get that. So [while talking with them] I wrote a couple of things down that I think worked and stuff that didn’t work.

We did actually [have] more than 2 million players sign up. We had a fairly high degree of engagement, about 4 hours of game play per week per player on average. I think it's not bad and among those who decided to pay to play, the monthly retention rate was quite high, in the high 80s, which I'm told is very high. Among those who stayed on as players there was a very high Net Promoter score. A Net Promoter is a measure of not only if you're satisfied with a product but how likely you are to recommend the product to other users, and in this case the Net Promoter score was incredibly high.

But at issue for us was that the product was extremely expensive to operate. [Of course] maybe why the satisfaction was high was that it was a well-serviced product and we thought it was a very good experience, but unfortunately not appreciated by enough people who were willing to pay for it. We think that there were a couple of things that made willingness to pay decline over the years as the program developed. One is of course that when we started talking about this, which is now quite some years ago, competition changed dramatically over the years, in particular cash for gaming and free gaming. A lot of games out there today are based not on a subscription or a DVD that you pay for, but are free to play in a browser and then if you like, you can sign up, or more typically you do micro payments as you go along. So not only much more competition, but also change in the business model. You might remember we started out with a DVD at \$40 plus a \$10 monthly subscription which we relatively quickly had to change into a free download at the end of the life cycle, but even then that was not enough.

There I also have to admit that as a third negative factor, we did not manage the accessibility factor very well. What that means is we offered the free download but we saw that many users were dropping [off when trying] the download and [were not] getting the universe program installed. They found it inconvenient or time consuming. So because we were not running in a browser or on a mobile device, the cost of starting, if you like—not in money, but in terms of time—was high. So that's probably what caused [too] many users not to be willing to pay for and play enough with the product,

There was certainly a core [set] of users that were in to the thousands, at no point more than a hundred thousand, but there were quite a large number of players who were very, very happy, [with a] very high retention rate, and high satisfaction, so they of course [continue to] come back to us and ask us to reopen it, but it was simply... it was a stretch too far for us to operate it from a financial point of view.

Geoff: Hearing some of the options that you mentioned as delivery vehicles like the web and mobile, and the lessons learned from that, it begs the question: Is the company looking at a potential re-release of, if not the exact same game, something similar to it with a different platform as the way of playing the game or interacting with it?

Jørgen: We are certainly not giving up on it. [I went] to LA this week to watch your colleagues from the xBox live team tell us about all the exciting new innovations Microsoft is introducing in the space of gaming, or in fact home entertainment, more properly. There's a trend that goes across the industry as you may be aware, that sales of video games actually declined 31% over the past year, so it's already becoming a very mature, declining industry. But that means gaming is now shifting back to, if you like, arcade-style gaming. When you and I were kids, and playing arcade games, we had to pay for every game we played, and the more we liked a game, the more money we spent on it obviously. The video gaming or the online gaming industry is coming back to those terms now because games are free, and only if you get really addicted will you start paying, because you ask for more advanced content. So micro payments are becoming invoked. The whole industry is shifting and LEGO needs to pay notice to that. So LEGO needs to consider, with its partners like Travelers Tales games, how to develop games that are online, that are micro payment based, etc. because that seems to be where we'll meet the audience in the future. We don't have any such solutions available to any large extent today. We have a lot of free games obviously on an app basis for Android and IOS



Jørgen Vig Knudstorp

but those are sort of small experiments comparable to what we have on LEGO.com. But in terms of developing a really large game, that's something that's still ahead of us, but it's definitely something that we are scheming on one day being able to do.

Geoff: Sure. That sounds great. [I want to ask about] the initial vision that was considered with the first round of this when it was looked at as LEGO World Online. There was a point in time when you were talking to a group of people at one of our festivals about LEGO moving towards the future in being able to have online interactions that were well beyond gaming, which would include things such as the ability to sell models online or to have custom models built and shipped. Some of that did come about in the style of the "Design By Me" line of products. That also was a big challenge for the company I understand, and it was impressive to see that the company was able to keep that going as long as the company did it from a feasibility standpoint. It shows how serious you were with respect to managing that type of interaction. How do you look at things now from a standpoint of trying to reinvent the ability to do some more of the online purchasing, and some of the other interactions that are not specifically [related to] gaming? How important is that to the future of the company?

Jørgen: How important it is to the future of the company, I'm still on a learning journey. I would like to think that it is important still, but I don't think we've come to a conclusion on that. In my own (if I can say) private considerations on the issue of developing customizable sets online and being able to ship them, I'm starting to wonder whether the reason why it's not so popular to do that with LEGO as we thought it might be, is because the product in itself when you buy it and collect it is in fact already customizable. I mean, that's the whole thing with LEGO, isn't it? I'm noticing that brands like Nike and Converse seem to be quite successful in selling self-made customizable shoes, but then there is no way a consumer could do that on their own. But with LEGO, you can build your own LEGO set online, but you can also do it yourself

"When I saw this at BrickCon a couple of years back, my immediate reaction was 'Why would I want to play an online version of LEGO with imaginary bricks, when the central appeal of building with bricks for me is the sensation of being able to pick them up, move them around, put them together in novel ways, etc.?'. I just can't imagine paying money every month to rent imaginary bricks, when I could go to the LEGO store with that same money and buy more real bricks."

This comment came to me from an AFOL, but I did not share it with Jørgen before the interview.



This graphic shows the various areas available in the game. Some areas, like Starbase 3001, were added after the initial release.

because you [already] have all the basic elements of producing a LEGO set. I think that's a real consideration for the LEGO Group here; whether the idea of selling customizable sets has any broader bearing to the public. There will always be some fans who are very keen to do it, but it may be a very small group rather than the broader audience of primarily kids. So I think that is one thing that I'm putting on the shelf and having to think about how we want to potentially move on with that, but as I said in the beginning, I would still like to explore some of these ideas and also think about how they are relevant to a fan community.

It's also (as you eluded to) true that when we set up a division for LEGO Universe or LEGO World online, we had many ideas of features that we would love to see in there and certainly it was my hope that we would develop a platform that wouldn't be a game that children would play for short periods of time, but actually be a meeting place to exchange and share your passion for the LEGO brand in an online space. I think we very quickly found that when we engage with children in what became an online game instead of an online world, that was a place they would spend maybe 5 or 6 months, but then they'd feel like they'd be done with that game and then move on to something else, maybe returning later like [they do] with some existing LEGO video games, but usually when the product is consumed they move on. So we drifted, rather than maybe decided, away from the idea of a world online to more like an online game, and I think the main reason for doing that over the years was that there was a sense that an online world in itself would not be sufficiently and broadly attractive enough to justify the business case that we were putting behind it in terms of operating costs, capacity and our server cost and so on. [Also consider] moderation, not the least of which was a major cost item for us to have people moderate and make sure it was a child-safe environment.

So all of those things took us away from the World Online. We did keep a backlog of exciting features we would have loved to add in later stages on LEGO Universe. Probably the single largest feature that was pushed for a later release was related to building and playing together on properties inside LEGO Universe. [In summary] 1) It moved away from the idea of a world online to more like an online game. 2) Many features were pushed out for later releases and 3) this whole question about customization, I'm having a good think about whether it's really relative on the LEGO context.

Geoff: Very good. With respect to the branding of the game and some of the other intellectual property of the game moving forward from here, since the game has been canceled, does the LEGO Group still retain the rights to all of the intellectual property of the game for possible reuse if you do bring this back in the future?

Jørgen: Yes, we have all the rights to the branding and the themes. Everything related to LEGO Universe is entirely with us.

Geoff: That's great. That answers a lot of the questions I have about LEGO Universe. Are there any other [thoughts about the game] that you'd like the readers to know about?

Jørgen: I would love to respond to the rumor [about the game servers being re-opened] because you are picking up a rumor that's out there and we still get questions, but we have no plan to reopen it, unfortunately. We went very far with this. (Jørgen pauses for a second, then chuckles.) A more focused CEO would have closed it a long time ago. That may be an exaggeration, but I think I was very patient on this one so I can assure you we have no plan of reopening it. You shouldn't say never, but unfortunately the readers will have to take my word that there's no plan to do it.

Geoff: It would be a long time, it sounds like, so we'll put that rumor to rest.

Jørgen: I think we should do that. In terms of the question about considering releasing it for game consoles, we actually did have conversations with some of the interesting players in the console business and there was an interest, but the way the terms for such a deal would typically work would be exclusivity so we

- 1) Ability to build and program robots online. Suggested the ability to tie into the Microsoft Robotics SDK.
- 2) Robotics competitions.
- 3) Ability to design, build and sell creations online.
- 4) Trains, cars, etc. to travel to different areas.
- 5) LEGO museum areas where you could walk through old sets from the past, walk into large buildings designed by LEGO designers and/or AFOLs

The following list was taken from an e-mail I sent to the company in June 2006 after my initial meetings with the design team. These were ideas we discussed during the meetings.



This shadowbox was made to help a 13 year old beta tester remember his time with the game.



were a little bit worried about being exclusive to one console platform, so our thinking was, why not do that for a later release of the game once it had been established? Of course, that never materialized.

In terms of Net Devil versus Travelers Tales Games, we are very impressed with Travelers Tales Games and they seemed to be doing a fantastic job, but at the time, Travelers Tales Games itself did not assess itself as having the capability in online gaming. Back then, in 2005 or 2006, there weren't actually that many companies around who did online games on this scale and so we worked with Net Devil.

And I think actually it would not be unfair to say that for Net Devil this was a huge undertaking and something that they had hardly tried before. They had done other online games, but just a couple and so unfortunately during that time, NetDevil was seeing the necessity of being acquired by a company called NR2B which became Casillion, a San Francisco based operator, and eventually the founders of Net Devil left the company, so you know from that angle [it was] a big tumultuous period and LEGO decided that we had had such an excellent relationship with Net Devil that we asked quite a few Net Devil employees to come work for us as we continued working on the game, [because] we were keen to tie into people from Net Devil that we had come to know very well and work with for several years. All in all we are quite happy with the collaboration with Net Devil, but I think it also has to be said that it was not a proven case. It was an experiment for both LEGO and for Net Devil and as we all know now it worked out to be one of those experiments where you can say you learned a lot that hopefully you can apply in the future, but unfortunately the experiment was not successful in the first instance.

Geoff: Certainly. And for all the readers who may not know, Jim Foulds, who works in the Community Division out of Enfield, is one of employees who came over from Net Devil. So just a quick shout-out to Jim, and a thank you for clarifying all the issues with Net Devil.

To slightly change the subject a little bit, this particular issue of *BrickJournal* is slated to be released right before Comic-Con and so we hope to have lots of copies of it out there for all the people [attending] Comic-Con. It would be kind of fun to get your view on the Super Heroes line of products from The LEGO Group and also the Super Heroes in general, so all the readers at Comic-Con can enjoy that.

Jørgen: So referring [back] to the LEGO Inside Tour of participants I met this afternoon, one of the questions I got was "so how did you manage to get both the Marvel figures and the DC Comics figures" and I have to say I don't know. I have a good team who works on this sort of thing, but I think the attractiveness of being able to offer something like this on the LEGO platform was very high for the people who grant the licenses, which I'm very happy about, because I think it has turned out to be a very popular series. It's had a very positive reception of course, and also the release of the *Avengers* movie has helped a lot, [so] we certainly are seeing many people who are very interested in the new LEGO sets. The sets that I feel are most successful are also the ones that I would call the classics. The sets related to X-Men are in my view a little bit less classic and I think will do a little bit less well than the ones that relate to, for instance, Hawk, which is very popular in the LEGO sets, and also of course Batman and so on.

Side Note: In volume 1 Issue 6, I interviewed Jørgen and asked about the company's ties to other brands. At the time the company was tending to turn away opportunities (Just in the year 2006 they had turned down opportunities from Pixar's 'Cars', Super Heroes, and Fantastic Four.) Jørgen indicated that they would 'take a very careful approach in that area.'

Geoff: It seems you've done a really good job of turning around the ability for your company to enter into [several successful] relationships with other companies. What do you see as a reason to be able to attack this much more aggressively over the last several years than you did in the first half of the last decade?

