

"Le Mans" Fever

Evolution on wheels

Text and pictures by arvo

Despite never having been to Le Mans and being far from 40 centimetres tall, we feel strongly attracted to this sports car, the Ford GT40 "Le Mans". The fact is that a design that after 45 years remains as valid as the miniskirt deserves the attention of anyone who has ever read a car magazine at the dentist's ... and Ramon has read many!

We imagine that it must be the age ... but all the sport cars from 60's and 70's stir up in us like their actual counterparts have never done. The Renault Alpine, Corvette, Datsun 240Z and the Shelby Cobra ... the list is endless. All very different but with a common feature in their design ... "They were not shy"!

That mix between disproportion and sophistication attracts us. Sharp noses, mega-sharp curves, fenders pointing to the infinite sky, stickers and lines that suggest ... cars that seem to be "posing", with a presence capable of attract all eyes, no matter how distracted you are ... and Ramon ...

1, 2, 3 ... S PLASH!

Having three versions of the same type of car is a clear sign of discontent (or depending on the case, exactly the opposite), however ... there won't be a fourth one. For us, this version is the last one. We found a size that we are truly comfortable with, a "not for you", "not for me" where we can capture sufficient detail without having to mortgage our time with ridiculously large models.



From the first to the last version 4 years have passed. Looking at the pictures, the evolution is more than evident and, although the time between versions is practically the same, the differences between them are at very different levels.

Why?

This article is an attempt to identify the points that explain, from our point of view, the many differences in technique and design that exist between each of the versions and that also represent our evolution as builders.

The best is to start at the beginning...

... We'd just picked up the hobby again, we knew next to nothing about the AFOL movement (except that there was a site called "Brickshelf" where you can show photos of your constructions) and the parts that we had barely allowed us to build anything but a distorted multi-colour absurdity.

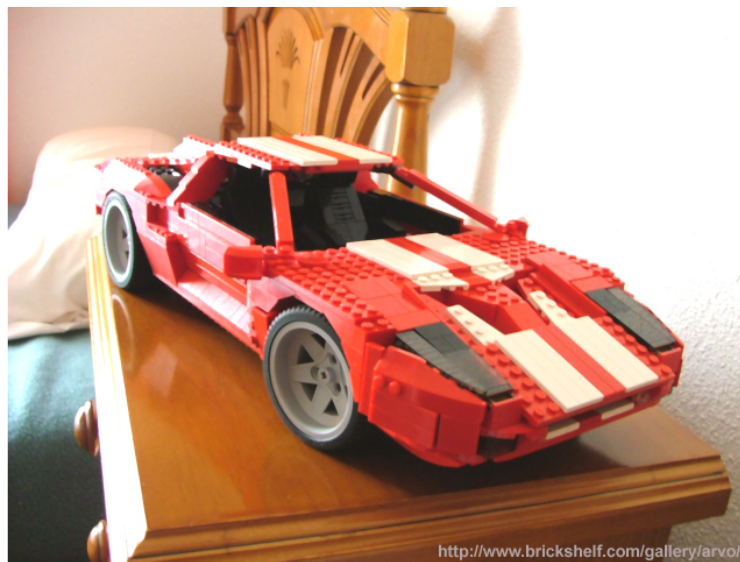
We were not even aware of how difficult and expensive some of the models we looked at, admired and valued only by their "weight" were Ironies of life, they paid us back in their own many times ... but that's another story.

We knew nothing about many of the techniques that we now take for granted (SNOT, use of minifig accessories, bar or click type elements or Technic, etc.), but that was not an impediment for making more and more constructions. Conscious that they appeared to have escaped the mind of a child ... we were not deterred. Without knowing it, part after part, we learned new uses for them, but the real revolution was yet to come ... because, by then, we lived with our back to the "new" sets, and therefore "new" parts.

