

Discovering LEGO® Space

“..stars to fill my dream I am a traveler of both time and space”

Text and pictures by Jig

For over 30 years I have loved construction toys within a very specific subject: spaceships. Only five years ago I came back to LEGO® thanks to LEGO Star Wars™. I recently discovered LEGO Space, and I went back almost literally to my childhood. LEGO Space started in 1978 and until 1987 we can talk about a golden age. This period is known as Classic Space. Simple ships and vehicles, friendly smiling astronauts, and there you had the whole of space to explore. Few pieces, but well used with imagination. Those who lived through those days remember it with enthusiasm and nostalgia.

However there was a later stage, which involved an evolution between 1987 and now, of which I have always found few references, since this stage has not been appreciated enough and, with the exception of a few ships, nearly forgotten. In fact, after having played with LEGO for the last five years, less than six months ago I discovered this ‘new’ stage. We are talking about sets from 20 years ago. The number of parts is not equivalent to a set today. A set could be considered big at around 400 pieces.

I'd like to highlight three key differences between Space and Classic Space:

1 - The evolution of their cute and adorable minifigures: one-color astronaut, yellow smiley face, with the Space logo on the front of the torso, the loss of innocence / smile which was the all time standard (featured in all previous sets). This implies a kind of nostalgia that makes some people still prefer Classic.

2 - The introduction of two sides of the coin. Initially we had only explorers. With the arrival of Blacktron, we will have both “good” and “evil” sides (not so evil, by the way).

3 - Modernization of ships. The ships were extremely simple, and they became larger. We began to see more “Space” parts and the evolution of ships. Each line will have its hallmark. Let's take a closer look to get into the subthemes that came after Classic and meet some of their key features.

1) Blacktron (1987-1988)

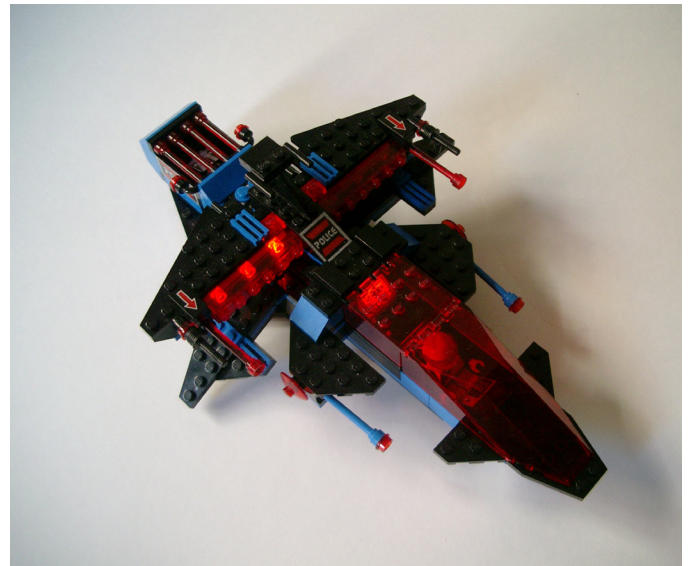
It was a revolution to change the once nice single color astronaut minifigure (blue, red, white or yellow - (including gloves, torso, helmet and bottles) – with a smiley face, logo space on the front torso, to a minifigure in a black suit, military pilot style, with black helmet and black visor too. Its much more intimidating and aggressive look broke with Classic Space. Its biggest ship, “Renegade” 6954 was only 302 pieces and two minifigures.

2) Futuron (1987–1990)

From classic Space and inheriting the colors, the “Futuron” minifigures share evenly in several colors, still carrying the space logo on the upper left of their torso. They are the natural evolution of Classic and the clearest continuation. This idea was moving into a kind of Space City, and clearly it is focused on monorail and bases, lacking of large ships.

3) Space Police (1989)

In 1989,LEGO decided that Blacktron, previously living in a world with no moral inclination, were declared LEGO Space “bad” boys, and, facing them and defending Futuron, LEGO introduced the Space Police. The characteristic features of Space Police are black with blue bricks and red transparent parts. LEGO reintroduced the idea of modularity. The sets came with a Police capsule-cell, and a Blacktron prisoner occupying it.



The star ship of this series is the “Mission Commander” 6986. This is the first really big ship which would be in a position to shine brightly. With nearly 500 pieces, 3 minifigures and lots of accessories make this playable ship a true jewel. The 6781 “SP-Striker” would really shine by adding some light bricks turning it to a light system and making this ship of 230 pieces and two minifigures unforgettable. True to its line but breaking schemes with a modular fitting system (as opposed to adding). LEGO was doing well.

4) M-Tron (1990–1991)

To add interactivity, LEGO® introduced the scrap dealing M-Tron, whose minifigures would be peaceful civilians. Vehicles were red and black, with distinctive neon yellow transparent elements. There were magnetic cranes for transporting large and heavy boxes. Classic minifigures were still smiling and all bearing the “M” logo.