Jørgen: I think it's a couple of factors. One of course is that I think our development team has found a way of identifying which of those properties and stories will be particularly attractive from a LEGO angle. One thing I can tell you is that if we are talking about something that also includes making great vehicles for instance, it will typically turn out to be exciting (and I'll include spaceships of course among those vehicles), then it turns out to be something that's very popular with the LEGO user. I think also if you think about something like Marvel, DC Comics, Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Star Wars, you see that one thing that is common between all of them is they are almost like a modern day fairy tale and they've shown to have longevity. There are several books, several movies. They've been around, some of them for 30 years or more, and so we're not talking about something that has just come on the market and may not have so much recognition. It's well recognized, it's classic, and I think that goes very well hand-in-hand with the standing of the LEGO brand. Of course as you know, while it is called Star Wars, LEGO is not generally a company that is encouraging, let's say, violence and very aggressive toys; we of course also look for some of those stories that we feel connect well with some of the values that lie behind that aspect of our branding.

Geoff: Great. One last thing. We had spoken briefly prior to this interview in e-mail about some things that you are particularly proud of [with respect to] the company and you had brought up the fact that over the last several years, the company itself had grown in size quite a bit yet your company still manages to maintain the feel for the employees and for everybody else involved of just a nice small, close knit family and friendly relationship. I wanted to give you a chance to comment on that.

Jørgen: Certainly. So I think for us, we certainly appreciate the commercial success we are enjoying and that's probably also helping us secure access to some of those exciting properties such as Marvel and DC, so it's certainly very important for our ability to remain attractive and innovative to the user. But I think what is very essential to us is that success doesn't become a hollow success. So it would not be satisfying for us if LEGO was just making a ton of money and achieving good sales. We want our retail customers to consider LEGO the most exciting thing that can go into their store in terms of the toy section and I think we have really achieved that. We won great acclaim from retailers such as Wal-Mart and Toys R Us, winning Vendor of the Year awards for some years now. Also, we want to be their best advisor on how to successfully sell products and certainly, most important to us is what we call the Net Promoter score which we measure also on a product basis. [For example] "So how are LEGO users thinking about the product we are releasing?" To us it would be a very hollow success to be able to sell something because the packaging looks nice or there's Marvel in it so people get excited for that reason, but the actual building or playing experience is poor. That would be a real disaster for us.

And then the last elements next to our customers and consumer would be our employees, where we continue to measure on a bi-monthly basis the level of engagement and satisfaction. We're seeing that that has steadily increased as the performance of the company has also increased. We take this so seriously that when you consider for instance, my compensation scheme which is public to employees of LEGO, more than two-thirds of my annual bonus does not relate to how LEGO is selling or making profits, but relates to exactly the engagement and motivation amongst employees, the satisfaction of retail customers and this Net Promoter Score (NPS) that measures how consumers are reacting to LEGO experiences and interaction with the company in general. I'm very grateful that I'm able to have such a compensation scheme, not because it's making me a rich man, because it's always difficult to satisfy everybody fully, but [because] I think it sends a very strong culture signal to employees when they can see that the CEO is actually compensated on their feeling engaged and motivated, and also that customers and consumers must have the same experience because that basically puts your money where your mouth is. I feel it's a bond I have made that I can never move back from. How could I one year say "Well, we discussed it in the board of directors, and you know what? Next year my compensation





REUTERS - The family firm that controls Denmark's LEGO is buying almost a third of a German offshore wind power project in an unusual foray outside the toy business to showcase its green credentials to customers.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/23/us-dongenergy-lego-idUSTRE81M0MO20120223>

Headline from a Reuters article about the wind turbine investment. The article that Jørgen mentioned is available only to subscribers of the Financial Times Newspaper.

does not depend on whether we make great products and make our retail customers successful in selling LEGO? That would be a very, very negative signal to all employees. [Signals like my compensation scheme] are the best signals you can send and those are the signals that are so committing "that you've burned your bridges behind you," and so I'm very grateful that we are able to do it this way and thereby send very clear signals to the organization that we are serious about it.

A more recent example of our approach in this space is also covered with a full page article in *Financial Times*, I think on Tuesday or Wednesday of this week, that LEGO has announced an investment of \$500 million into renewable sources of energy; primarily wind turbines which will be located off the shores of northern Germany, and once they are fully constructed, they will generate all of the electricity we expect to consume in the company with the growth we are having by the year 2020. So with that we're joining a group of companies like Google and other IT Techs and also IKEA in taking the view that our success must also not be hollow from the point of view of energy consumption. We want to be, as much as possible, [basing] our business on renewables and biodegradables and so on.

Geoff: That is very interesting to hear and that is very encouraging. I appreciate you sharing that. I will say having been a very close fan of the company and following the work you've done, that over the past decade of leading the company, you have done a stellar job of turning it around, and I think your statement of how you view your message to the employees is probably a key part of that, and as an employee of a large company, I applaud that message.

Jørgen: Thank you very much.

Geoff: I would like to ask if there are any final parting words from you.

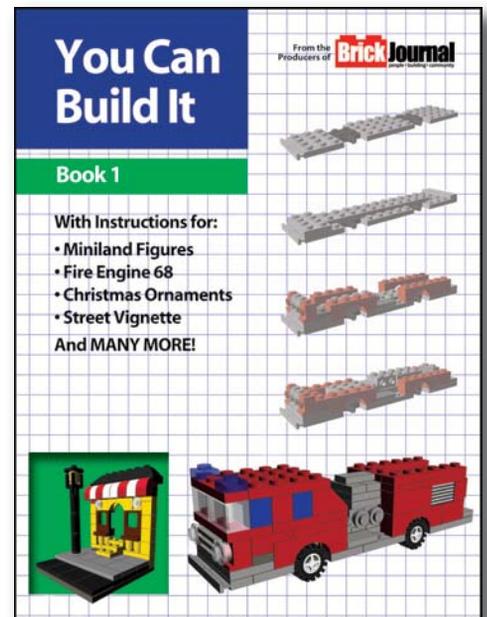
Jørgen: I think we covered a lot of good things in here, and thank you very much.

Geoff: Well, thank you, and I'll give you the rest of the evening off, since it is so late there. Once again, I appreciate your time

Jørgen: It's a pleasure Geoff. All the best. 

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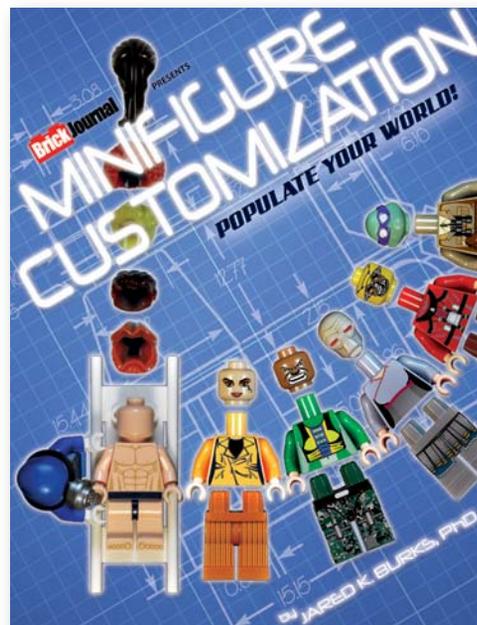


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Building



Batman and Robin.



Villains: Penguin, Joker, and Lex Luthor.



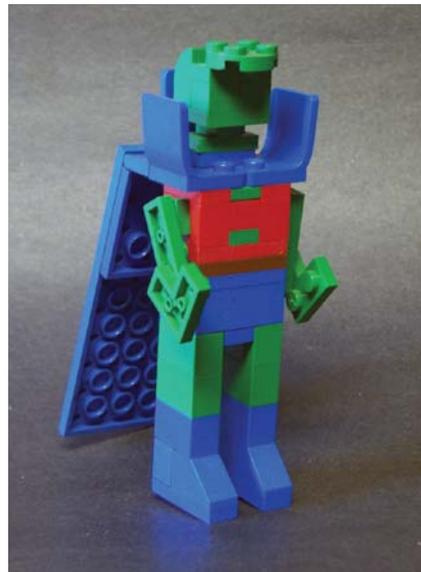
Reverse-Flash and Flash.



Justice League of America: Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Superman, Batman, Robin, and Aquaman.



Superman.



Martian Manhunter.

Miniland Heroes

Article and Photography by Matt Armstrong
(Monsterbrick on Flickr)

AFOL Matt Armstrong lives in California, not too far from LEGOLAND California, and not too far from his inspirations. As Monsterbrick on Flickr, his models have gotten the attention of people worldwide for his expertise and variety. One of the many things he has done is miniland figures, including superheroes. Here, he talks about building the figures.

I made the first superhero miniland figs while at LEGOLAND California some six years ago. I would often go to LEGOLAND just to build in the building area, as you could weigh your creation and then purchase it.

I have always been a big fan of superheroes. As a child some forty years ago, I remember wanting to know all the heroes' names as well as their secret identities.

Thor was the very first one I put together. I gained the inspiration after finding several blue and yellow plates stacked together. I looked at them and saw Thor's boot. After Thor, it was all about the Justice League of America and I did about 5 or 6 figs before leaving the park and returning home to fine tune, refine and make more. (You can't always find the exact brick you need at LL!)

Most of the Marvels were put together in my LEGO-room including the Fantastic Four. Sadly they did not survive the kitten onslaught of '09. With the Marvels I did not try for the miniland look but went for more articulation on each figure.



Hulk, Captain America, and Thor.



Beast.



Bruce Banner transforming.



Ghost Rider.



Wolverine, Professor X, and Beast.

Building

Minifig Customization 101:

Sculpting Custom Hair From Clay

by Jared K. Burks

*A figure with a finished hairpiece:
Honky from the Clown
Commandos.*



This article is going to discuss hair — not your hair, your minifigure's hair. The second most defining characteristic of any custom minifigure is typically what is on the minifigure's head. Having an accurate hairpiece is critical. LEGO® has recently done a great job giving us new hairpieces, many of which can be easily modified into several different styles. This sort of modification was previously covered in an earlier article. Color alteration of LEGO elements has also been covered in the magazine. So suppose LEGO doesn't make the hairpiece in the correct color for your custom figure. So what do you do

when you can't modify or recolor a hairpiece? Break out your clay! Time to sculpt a hairpiece; this is typically a little different from sculpting other elements due to the size and level of detail.

Tips and tricks to make custom hair elements are presented here, but the best piece of advice I can offer is to sculpt. Practice improves any skill, and if you aren't happy with your first attempt try again. I typically sculpt a part two to three times, learning from each attempt. Is each attempt a success, no, but each is a learning experience.

The Basics

Types of Media (Polymer Clay versus Epoxy Putty)

There are several types of clay ranging from the earthen clay dug from the ground to completely synthetic, most are not appropriate for this type of application. The major type used for making custom hairpieces is polymer clay, however, some use Epoxy putty (MagicSculp) which is similar to clay. Polymer clays will not harden till cured by low heat; epoxy putties cure by chemical means limiting your sculpting time to typically less than 24 hours. Choosing one over the other is ultimately up to your preference, however there are some basic arguments for both. It boils down to extended sculpting time versus durability. The clay will not cure till heated and the epoxy putty will be more hard wearing. If you are not going to mold and cast your part and/or you are a fast sculptor I recommend the epoxy putties, if not polymer clays.

Polymer clay has a relatively low curing temperature and remains pliable until cured. Polymer clay hardens by curing at 265 to 275 °F (129 to 135 °C) for 15 minutes per 1/4" (6 mm) of thickness in your home oven and does not shrink or change texture during the process. The curing temperature can be lowered if the clay is heated for a longer duration. You can also cure polymer clay by placing it in very hot water or surface cure it using a hair drier. Surface curing will allow you to sand your part; however without a complete curing the clay can be fragile. When properly cured polymer clays are quite strong and won't normally break when stressed or dropped. Polymer clay is available in hobby and craft stores, and even stores such as Wal-Mart. Leading brands of polymer clay include Premo, Fimo, Kato Polyclay, and Sculpey. These clays are available in a wide array of colors so you might not even need to paint the parts you create. On top of these great options this type of clay is quite inexpensive; a small package of clay, more than enough to create many parts and can be purchased for less than \$2. I prefer Sculpey firm, which is as it's name suggests a firmer clay. This firmness makes it a bit easier to handle for me.