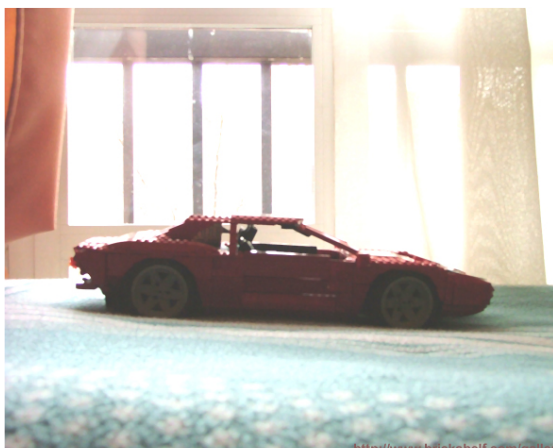
But lets not anticipate events.

As if we had given "Marnie the thief" a bucket and a half of red bricks, we were only able to think about red MOCS... motorcycles, boats or cars ... everything had to be red, and we assure you that red was not the dominant colour . One curiosity that must have an explained, we assume. So, in this way we managed to reach our first version of the famous Ford GT.

Resigned not to being able to reproduce curved lines, for us a Ford GT was simply a car with a wedge silhouette and ... red, "has to be cool" we said. We were not too demanding on ourselves and getting any "extra" detail represented a real tour de force worthy of the admiration of brothers and nephews.



Just a few "brush strokes" managed to survive the inevitable evolution, but the choice of that size would be (unknowingly) a declaration of principles for us.



Ford GT40 - Original Lego design by Arvo - tour_d_horizon@hotmail.com

But ... besides the obvious, what differentiates one version from the other?

Something as simple as discovering one single part: the Brick "modified curved"!

This "modest" part is capable of much more than providing a smooth curve where once there was only a sharp edge. We would like to know why this piece has a plate-like flap or why it has a height of 4 plates (slightly off from the multiple of 3) ... maybe there is an explanation; sure ... these "subtleties" determine the use and therefore the staging of the part. In any case, it was as important to find this piece as finding going crazy in with the effort

Between the two versions there are many MOCS and above all, a willingness and an approach to building in a very different way ... we definitely left behind the functionality (if e ever managed to create any) in favour of aesthetics. Some builders have the ability to combine both, but our experience tells us that both qualities can hardly be maintained at a high level in the same construction. Of course there are exceptions. Who does not remember the famous MOCs of LoryGub32?

It would not be fair to the "yellow GT" if we said that we finished the second version, knowing that we hadn't reached our goal. On the contrary, we finished it as we do any MOC, in the certainty that we really cannot do it any better, but...

... Time is a merciless judge and this second version has revealed the passage of time more than any other construction. It feels "strange" how a MOC to which you have been devoted in body and soul loses "punch" every time you look at any of its photos.

Things could not remain this way..

"Le Mans". WHERE CARS DREAM WITH FLATS.

... And we say "strange" because at that moment in which we were aware that we have to put "order", we had a feeling of vertigo not knowing whether we could or not do better ... that was only comparable to the feeling we had on our first ride in the "The Octopus" at the fair (although at that time our only concern was not to lose our glasses).

It's the car that has taken us the most time to build. It is true that some events delayed its construction (we started it in April and until August we could not take the photos) but this time we wanted to get a model in which we saw the final version ... whatever the time it took.

This seems to work in theory, but in practice, nothing further from the truth. You have to like what you're trying to build to endure month after month of building without ever questioning the objective. We wrote it off as impossible twice.... it was like crashing over and over against a concrete wall... as in an advert, we were like two fish looking for the exit of the fishbowl ...