They could be considered as the natural evolution of Futuron. The most interesting vehicles are the “Stellar Recon Voyager” 6956 and “Mega Core Magnetizer” 6989 (1990). The last one was a massive 6-wheeled vehicle, the biggest and best space vehicle of its time. Interestingly, the M-Tron had no bases, all sets were vehicles and a few ships (The Stellar Recon Voyager being of average size is truly remarkable -230 pieces-). The M-Tron guys were not prepared to fight, they were peaceful and carried no weapons. A nod to “Classic Space?”



5) Blacktron II (1991–1992)

In 1991, Blacktron evolved. Blacktron minifigures turned into black and white, printings and a new logo with a “B” letter in neon green, similar to the M-Tron logo. Losing aggressiveness but improving elegance and design ... Black and white with neon yellow transparent elements as identity.

Top Blacktron II starships included the “Spectral Starguider” 6933 and 6981 “Aerial Intruder” (1991). Today they would be of a medium size as both do not exceed 300 pieces and two

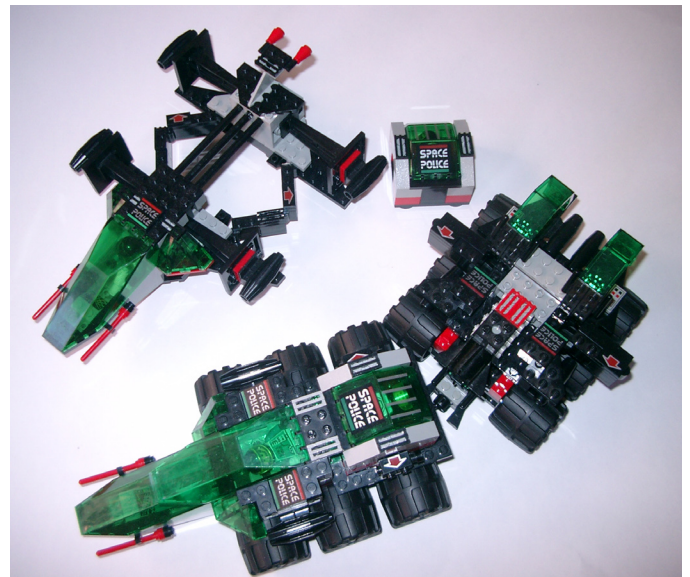


minifigures. They do not have a real ‘star’ ship. Nevertheless its smallest ship 6887 “Allied Avenger”, was the one which most reached the hearts of people. With only 100 pieces and 1 minifigure, the playability, modularity and operability of this ship are hard to beat, and with some very interesting parts.

The Blacktron cabin set the standard for all Blacktron ships.

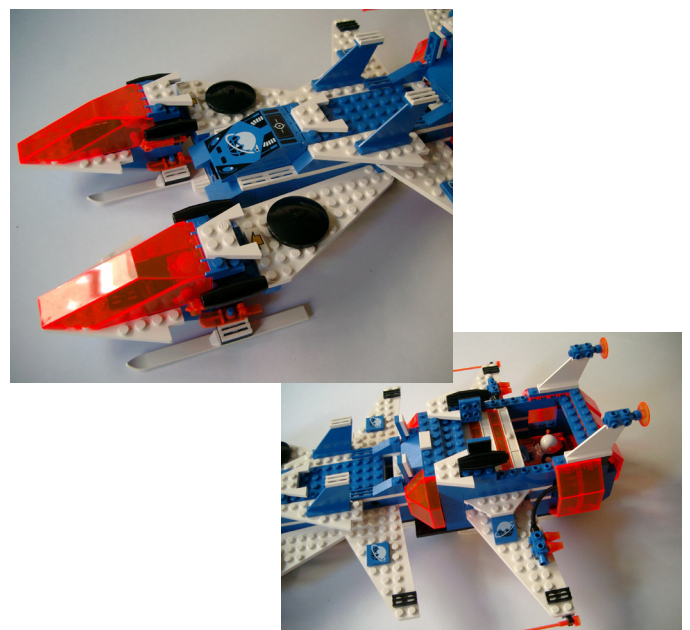
6) Space Police II (1992–1993)

Space Police also evolved. And with it the colors (blue-gray became more serious, transparent elements in the red became green), uniforms, their prison cells (which would be in each set) ... and the classic simple, smiling face also evolved, adding hair, eyebrows and even pilot headsets. Modularity continued and also expandable elements, but there is a loss of color. The Space Police are not armed to their teeth either, so the Blacktron were not so bad.



The best ships of Space Police II are the 6897 “Rebel Hunter” and 6984 “Galactic Mediator” (1992), 400 pieces. As another interesting vehicle we have the 6957 “Solar Snooper”.