Sculpey Firm & Magic Sculp

Epoxy Putty has many of the exact same characteristics as polymer clay with the main difference being the mechanism of curing. Epoxy putties are mixtures of two chemically different parts of putty. Mixing the two parts together initiate the chemical process of curing the putty. This curing time depends on the thickness of the putty and how well mixed. Typically 24 hours is common for a minifigure scale item. The big advantage is the durability of the epoxy putty as it will always completely cure.



Figure 1. Putty and resins..

From here on out the article will refer to sculpting material as clay; however it could be either clay or putty. Once you get your hands on clay, play with it, work it, and get a general feel for it. Your hands are your best tools so play with some of the material and see what level of detail you can capture with just your hands, don't forget your fingernails, they can be used to sculpt details as well. You will likely need some additional tools to create the fine details on your creations, and maybe even a texture mold (more on this shortly). I find any fine-tipped item works well including x-acto knives, paper clips, and most any other small item, figure 1. Find items that work for you. Your tools don't have to be store bought clay tools; most of these are actually too large for this work. If you want buy a tool set, look for dental tools (Harbor Freight has some good options). Remember this is very small scale work; your tools need to be able to create fine detail. The best advice I can give you on tools is get some Popsicle sticks. Cut them into various shapes, sharpen them and try sculpting with them, they will serve you well.



Figure 2. Tools. Several commercial clay tools as well a few makeshift items.

Sculpting 101

Clay sculpture is generally created by one of two methods, addition or subtraction of material. These techniques are as they sound; the addition or removal of material to create detail. I started in woodcarving, a subtractive technique, and commonly find myself reverting to this method. Find the technique that works best for you. One

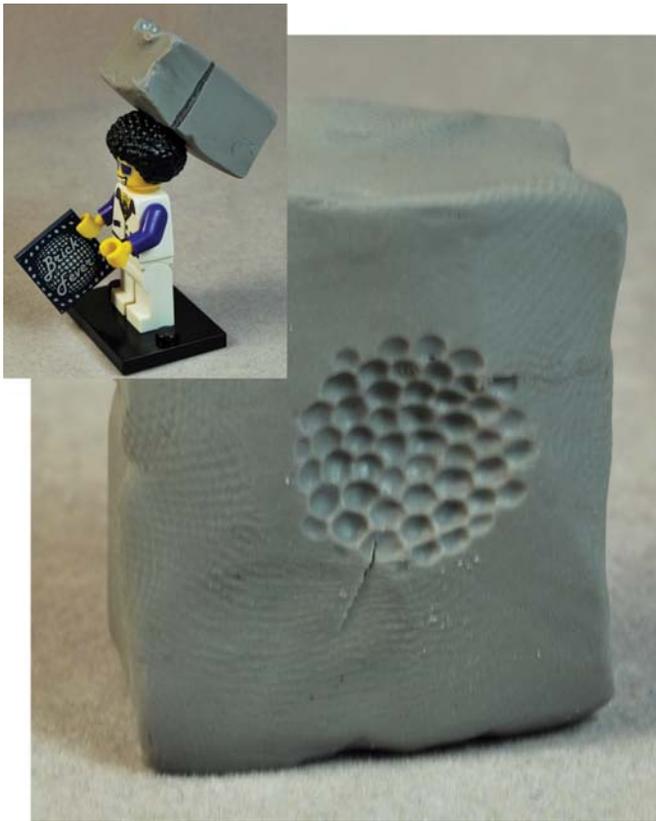


Figure 3. Making a texture mold.



Figure 4. Sanding Tools. Modeling sanding sticks from Hobby Lobby (blue & white). Micromesh sanding swabs.

tip I can offer is subtraction works better with surface cured clay and epoxy putty. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you exactly how to sculpt a part, it will take time and practice to master this art. I can offer a few tips and tricks that I have learned to help speed your learning curve into creating a custom hairpiece.

Design Suggestions

If you want to sculpt a hairpiece that works in the LEGOverse avoid too much detail as LEGO commonly stays simply by designing hairpieces that display locks or segments of hair as opposed to individual hair strands.

Make sure your design frames the face of the minifigure as your figure wants to see who is

checking out it's new hair style. Covering the face is not a good idea. For a more realistic hair style avoid perfect symmetry in the design style. Make sure that the hairline starts at the curved portion of the head or slightly lower.

A very helpful trick I have learned is the creation of a texture mold (Figure 3). If you can identify an official hairpiece or any other piece of textured plastic that has a similar detail to the hair style you wish to create you can press clay onto that piece of plastic and cure the clay. This original piece is called the "master." Once cured the clay can be removed from the "master" piece and used a mold to press into the clay on the hairpiece you are attempting to create. You will still have to sculpt the hair into the desired general shape, but this will add the detail. These details will need to be cleaned up slightly, but this method will add detail quickly and your press mold can be altered in direction and angle to create very different details to a hairpiece.

Alternatively, if sculpting all the details from scratch, I create my sculpted parts in layers. This allows me to sculpt and sand as I go, when I am finished sculpting I have little sanding left. This is exceptionally critical with small parts like hairpieces. If you try and sand the part at the end, you may find that the detail work on the piece is difficult to work around. Sanding is a slow process, but it is CRITICAL to making your custom element look more like LEGO elements. Two tips to save time on your sanding is right before you cure (surface or complete) any part; give the part a quick wipe down with a cotton swab or paint brush that has been dipped in rubbing alcohol (70% Isopropanol) for clay or water for epoxy putty. This will remove any fingerprints or other slight imperfections on the sculpted part leaving a smoother surface. The second tip is to scrape the area you want sanded with a very sharp x-acto knife. After scraping or wiping down with alcohol or water it is time to sand. To sand your custom parts you will need very fine grit sand paper, which can be purchased at most hobby stores (woodworking grades are simply too coarse). Because you are using an ultra fine grit paper, sanding will be slow, but you will be rewarded in the end with a better looking piece. As with the tools you are using to sculpt the part you will need small tools to sand it. To make these sanding tools cut the sand paper and attach it to small sticks or rods (seen in Figure 2). Make sure to step up in grit values to really get the best finish.

Tips and Tricks

If you are creating a hairpiece or some other accessory item that must attach to a LEGO element, you will likely want to remove it after you have finished sculpting it. This can be tricky and if your clay isn't completely cured, which could result in damage to your creation by trying to remove it. To help with part removal, you can wrap the LEGO element it attaches to with very thin aluminum foil or parafilm. Parafilm is a stretchable wax like product that is used by hobbyist when painting models. It can be found at hobby shops or online. Another great trick is to sculpt over the top of another element. You can sand down a LEGO hairpiece to a "skullcap" and add clay to the top of it allowing you to sculpt a new hair style, helmet or

whatever. Most importantly this allows you to keep the internal stud acceptor and more easily remove the cured part. Just remember when curing this clay to be careful, you will need to cure using slower/lower temperature technique previously discussed. If you plan on molding and casting your finished piece merely include the head in the molding process.

The final tip/trick I have for you is the use of clay sealants, primers, and air drying glazes. The sealant is sold with most resin casting kits, primers are found in plastic modeling kits, and the glaze is found with most clays. These items will strengthen the cured clay and give it a finished sheen. The epoxy putty will be very strong and these items are not needed. The use of a primer will improve any painting you wish to do on either type of material (clay or putty). If you want to jump in and paint it I suggest acrylic paints. They are easy to find, dry quickly, and clean up.

The Wrap

I will end this article as I began it; sculpt, sculpt, and sculpt. Only through practice will you get better. Sculpting and re-sculpting a piece will teach you something each time you make the design. Everyone needs a hair drier, even if you are bald. Sand paper is your friend, sand early and often, always increasing in grit. Seal your final part to give it that LEGO sheen. 



Figure 6. Hair Example 2: Sculpting directly on top of a minifigure head.



You can go to Jared's webpage by scanning this QR code!



Figure 5. Hair Example 1: Sculpting on top of a skullcap

A figure with a finished hairpiece:
Bubbles from the Clown
Commandos.



Next Time:

Minifig Customization 101 – Packaging Your Figures for Display

You Can Build It

MINI Model

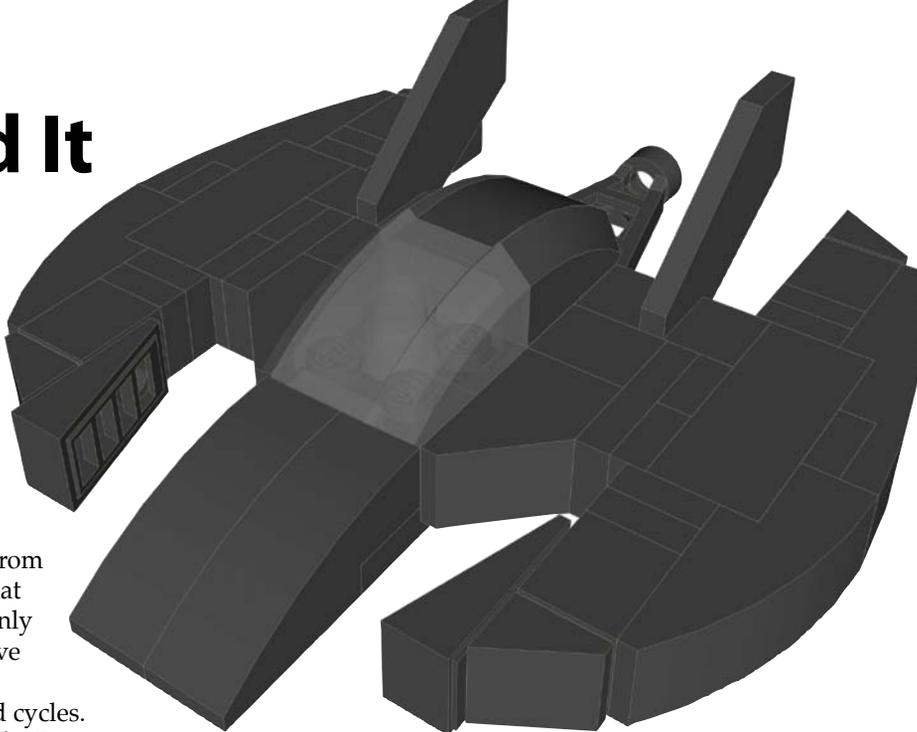
MINI Batwing

Design and Instructions

by Christopher Deck

Hello everybody, I am glad we meet again in this fantastic issue of *BrickJournal*! Have you already picked your favorite character from the new LEGO® superhero series? I think that Batman would be a great choice! He is not only an exceptional hero, he also has an impressive vehicle fleet to support him on his missions, including planes, helicopters, boats, cars and cycles. Among the most memorable ones for me is the Batwing. There already have been two different versions released by LEGO® (set 7782 from 2006 and set 6863 from 2012).

The mini model we want to build here is the classic Batwing featured in the original Batman movie from 1989. This version also roughly resembles the Batman logo when you look on top of it, which also works for the mini model. It's a very sleek vehicle with streamlined outlines. To obtain these effects on the mini model, many curved



pieces were used. Applying additional SNOT (studs not on top) techniques provides the model with a completely studless and smooth appearance!

Happy building and see you next time!