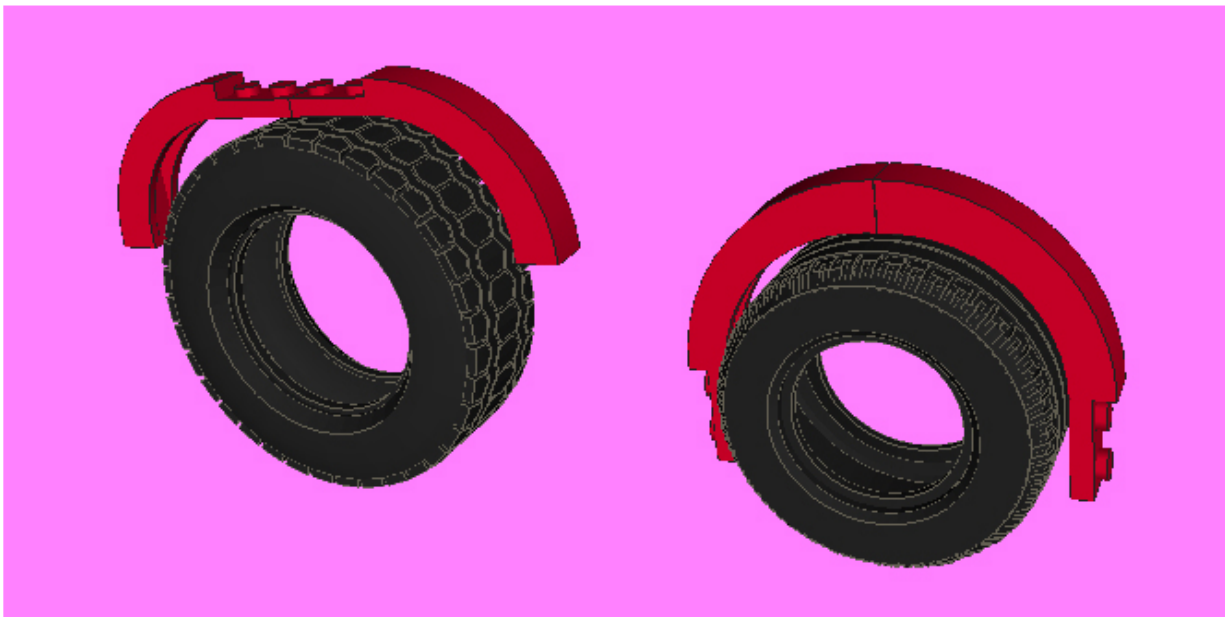
... And probably we would still be looking for it if there hadn't be a change of course.



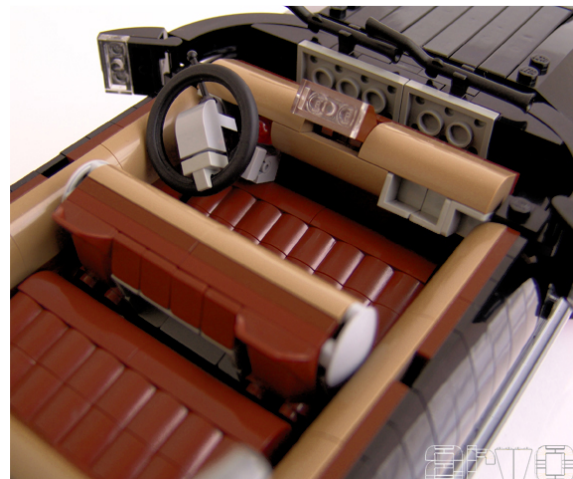
The first idea was to make this latest version in exactly the same "terms" as its predecessor, i.e. a yellow car with black stripes. The only way to perceive the real differences between each model was doing it this way. We already imagined some of the photos at very similar angles to those of the previous model, with the effect that has on us... we were very curious to see them.

And so we started the project with the intention of building it in yellow with black stripes.

One condition though, no more XL sizes... please!. We hadn't done altogether badly with the last two models, the DS Citroën and the Porsche 911 "Carrera". Their dimensions were almost identical and the degree of detail that we captured was more than enough to get something "recognizable". Being able to include our idolized WindScreen "greed-size" or being able to get a semicircular gap for the hollow of the wheel (inverting the Brick Arch 6x1), has made this size a standard for us.



The chassis that we used has the same characteristics as those used in the two models mentioned before (we even saw the opportunity to also use the WindScreen 2x4x12) and some of its elements are a legacy of the times of our NewBeetle, the 131 or even the Escudo.



Everything seemed to go well with the chassis (Why not? It was the same we had used in other models). The proportions seemed right and the wheels (front and rear identical to each other) conformed perfectly ... until...