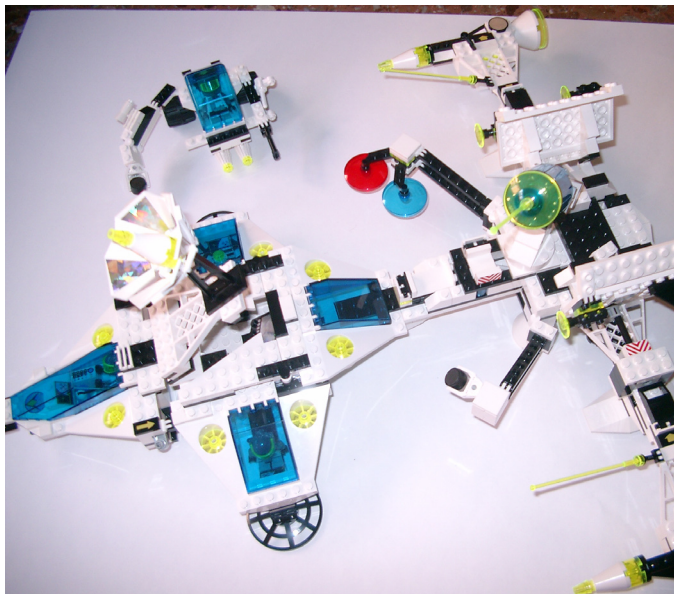
7) Ice Planet 2002 (1993–1994)



Ice Planet remembered the emblems of Classic Space, as you can see their similarity. It incorporated new elements that would be its trademark: an icy planet "Krysto", skis, neon orange transparent elements, cabins, and even chainsaws. Most sets are vehicles (and a base), but there was also a large space ship! (400-odd pieces) that many consider the best space ship of all time, the 6973 "Deep Freeze Defender" (1993). This was the first ship of this period that I constructed, and in my opinion, this conclusion is merited.

8) Exploriens (1996)

We return to the pristine white and blue Futuron transparent cabins, to make way for Exploriens. They were explorers/archaeologists in search of fossils, and they made holograms. Peaceful. They also had a robot (Ann Droid), and Real Girl minifigures. The "Explorien Starship" 6982 (1996) is the largest starship so far and is noted for its many accessories and spectacular size. With 662 pieces, it was unrivaled in size and competes for supremacy with the 6973.



The "Explorien Starship" 6982 is truly spectacular: it has a significant number of pieces, a good design and lots of possibilities. Many have considered it the best ship of Space and I must admit that it fulfilled my expectations, which were high when I got it. A set that certainly is mandatory for every fan of Space.

9) UFO – Insectoids – "Life on Mars"

These minor subthemes, were less successful. Condemned to oblivion because of the onset of SW LEGO® which completely annihilated them ... Strange Space minifigures, strange colors (Purple Sand, Red Sand ...) and new pieces with strange shapes ...they failed to engage people who turned massively to SW.

10) Mars Mission (2007-2008)

With a slightly more attractive appearance it revives the space theme, wanting to capture the image of the good years of Space. SW was in full swing, so Mars Mission prices dropped and it is not hard to find them at an interesting price still. Recovering pristine white from Exploriens and adding some orange transparent elements. The opponents, aliens, were strange-looking, dark green and transparent. Modularity is still the dominant feature.

It is interesting for fans of Space, but without any pretensions. Ideal to recapture fans because of the reasonable price.

11) Space Police III (2009-2010)

Almost 20 years later Space Police reappears. And this time the differences between Part I and II are more prominent, not in vain 15 years have passed since the last space police. This time the bad guys are aliens (again not too attractive ...). Interestingly, this theme shares characteristics from its predecessors: modularity, transparent elements (blue this time), prison cabins ... The biggest starship, the "Galactic Enforcer" 5974 has everything to be considered the best LEGO starship ever. Doubling the number of pieces from the 6986 or 6984, it has the elegant white, the details that were missing the 6984 and great playability. The quality of the parts is the only possible drawback, but that can happen to any model with over 15 years of history...

Conclusions:

LEGO Space is quite unknown, and unfortunately forgotten and underrated.

I know nostalgia plays a big role when choosing for the Classic line, and it relegates its successors to oblivion, but in my opinion Space should be a basic line in LEGO. It has enough potential.

However, despite the potential that Space possessed, perhaps at the time it was not appropriate or the right time, or something else failed, but Space is a good line - with its ups and downs, of course - that deserves a little more recognition or perhaps my enthusiasm as a Space fan is just not shared enough.

It is true that SW has taken too much prominence over Space and maybe some people would not understand that the two lines could coexist, but from my point of view, they are completely different... Fans of spaceships like me, mostly have had SW as their only option for 10 years, and although it is true that we can not complain, Space represents the LEGO spirit better than the franchise of George Lucas, despite it being a bestselling line. SW ships are so well-known and LEGO has turned to them and made models that are quite faithful to the films -increasingly so over the years and with the new editions- while Space relies only on your imagination. Even we Space defenders surrender to the evidence that it is very difficult to compete under these conditions. I left my "Dark Ages" due to LEGO SW...

My enthusiasm for Space is clear, because when I was 7-8 years old what I really liked was science fiction and spaceships. I was not interested in fire trucks or police cars. Neither did I have any attention for Technic or City. And, although I have always liked Castle and Pirates, Space was always a couple of steps ahead, and gave me the foundations and parts for my imagination to fly. To infinity and beyond. I am convinced that there are old classics and new generations, adults and children, waiting for new and better ideas in Space.

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