Yours, Christopher Deck 

Parts List (Parts can be ordered through Bricklink.com by searching by part number and color)

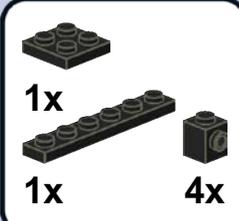
Batwing Main Hull

Qty.	Color	Part	Description
2	Black	3005.dat	Brick 1 x 1
4	Black	87087.dat	Brick 1 x 1 with Stud on 1 Side
2	Black	3622.dat	Brick 1 x 3
10	Black	3024.dat	Plate 1 x 1
2	Black	49673.dat	Plate 1 x 1 with Tooth
4	Black	3023.dat	Plate 1 x 2
1	Black	4596.dat	Plate 1 x 2 with 3L Extension and Stud Hole
1	Black	3666.dat	Plate 1 x 6
1	Black	3022.dat	Plate 2 x 2
2	Black	3040b.dat	Slope Brick 45 2 x 1
4	Black	50950.dat	Slope Brick Curved 3 x 1
2	Black	61678.dat	Slope Brick Curved 4 x 1
1	Black	30602.dat	Slope Brick Curved Top 2 x 2 x 1
1	Trans-Black	30602.dat	Slope Brick Curved Top 2 x 2 x 1
2	Black	44661.dat	Tail 2 x 3 x 2 Fin

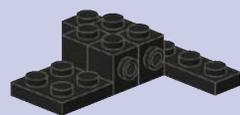
Batwing Wingtips

Qty.	Color	Part	Description
2	Black	87087.dat	Brick 1 x 1 with Stud on 1 Side
2	Black	47905.dat	Brick 1 x 1 with Studs on Two Opposite Sides
8	Black	3024.dat	Plate 1 x 1
4	Black	50746.dat	Slope Brick 31 1 x 1 x 2/3
2	Black	61409.dat	Slope Brick 18 2 x 1 x 2/3 Grille

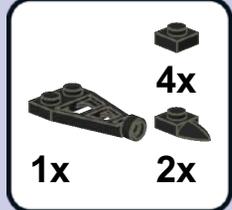
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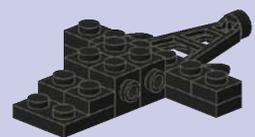
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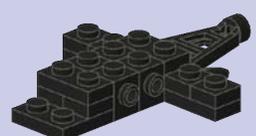
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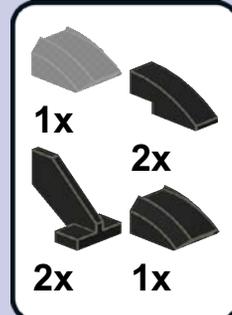
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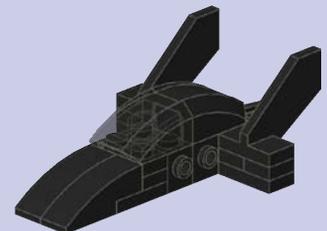
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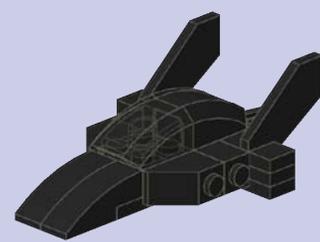
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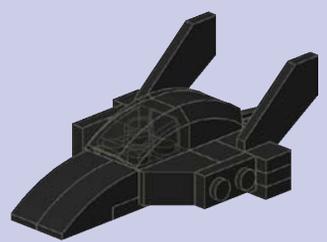
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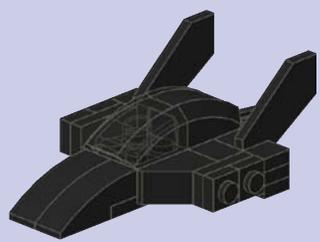
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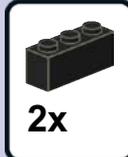
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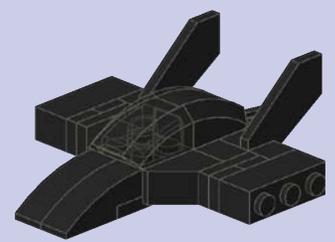
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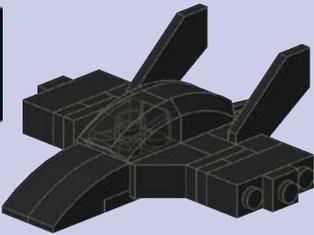
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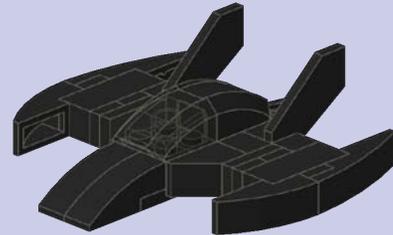
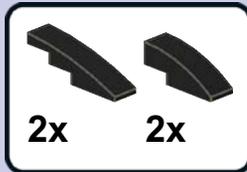
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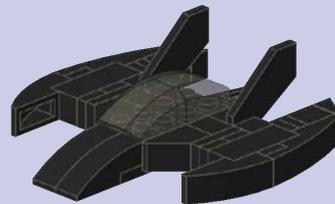
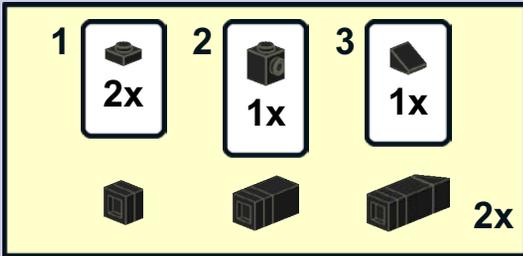
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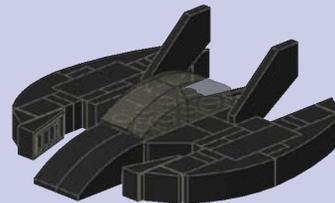
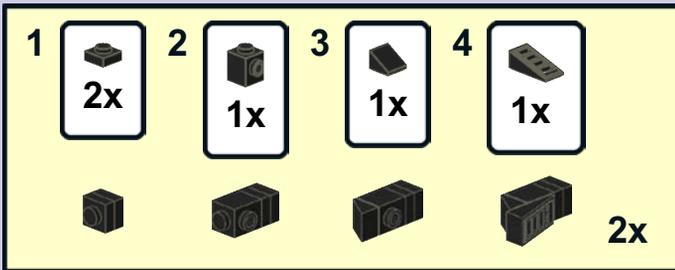
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12



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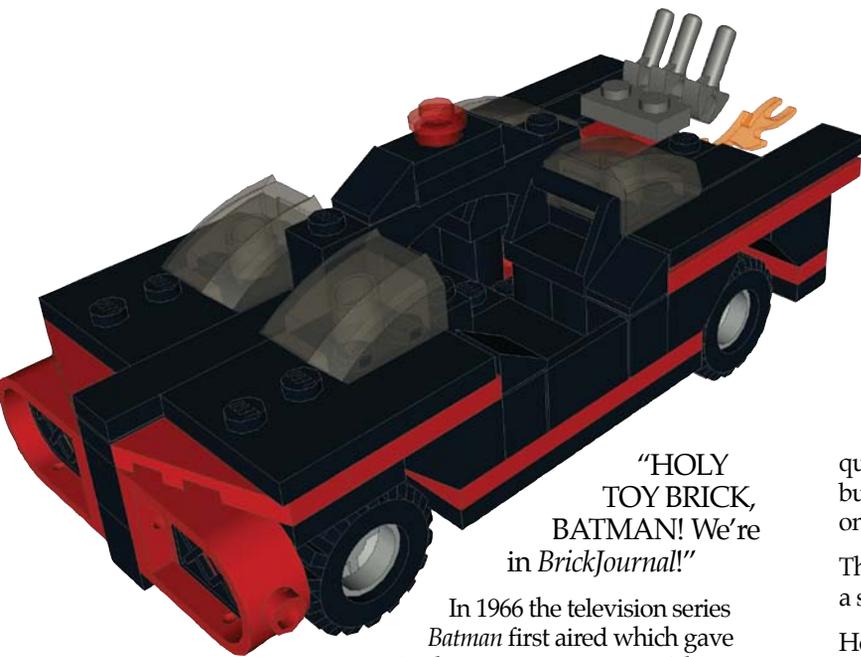
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“HOLY TOY BRICK, BATMAN! We’re in *BrickJournal!*”

In 1966 the television series *Batman* first aired which gave birth to two iconic parts of the Batman mythos: Robin’s famous exclamation, “Holy (insert relevant word here) Batman!” and a fresh new take on the Batmobile. A modification of a Ford Futura concept car, with its red and black color scheme, convertible design, dual windshields, and rocket engine on the back, it

You Can Build It

Batmobile

Design by Carson Sangala
Instructions by Joe Meno

quickly became an icon of the show. Today we’re going to build one of those two parts of the show (can you guess which one?).

The model presented an interesting challenge trying to make it a seven-stud wide car rather than six-stud width.

However, with its proper balance of simplicity and tricky connection points, it turned out rather nicely.

Join us next issue for more models — same brick time, same *BrickJournal!* 

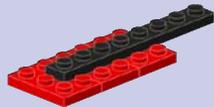
Parts List (Parts can be ordered through Bricklink.com by searching by part number and color)

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1	2420.dat	Plate 2 x 2 Corner	Black
1	2431p08.dat	Tile 1 x 4 with “-3-” Pattern	Black
2	2432.dat	Tile 1 x 2 with Handle	Black
1	2540.dat	Plate 1 x 2 with Handle	Dark Bluish Gray
6	3005.dat	Brick 1 x 1	Black
2	3020.dat	Plate 2 x 4	Black
3	3021.dat	Plate 2 x 3	Black
9	3021.dat	Plate 2 x 3	Red
2	3022.dat	Plate 2 x 2	Black
5	3023.dat	Plate 1 x 2	Black
2	3023.dat	Plate 1 x 2	Red
1	3062b.dat	Brick 1 x 1 Round with Hollow Stud	Black
1	3062b.dat	Brick 1 x 1 Round with Hollow Stud	Light Bluish Gray
2	3068bp81.dat	Tile 2 x 2 with Black “1” Pattern	Black
2	3069b.dat	Tile 1 x 2 with Groove	Black
1	3070bp04.dat	Tile 1 x 1 with Black “4” Pattern	Black
1	3455.dat	Arch 1 x 6	Black
1	3460.dat	Plate 1 x 8	Black
1	3622.dat	Brick 1 x 3	Black
1	3622p02.dat	Brick 1 x 3 with Control Panel Pattern	Black
1	3623.dat	Plate 1 x 3	Black
6	3660.dat	Slope Brick 45 2 x 2 Inverted	Black
4	3666.dat	Plate 1 x 6	Red
5	3710.dat	Plate 1 x 4	Black
5	3794a.dat	Plate 1 x 2 without Groove with 1 Centre Stud	Black

Qty	Part	Description	Color
2	3794a.dat	Plate 1 x 2 without Groove with 1 Centre Stud	Red
2	3795.dat	Plate 2 x 6	Black
2	4070.dat	Brick 1 x 1 with Headlight	Black
1	4073.dat	Plate 1 x 1 Round	Black
2	4865a.dat	Panel 1 x 2 x 1 with Square Corners	Black
4	6014.dat	Wheel Hub 11.2 x 10.4	Light Bluish Gray
1	6126.dat	Minifig Flame	Trans Neon Orange
1	6141.dat	Plate 1 x 1 Round	Trans Red
2	6157.dat	Plate 2 x 2 with Wheels Holder Wide	Black
1	6188.dat	Cone 1 x 1	Light Bluish Gray
2	6636.dat	Tile 1 x 6	Black
2	30044.dat	Window 1 x 2 x 2.667 with Rounded Top	Red
2	30046.dat	Window 1 x 2 x 2.667 Pane Lattice Diamond with Rounded Top	Black
2	30136.dat	Brick 1 x 2 Log	Black
4	30602.dat	Slope Brick Curved Top 2 x 2 x 1	Trans Black
1	43722.dat	Wing 2 x 3 Right	Red
1	43723.dat	Wing 2 x 3 Left	Red
1	47905.dat	Brick 1 x 1 with Studs on Two Opposite Sides	Black
3	48729.dat	Bar 1.5L with Clip	Dark Bluish Gray
8	50746.dat	Slope Brick 31 1 x 1 x 2/3	Black
4	60700.dat	Tyre 12/ 40 x 11 Wide	Black
2	88646.dat	Tile 3 x 4 with Four Studs	Black