...

TYPE MISMATCH
TYPE MISMATCH
TYPE MISMATCH
TYPE MISMATCH

"TYPE MISMATCH" ... it's what a Commodore 16 would tell us if it could talk (it would mean something like "you screwed up"), with only 16 k, it would have been absolutely right. Something told us that we were moving away more and more, we were doing it so slowly that it was hard to realize ... that "something" is usually called "lack of enthusiasm", a kind of "mental warning" subtle, but which it is impossible to escape from. There was only one way to "turn it off" ... pulling the fuse, perhaps!?

Starting the latest version also in yellow was half a mistake that, although it consumed much of our time and energies, at least helped us realise what works and what doesn't.

But what prompted this sudden change of direction?

We were not seeing a true GT, we urgently needed a spark to keep going, whatever, a line, a shadow ... a ...

... Of course! A COLOUR !!!!!!!

- "we were always talking about it", we reproached ourselves.

We did not need great speculations and convoluted analysis to understand what went wrong, it was enough for us to pause a few minutes and ask us what a GT is for us. Gone were the days when we were satisfied with the red... now we needed the greatest realism.

Because, the Ford GT, the real one, the one thousand times admired and imitated ... "that" GT ... there is only one ... the "LE MANS" with its incredible combination of light blue with a (single) orange band opening at the nose. Hundreds of combinations have been tested (some very striking and beautiful) but the combination of which we are speaking has been, for us, the best of all, to the point of fully defining the model.

But if there is a qualifier that perfectly defines the Homínidus-AFOLus it is "totally insane" ... "From what magical hole of candy illusion we would be able to draw all the parts we need in "Medium Blue " ???

We were at a crossroads. We either retreated in the most dignified manner, i.e. without saying a word and racing around the skirting board! (we are nice people, huh?) ... or ... we did some "crazy thing" to take us out of this empty argument (we are nice people, huh?).

Testing with the light blue gray was the closest we could get to the desired colours, so we had to go all the way before fainting because of being totally and absolutely fed up. It was not necessary to wait long, with the first parts in gray and orange arranged we realized the wisdom of the decision ... the car already had a "suit" and we only needed to look for the right size.

Apart from size differences between the yellow model and this one, we found many others differences of a conceptual nature. We tried to pay special attention to detail and tried to capture and synthesize its essence of the car as best we could.

We have reproduced, with more or less perfectly, but accurately, the air intakes on the hood, the shape of the headlights and above all, the nose (one of the weaknesses of the previous model), without forgetting the rear, which is as characteristic as the front, or even more!. This final part of the car "goes up" to finish in a sort of mini wing (seen in profile it looks like a meringue), the "bottom" is so high that it leaves a view of the footprint of the tires and the tails are bent to close behind the rear vaults ... it proved difficult to find something that served us, but the slope 4x4 together with the accompanying arc 1x6 is ideal.



arvo

Another detail that is essential, and which we ignored in the two previous versions, is the use of wheels of different diameter in the front and rear. It is vital! ... Therefore we don't hesitate in saying that any attempt to replicate this model omitting this detail ... is far from the image of Ford "Le Mans". We would have liked the rear wheel to fill the gap better, but we are pleased to have managed to at least "suggest" it.

We wanted to reserve the last few lines to comment in some details of the tires. From the first time that we saw similar wheels on BrickShelf (built up, not using standard ones) we have wanted to try to create our own ... we liked the result we got with the Porsche and Citroen tyres so we did not want to go without them in this new model ... in general, they give a unique-extra character to the MOC.



The end result ...it's at consumer's taste but, for better or for worse, this time we believe that we have reached our ceiling (or touched bottom, depending on how you look at it!!!). Will there be a fourth version?, Did we say this would be the last? ... Well ... the only thing we can assure is that every night we pray to St. "Medium Blue". Who knows, maybe one day he will hear our prayers.

In any case, it's very strange that every year and a half we have an unbearable "GT " itch...

... Our mother would blame it on "worms" ...

... we blame it on the "LE MANS Fever"! ■