1

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2

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1

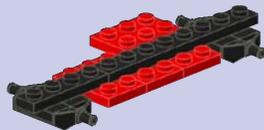
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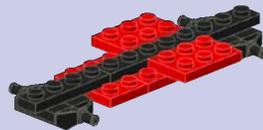
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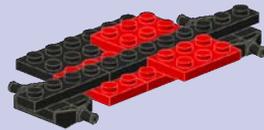
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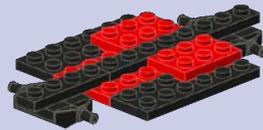
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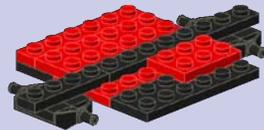
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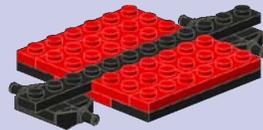
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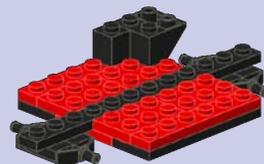
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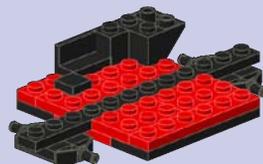
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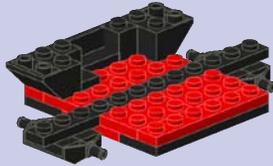
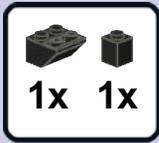


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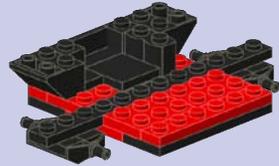
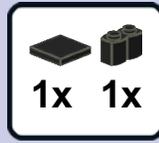
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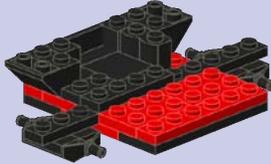
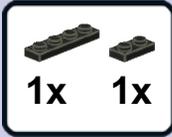
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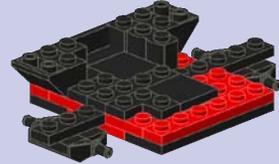
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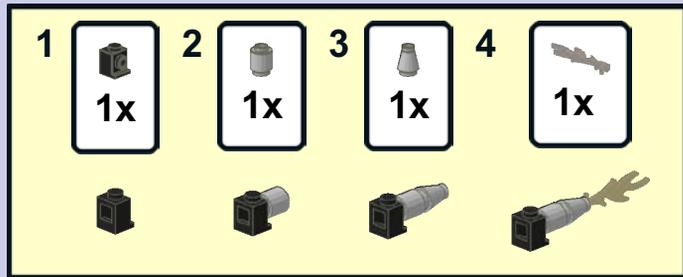
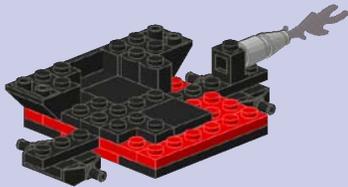
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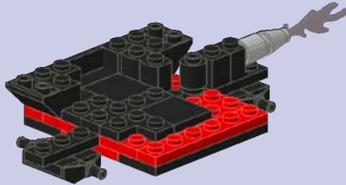
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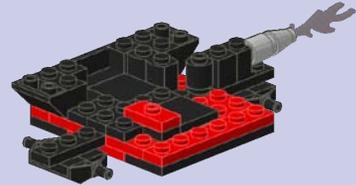
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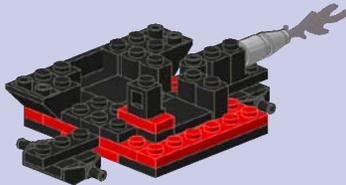
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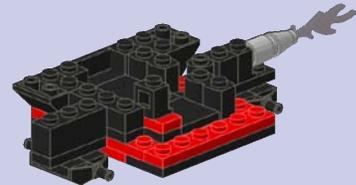
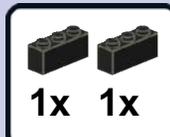
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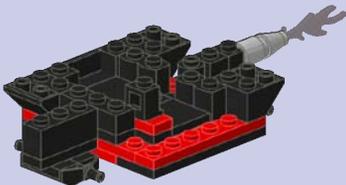
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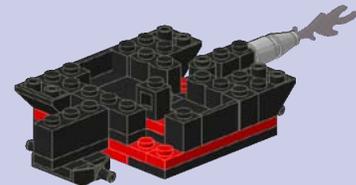
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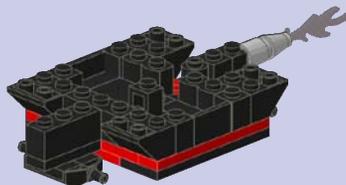
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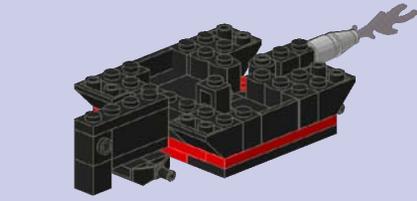
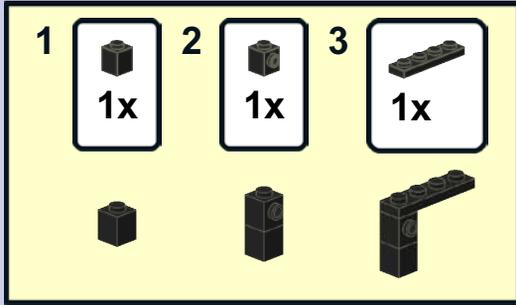
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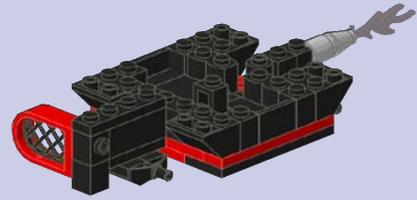
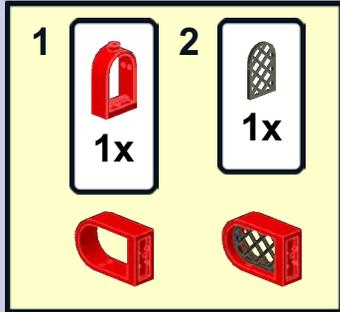
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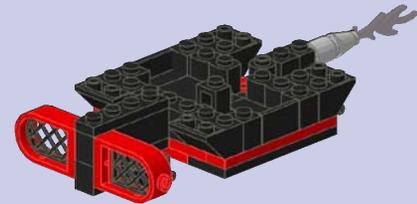
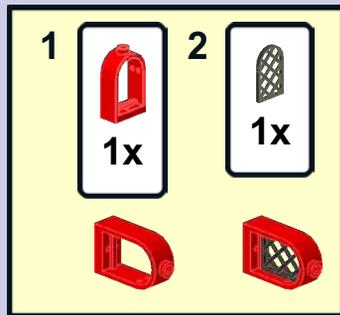
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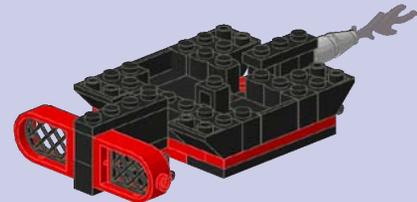
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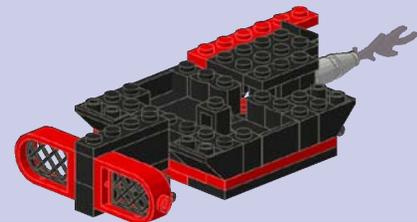
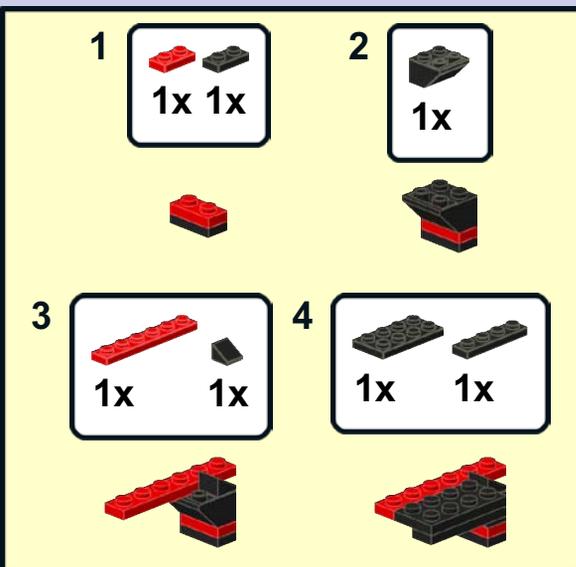
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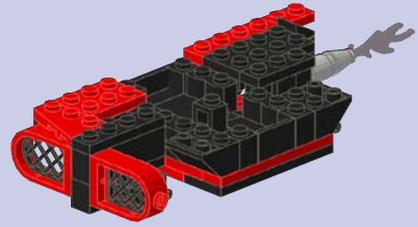
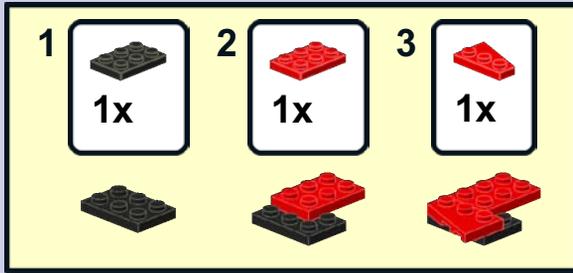
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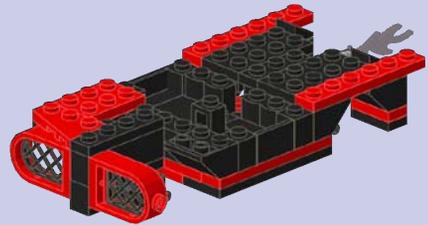
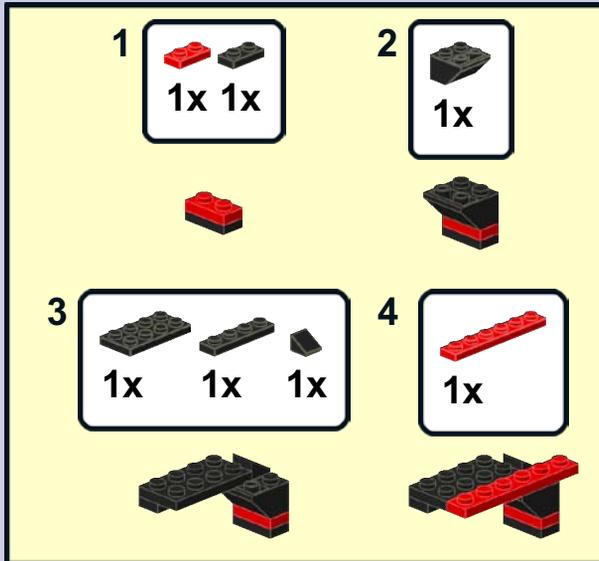
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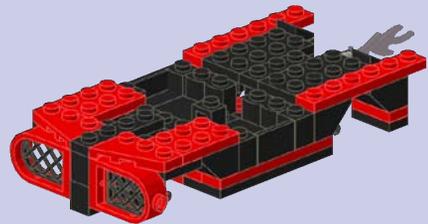
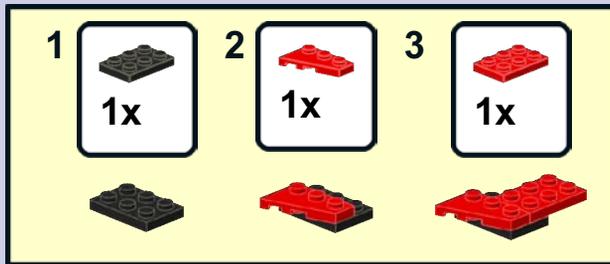
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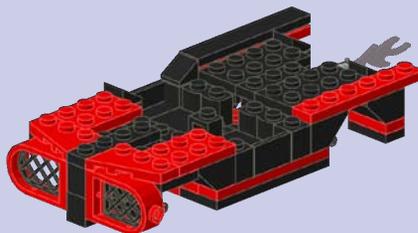
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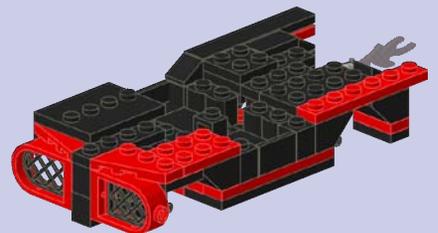
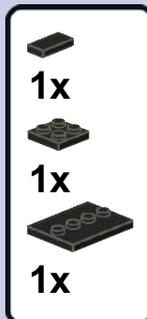
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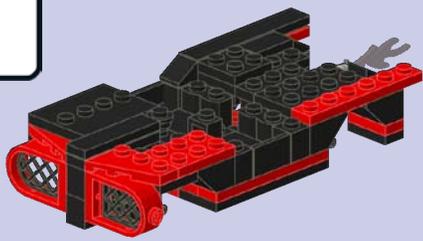
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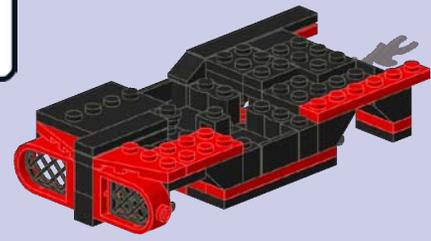
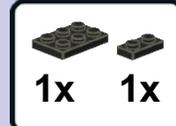
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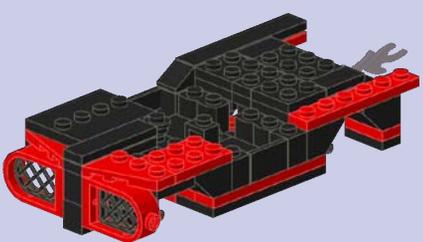
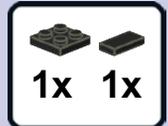
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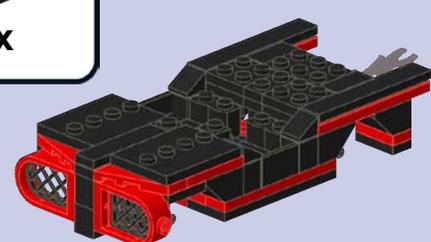
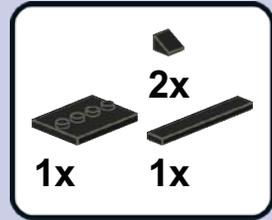
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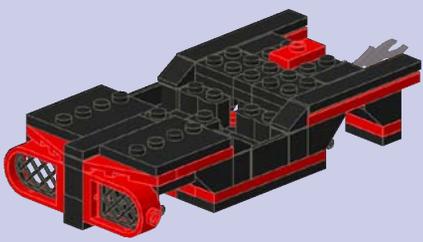
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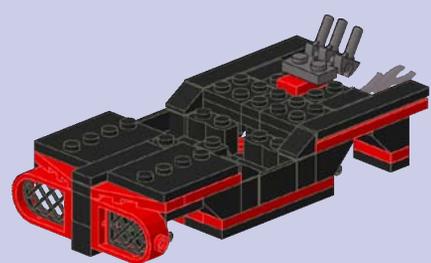
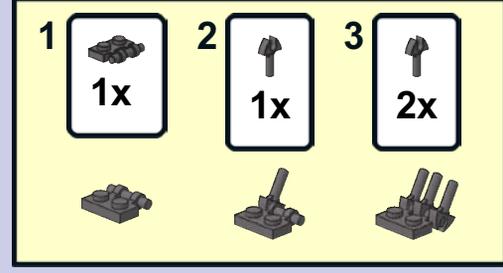
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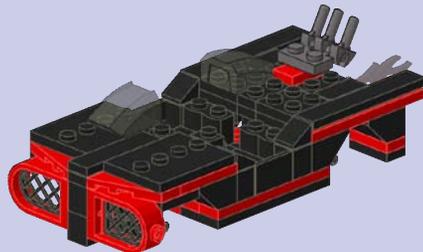
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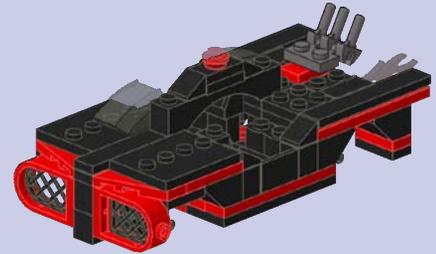
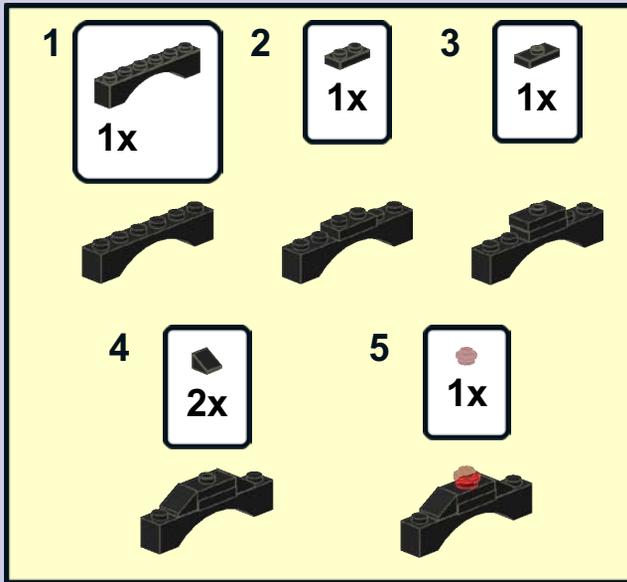
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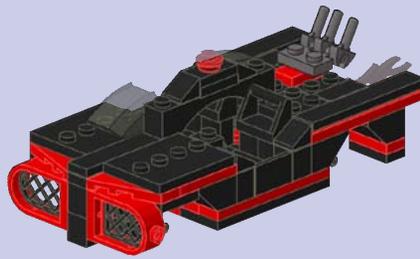
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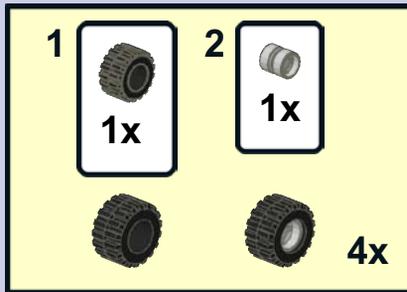
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46



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Not Quite LEGO

It's time for another edition of "Not Quite LEGO" —the column that takes a look at some of the other toys out there that are "not quite LEGO." No, we're not talking about MegaBlocs, but about other toys that are sometimes similar to LEGO, or may be of interest to LEGO fans in general!



Spider-Man's Rogues Gallery: (from left) Kraven the Hunter, Diablo, Dr. Octopus, Mysterio, and Sandman. Top: Vulture.

Bring on the Bad Guys!

Article and Photography by Greg Hyland

Art Asylum's Minimates figures are a line of popular block figures that a lot of LEGO fans might know about (or because I wrote about them in a previous *BrickJournal*). They've done figures for a big range of characters, including *Battlestar Galactica*, *Terminator*, *Halo*, *Universal Monsters*, *Back to the Future* and the hit Madonna movie *Desperately Seeking Susan* (What, really? No, really). But their most popular line has been for *Marvel Super Heroes*, which is approaching its 50th Direct Market wave and over 15 Toys R Us exclusive waves.

One of the things that superhero action figure collectors complain about is often the lack of villains for a line. But I'd argue that problem doesn't exist with the Marvel Minimates line. While multiple versions of popular heroes, like Spider-Man and Wolverine are plentiful, so are villains—often sold in two-packs with the hero.

With almost ten years of Marvel Minimates made, it would take up too much space to list all villains made, but I'd like to showcase some of the more iconic villains. Also, with the new LEGO Marvel Super Heroes sets, it's an interesting look at figures that could show up as minifigures!

Spider-Man

Along with Batman, I'd say that Spider-Man has the most interesting "Rogue's Gallery" of all superheroes. Spider-Man villains Venom, Carnage, and Green Goblin date back to Minimates' first wave (officially, they are all part of "Wave 2," however the first three "waves" were all released at the same time).

As someone that likes the line for its ability to assemble "teams," I like the fact that the team of Spider-Man's greatest



Spider-Man's Rogues Gallery: (from left) Black Cat, the Lizard, Venom, Green Goblin, the Scorpion, and J. Jonah Jameson.

villains, the Sinister Six, can be created. The Sinister Six comprise of Doc Ock, Sandman, Electro, Mysterio, Kraven the Hunter, and Vulture. Other notable villains include the Lizard, Green Goblin, the Shocker, Chameleon, Kingpin (I still count him as a Spidey villain, not Daredevil's!), Black Cat, Rhino, and Scorpion.

And although he isn't a costumed villain, I count Peter Parker's boss and Daily Bugle publisher J. Jonah Jameson as a "classic" Spidey villain. A version of JJJ came in Wave 7, but this figure was actually the Chameleon disguised as Jameson! A new version of Jameson came out in the recent Wave 43, and his accessories includes a Daily Bugle newspaper with the headline "SPIDER-MAN: HERO OR MENACE?"

The Green Goblin has had five variations made of him (if you count Ultimate Green Goblin), but the most interesting version was the one that came in Wave 41, which not only came with a "Goblin Glider" for the first time, but came with "Unmasked Spider-Man," a rope, and flame-blast stand, allowing you to recreate the cover to the classic comic *Amazing Spider-Man* #39!

There have also been six versions of the popular Spidey villain Venom, including a version from the Spider-Man 3 movie line. While I'm not a Venom fan, I find a couple of these figures interesting. I like the original Venom that came in Wave 2 because it's just plain goofy! Also, a variation of that figure was made with an extra goofy sticking-out tongue. Incidentally, that version was only released in Canada. The version that came in Wave 24, called Transformation Venom, is good because it came with so many parts. This figure allows you to convert it to Venom's alter ego, Eddie Brock, a version of an extra-crazy Brock in mid-transformation, and lastly a final version of Venom. As a *toy*, this figure is really well done. Makes me almost like Venom!

To me, the key villains that are missing for Spidey are Morbius and the Beetle (and a good friend of mine desperately wants Stegtron!).



Venom transforming.



Green Goblin and Spider-Man.



Venom.



Fantastic Four

After Spider-Man, I'd argue that some of Marvel's most iconic villains belong to the Fantastic Four. FF villains that have been made include Mole Man, Doctor Doom, Skrulls, Super Skrull, Molecule Man, Klaw, Terrax, and Galactus.

While some wouldn't count him as an FF villain, they've also made three versions of Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner. The Toys R Us Wave 8 version even came with an Atlantean soldier.

There have been six versions of Doctor Doom made, including a Secret Wars version and a First Appearance version. Now I wish they'd make a First Appearance version of the Fantastic Four!

Super Skrull, who has the powers of all the members of the Fantastic Four, is a favorite figure of mine and has had two versions made of him. The first version came as a 2004 Exclusive set and comes with a "stretchy" rocky hand and a fireball fist to represent his powers. More recently, Super Skrull has been redone and appears in Wave 2 of the *Marvel vs. CapCom* line. This version of Super Skrull comes with add-on accessories, like a stretched out arm and fist, a stretched out lower body that is partly transparent, a rocky fist and a fiery arm.

From left, some of the Fantastic Four's adversaries: Mole Man, Doctor Doom, Galactus, and Super Skrull. In the back is Molecule Man, Sentinels, and Skrull Troops.

Galactus, one of the Fantastic Four's most iconic villains, has been made twice, but both versions are "problematic" because of the character Galactus' giant size. The Marvel Minimate license doesn't allow for bodies to be more than the two-inch size, so making a larger figure, like Galactus, a Sentinel or Giant Man are difficult, at best. The first version was part of 2006's "Minimate Max" line. This figure was over 10 inches tall, and while it was styled like a Minimate, it was actually an unarticulated resin statue. The fact that it wasn't movable and had a \$75-\$85 price, made for a poor seller. However, if you can find one, they now go for over \$300 on eBay! The second version of Galactus was part of the recent "Heralds of Galactus" boxed set, which also came with Nova, Terrax and Morg. This time Galactus is made from a regular sized Minimate figure... however, he comes with a tiny Silver Surfer figure that clips on to his back, to give the impression of Galactus' giant size!

In the future, I have my fingers crossed for an Annihilus figure.



Avengers

There aren't a lot of unique Avengers villains made yet, but the *Avengers* movie prompted Art Asylum to create some recently, and the success of the movie will hopefully have them make more in the future. However, if you count the characters that are villains of individual Avengers members, then the number goes up.

I would consider figures like Ultron, Taskmaster, Kang, Grim Reaper and Thanos as main Avengers villains. Also, they've done "Army Builder" figures, like AIM soldiers, Hydra soldiers and the Kree Sentry that can fight the Avengers in masses.

*Front: Wolverine, Iron Patriot, and Ms. Marvel.
Back: Hawkeye, Spider-Man, Sentry and Quicksilver.*

Thanos, Kang, Ultron, Taskmaster, and Grim Reaper line up the front here. The rear is made up of a Kree sentry, and a HYDRAsoldier.

Kang the Conqueror has been a highly demanded figure by the fans and has only recently been done, appearing in a Disney Store exclusive boxed set.

Another interesting group of Avengers villains has been done—the Dark Avengers. The members of this team, all villains pretending to be heroes, appeared in two San Diego Comic-Con exclusive boxed sets. Figures for Iron Patriot (the Green Goblin in Iron Man-type armor), Spider-Man (actually Venom), Wolverine (actually Wolverine's son Daken) and Captain Marvel (formerly Marvel Boy) appear in one set, and Sentry, Aries, Hawkeye (actually Bullseye) and Ms. Marvel (Moonstone) appear in the second set. I love teams, so to have sets featuring all these characters, I think, are pretty cool!





If you count individual Avengers characters that have their own villains, the Captain America has Red Skull (both Silver Age and Modern versions), Arnim Zola, and Crossbones. Iron Man has Crimson Dynamo, Titanium Man, Spymaster, and the Mandarin (both Silver Age and Modern versions). Thor has Loki (three versions of him, including one based on Walter Simonson designs). Hulk has the Abomination, the Leader, and Absorbing Man.

It would be nice to see an Avengers villain like Baron Zemo and the Super Adaptoid made (he should be easy to make, as he could be made from reused parts!).





X-Men

Many of the X-Men's notable villains have been made, including Magneto, Juggernaut, Sentinels, the Black Queen and Hellfire Club guards, Sabretooth, and Dark Phoenix.

There have been nine versions of Magneto made, including one from the *X-Men: First Class* line, and Magneto in his worst-costume-ever, with a giant "M" on it that he wore briefly in the '80s. It would be nice to have a Brotherhood of Evil Mutants to go with Magneto; right now you can team Magneto up with Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch, but figures for Toad and the Blob are missing (although a very unattractive Blob figure was made for the *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* line).

Just like with Galactus, there was an 8-inch Minimates Max unarticulated Sentinel figure produced. But recently, a normal sized Sentinel was made, because again, large size figures can't be made. The Sentinel comes with a few extra accessories allowing you to customize your figure to be either a "classic" Silver Age Sentinel, or a newer modern looking one. Also, a beefy Sentinel was made for the *Marvel vs. CapCom* line.

And the rest...

Some of Marvel's traditionally solo heroes have interesting villains.

Daredevil has Bullseye, Elektra, Hand ninjas and most interestingly... Stilt Man! Because of his weird telescoping legs, Stilt Man actually gets to be larger than the 2-inch size required by the Marvel license!

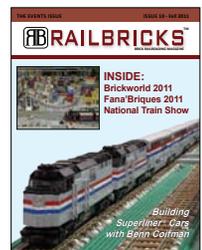
Dr. Strange gets to have two cool villains, Mephisto and the Dreaded Dormammu!



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What about DC?

The Minimates DC line was sadly short-lived, but they managed to include some key villains (and miss a lot, too). Many two-packs smartly featured a hero with a corresponding villain (but not all, like when Batman came with OMAC).

Superman gets to have a nice representation of villains with Lex Luthor (in the popular Super Powers-esque purple and green power-armor), Brainiac, Bizarro, and Cyborg Superman.

Batman, who has one of the best rogue's galleries in comics (if not in all pop culture!), has a pretty spotty representation of Minimates villains. The LEGO Group has done a much better job with Batman villains than what we have here! His villains include Joker, Harley Quinn, Penguin (in a white suit... I guess that's the dumb look he had in the comics when the figures were being made), Killer Croc, Clayface, and Bane. If you count the DC C3 line (of LEGO knock-off brick sets with Minimates included), then you can add the Riddler, Man-Bat, and Catwoman to the mix.

Other major DC heroes, like Flash, Green Lantern, and Wonder Woman get at least one or two major villains represented, like Sinestro, Star Sapphire, Ocean Master, Deathstroke the Terminator, Cheetah, and (arguably) DC's greatest villain—Gorilla Grodd! 



Cover Art: Making Issue 20

Article and Photo by Olivier Curto

This issue's cover was the result of a contest that took place last year. The creator of the cover, Olivier Curto, wrote this about how he built the cover.

The story of this project is very interesting because at the very beginning I built a roof of a building with my son, then I put Batman on the roof and I made a picture with my phone. Seeing the Grand Emporium in the background, I immediately imagined the scene that it could make: a view of Batman looking at Gotham by night under the rain, with a Batsignal in the sky.

It was the first time I built keeping in mind the final pic I wanted to do. The entire model was built for only one point of view. Facing my quantity of parts, I quickly skipped the idea to build minifig-size buildings. To take advantage of forced perspective I decided to build the background in microscale.

The hardest part of this creation began with hours behind my camera, trying to remake the pic hidden in my mind. Technically the construction are very simple, even if I've tried to add lot of details on microscale.

Inexperienced in photography I contacted LEGO photographers that really inspired me on flickr (Avanaut and Shobrick especially). I would like to thank them for their help and their support in this project.

The biggest part of this model was to build everything in LEGO. When I imagined a Batsignal in the sky at the beginning it was out of the question to use anything else than bricks for it. For that, I made a Batsignal box where I put light inside to project on the wall

All my creations were dismantled a few days after the final pics were taken. After a big creation (taking me a few days or weeks to build) I need to build something else to clear my spirit.

Community



Curto's original idea.

A few days after uploading the final pics on the LEGO fan sites I like (Eurobricks, The Brothers Brick, Brickpirate, FBTB) lots of different contests themed around super heroes appeared on the web. I entered *BrickJournal*'s contest and was informed a few weeks later that my creation won the contest and that I'll have the honor to illustrate the cover on issue #20!

The only problem was that the final pic couldn't be used like that for the cover and I was requested by Joe Meno, the editor of *BrickJournal*, to make some adjustments to show Batman facing the camera. At this time they didn't know that the MOC was dismantled. After reflection, I decided to rebuild all the scene in the same spirit.

I must say than even if this final pic is in the same spirit of the first version (but this time with a very rare batsy from Comic-Con) I prefer the first with Batman's back for the whole atmosphere. Still, I'm really happy to MOC it again for *BrickJournal*. I'm really proud of the confidence Joe gave me to build. 



Another builder, George "ZetoVince" Panteleon, sent this photo for the contest.



Superheroes Assembled!

Article by Joe Meno

Photography provided by the LEGO Group

At New York Toy Fair 2012, the LEGO Group displayed a mural and a minifigure to celebrate their new Superheroes theme. BrickJournal spoke briefly with the people who worked on these creations: Pete Donner worked on the mural and Mark Roe worked on the Hulk.

BrickJournal: When did you first starting planning out/ designing the models?

We first started planning out and designing the models in early 2012, so it was a several month process from conception to design, development and the actual physical build process.



BrickJournal: How were they (well, the Hulk so far) selected for building?

The Hulk was selected because LEGO Super Heroes Marvel is a brand new theme for the LEGO Group in 2012, which we wanted to celebrate and showcase via this iconic character.

BrickJournal: The mosaic is more than a flat surface mosaic, so how was it designed?

The mosaic was designed with a LEGO proprietary software called Brickbuilder 2

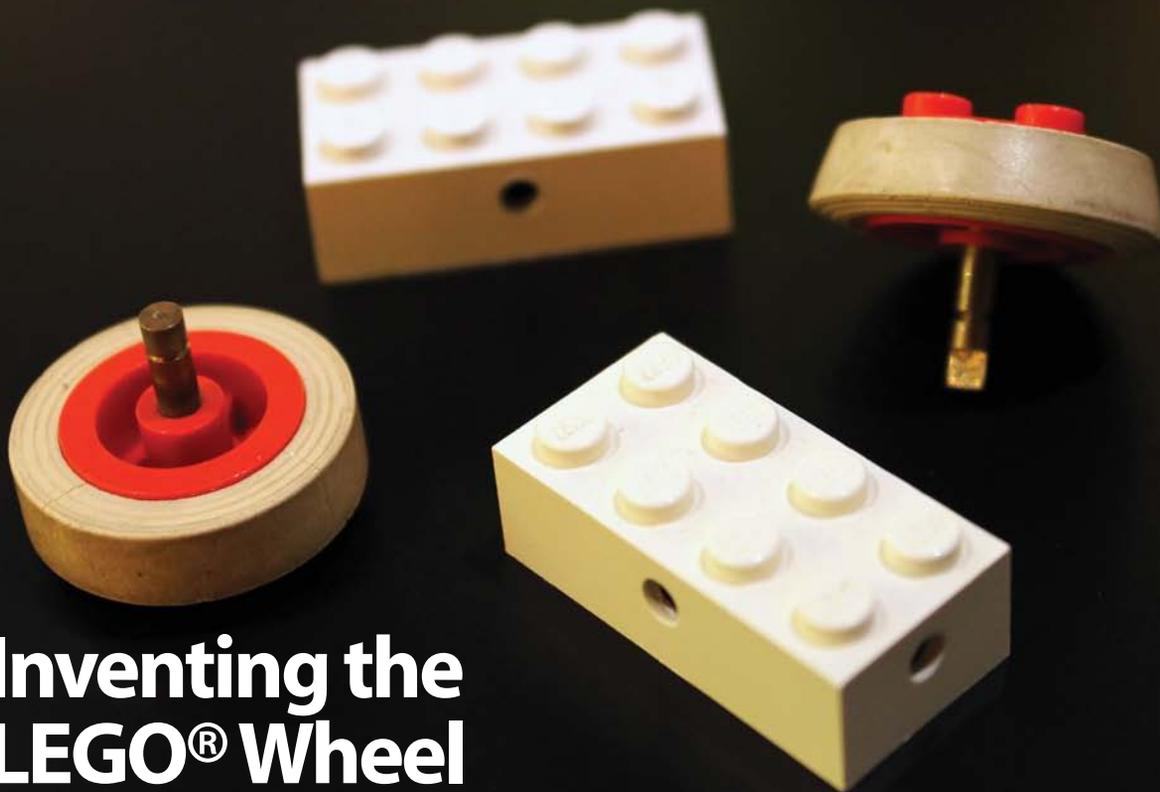
BrickJournal: How long did it take to complete these?

It took 150 hours to design and build the DC mural, and it took 450 hours to design and build the Hulk.

BrickJournal: Should we expect more of these?

As of right now, there are not further plans for large scale Super Heroes models in 2012, but you never know what the brand teams and the model shop have in store for 2013! 

From the Idea House



Inventing the LEGO® Wheel

*By Kristian Hauge, LEGO Idea House
Photography provided by the LEGO Group*

In 1962 the LEGO Group launched the very first LEGO wheel. Since then the 50th jubilee has contributed to the LEGO system by adding a very important thing: movement. Read on to learn more about how this hugely important LEGO element came about.

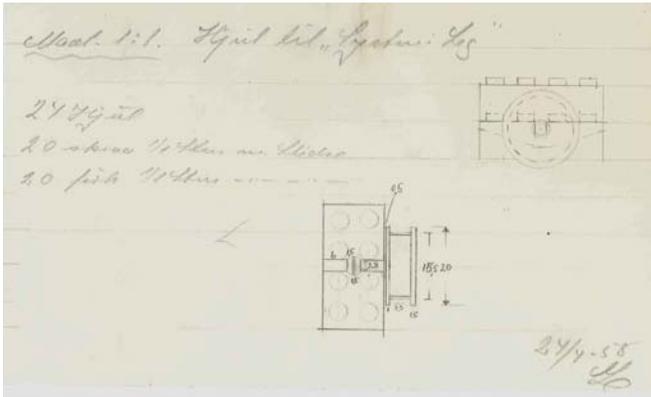
The LEGO wheel as it looked when launched in 1962.

Around the mid/late 1950s a wish emerged within the LEGO Group to add movement to the LEGO system. At this point in time, model building with LEGO bricks was centered around stationary models such as houses. You could supplement your Town Plan with small pre-made cars with their wheels permanently attached, but these cars weren't a part of the LEGO system. You couldn't build with them.

A Long Process

Designer Christian Lasgaard was given the task to create a wheel that fitted together with the LEGO system. It turned out to be a difficult task and Knud Møller, who also worked at the development department together with Christian Lasgaard, wasn't too happy about the progress made by his colleague. Instead he started to work on a solution of his own. In 1958 this resulted in some drawings and samples of a wheel that seemingly would fit together with the LEGO system. Due to fierce competition between designers and the fact that he hadn't been given the assignment in the first place, Knud Møller didn't show his work to anyone. As a result of this, no solution to the desire of adding movement to the system was found until years later.

It wasn't until LEGO owner Godtfred Kirk Christiansen saw Knud Møllers drawings in the early 1960s that things started to fall into place. Initially Knud Møller wanted to attach the wheel between two LEGO bricks, but it was soon discovered that this solution wasn't strong enough. After some alterations



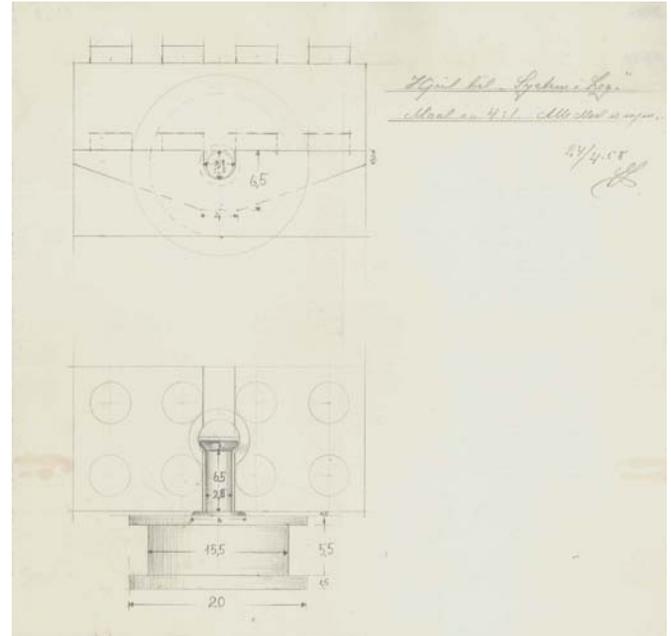
Knud Møller's drawings from 1958 showing his original intent to attach the wheel between two LEGO bricks.

the LEGO wheel was ready to be launched on January 1, 1962. The end result featured a gray rubber tire around a red plastic hub with four studs and a connecting axle on the back. Instead of the solution with the two LEGO bricks, the wheel could be connected to models using a specially-designed 2x4 brick with holes on all four sides for the axle.

Big Success

The first LEGO set containing LEGO wheels was an accessory kit (Art. Nb. 400) enabling consumers to attach wheels on their own creations. The first LEGO models with wheels were not launched until 1963 when a number of sets were released during the year. Due to the big success of the accessory kit from 1962, another wheel was introduced. Two of the sets launched in 1963 thus contained a new and bigger wheel with 12 studs on the hub. This enabled children to build even more different models containing wheels.

With the invention of the LEGO wheel, the wish from the 1950s had been granted: The LEGO brick had become mobile. The significance of the wheel cannot be overrated. Nobody has said it better than current LEGO Owner Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen: "It gave playing with products a completely new dimension, making the system more dynamic. Launching the wheel was a milestone for the company in much the same way as the DUPLO brick, the minifigure and MINDSTORMS were to prove later." 



Accessory kit from 1962.



One of the sets launched in 1963, showing the original wheel with four studs and the new bigger wheel with 12 studs on the hub.

Wheel facts:

The wheel was patented in DK in 1965 with retroactive effect from October 19th 1961.

When defining a wheel as "a hub and tire" the smallest wheel was made in 1969 and measured 0.57 inches (1.44 cm) across.

The biggest wheel measuring 4.22 inches (10.72 cm) across was launched with the Power Puller set (Art. Nb. 8457) in 2000.

The LEGO Group produces more than 300 million tires a year.



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by Greg (AFOLs) Hyland

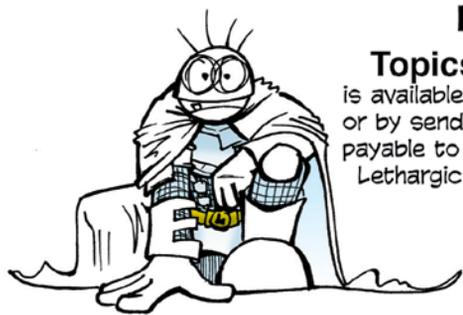
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Last Word



And another issue is done—and it was a blast! Gathering all the articles for this issue was a particularly fun effort, as everyone who was asked was not only happy to contribute, but often did something more, like reshooting their models or creating instructions. And people came from all over this time, with articles coming in from Asia and Europe—this was a true community effort!

But this is only a beginning. Things are starting to come together at *BrickJournal* to make a better magazine, or at least one on schedule. I thank all of you for your patience.

You gotta see what's on the horizon for the mag... 

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AFOLS

by Greg Hyland



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BRICKJOURNAL #5

Event report on the MINDSTORMS 10th ANNIVERSARY at LEGO HEADQUARTERS, Pixar's ANGUS MACLANE on LEGO in filmmaking, a glimpse at the LEGO Group's past with the DIRECTOR OF LEGO'S IDEA HOUSE, event reports, a look at how SEAN KENNEY's LEGO creations ended up on NBC'S 30 ROCK television show, instructions and spotlights on builders, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #6

Spotlight on CLASSIC SPACE SETS and a look at new ones, BRANDON GRIFFITH shows his STAR TREK MODELS, LEGO set designers discuss their work creating the SPACE POLICE with PIRATE SETS, POWER FUNCTIONS TRAIN DEVELOPMENT, the WORLD'S TALLEST LEGO TOWER, MINI-FIGURE CUSTOMIZATION, plus coverage of BRICKFEST 2009 and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #7

Focuses on the new LEGO ARCHITECTURE line, with a look at the new sets designed by ADAM REED TUCKER, plus interviews with other architectural builders, including SPENCER REZKALLA. Also, behind the scenes on the creation of POWER MINERS and the GRAND CAROUSEL, a LEGO BATTLESHIP over 20 feet long, reports from LEGO events worldwide, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #8

We go to the Middle Ages, with a look at the LEGO Group's CASTLE LINE, featuring an interview with the designer behind the first LEGO castle set, the YELLOW CASTLE. Also: we spotlight builders that have created their own large-scale version of the castle, and interview other castle builders, plus a report on BRICKWORLD in Chicago, and still more instructions and building tips!

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BRICKJOURNAL #9

BrickJournal looks at LEGO® DISNEY SETS, with features on the Disney LEGO sets of the past (MICKEY and MINNIE) and present (TOY STORY and PRINCE OF PERSIA)! We also present Disney models built by LEGO fans, and a look at the newest Master Build model at WALT DISNEY WORLD, plus articles and instructions on building and customization, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #10

BrickJournal goes undersea with looks at the creation of LEGO's new ATLANTIS SETS, plus a spotlight on a fan-created underwater theme, THE SEA MONKEYS, with builder FELIX GRECO! Also, a report on the LEGO WORLD convention in the Netherlands, BUILDER SPOTLIGHTS, INSTRUCTIONS and ways to CUSTOMIZE MINIFIGURES, LEGO HISTORY, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #11

"Racers" theme issue, with building tips on race cars by the ARVO BROTHERS, interview with LEGO RACERS designer ANDREW WOODMAN, LEGO FORMULA ONE RACING, TECHNIC SPORTS CAR building, event reports, instructions and columns on MINIFIGURE CUSTOMIZATION and MICRO BUILDING, builder spotlights, LEGO HISTORY, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #12

A look at school sculptures by NATHAN SAWAYA, builder MARCOS BESSA's creations, ANGUS MACLANE's CubeDudes, a Nepali Diorama by JORDAN SCHWARTZ, instructions to build a school bus for your LEGO town, minifigure customizations, how a POWER MINERS model became one for ATLANTIS, building standards, and much more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #13

Special **EVENT ISSUE** with reports from **BRICKMAGIC** (the newest US LEGO fan festival, organized by *BrickJournal* magazine), **BRICKWORLD** (one of the oldest US LEGO fan events), and others! Plus: spotlight on **BIONICLE** builder **NORBERT LABUGUEN**, our regular column on minifigure customization, step-by-step "You Can Build It" instructions, spotlights on builders and their work, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #14

Discover the world of stop-motion **LEGO FILMS**, with brickfilmmaker **DAVID PAGANO** and others spotlighting LEGO filmmaking, the history of the medium and its community, interviews with the makers of the films seen on the **LEGO CLUB SHOW** and **LEGO.com**, and instructions on how to film and build puppets for brick flicks! Plus how to customize minifigures, event reports, step-by-step building instructions, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #15

Looks at the **LEGO MECHA** genre of building, especially in Japan! Feature editor **NATHAN BRYAN** spotlights mecha builders such as **SAITO YOSHIKAZU**, **TAKAYUKI TORII**, **SUKYU** and others! Also, a talk with **BRIAN COOPER** and **MARK NEUMANN** about their mecha creations, mecha building instructions by **SAITO YOSHIKAZU**, our regular columns on minifigure customization, building, event reports, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #16

Focuses on **STEAMPUNK!** Feature editor **GUY HIMBER** gives a tour with a look at his work, **DAVE DeGOBBI**'s, **NATHAN PROUDLOVE**'s, and others! There's also a look at the history of LEGO Steampunk building, as well as instructions for a Steampunk plane by **ROD GILLIES!** Plus our regular columns on minifigure customization, building tips, event reports, our step-by-step "You Can Build It" instructions, and much more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #17

LEGO SPACE WAR issue! A **STARFIGHTER BUILDING LESSON** by Peter Reid, **WHY SPACE MARINES ARE SO POPULAR** by Mark Stafford, a trip behind the scenes of **LEGO'S NEW ALIEN CONQUEST SETS** that hit store shelves earlier this year, plus **JARED K. BURKS'** column on **MINIFIGURE CUSTOMIZATION**, building tips, event reports, our step-by-step "YOU CAN BUILD IT" INSTRUCTIONS, and more!

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BRICKJOURNAL #18

Go to Japan with articles on two **JAPANESE LEGO FAN EVENTS**, plus take a look at **JAPAN'S SACRED LEGO LAND**, **Nasu Highland Park**—the site of the BrickFan events and a pilgrimage site for many Japanese LEGO fans. Also, a feature on **JAPAN'S TV CHAMPIONSHIP OF LEGO**, a look at the **CLICKBRICK LEGO SHOPS** in Japan, plus how to get into **TECHNIC BUILDING**, **LEGO EDUCATION**, and more!

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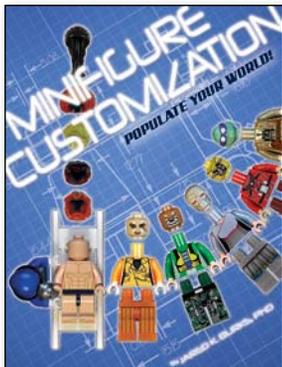


BRICKJOURNAL #19

LEGO EVENTS ISSUE covering our own **BRICKMAGIC FESTIVAL**, **BRICKWORLD**, **BRICKFAIR**, **BRICKCON**, plus other events outside the US. There's full event details, plus interviews with the winners of the **BRICKMAGIC CHALLENGE** competition, complete with instructions to build award winning models. Also **JARED K. BURKS'** regular column on minifigure customizing, building tips, and more!

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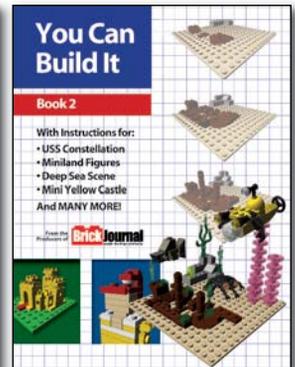
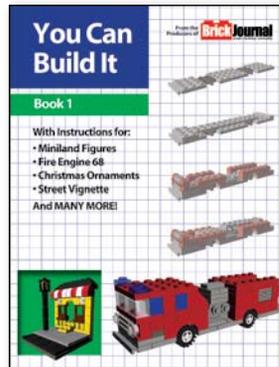
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