

Life in Trans Yellow

By Manticore & car_mp

Considered by many AFOLs - among which I include myself - to be one of the mythical LEGO® themes, Space was born, with just a few sets, back in 1978 according to Peeron, although they appear in the 1979 catalogues. They all shared the same particular colour scheme which has been burned into our retinas (gray, blue and trans yellow) and with smiling minifig astronauts, which together have become the identifying mark of the theme.

It was a theme without opposing sides, and of course without weapons or enemies, no matter what we imagined in our childhood playtime to convert virtually anything into weapons for destroying imaginary aliens. The theme was primarily oriented to exploration and investigation. Not even the rockets that appeared in some of the sets were ballistic. LEGO made sure to place satellites on the tips to leave no doubt about their purpose. How naive... The triangular ships provided us with large amounts of new parts, like wedges that presented new challenges to use them in combination with more classical parts. The eternal 918, 924 or 928 are burned into the collective memory of the fans of this theme and they are among the few sets whose parts I have not mixed up with other sets. Who didn't dream of covering the floor of his bedroom with those baseplates with two curious craters? Or what about how playable they were while flying through your house clasped in your happy hands.

But what has made the theme mythical? The truth is that it's hard to pinpoint a single reason.

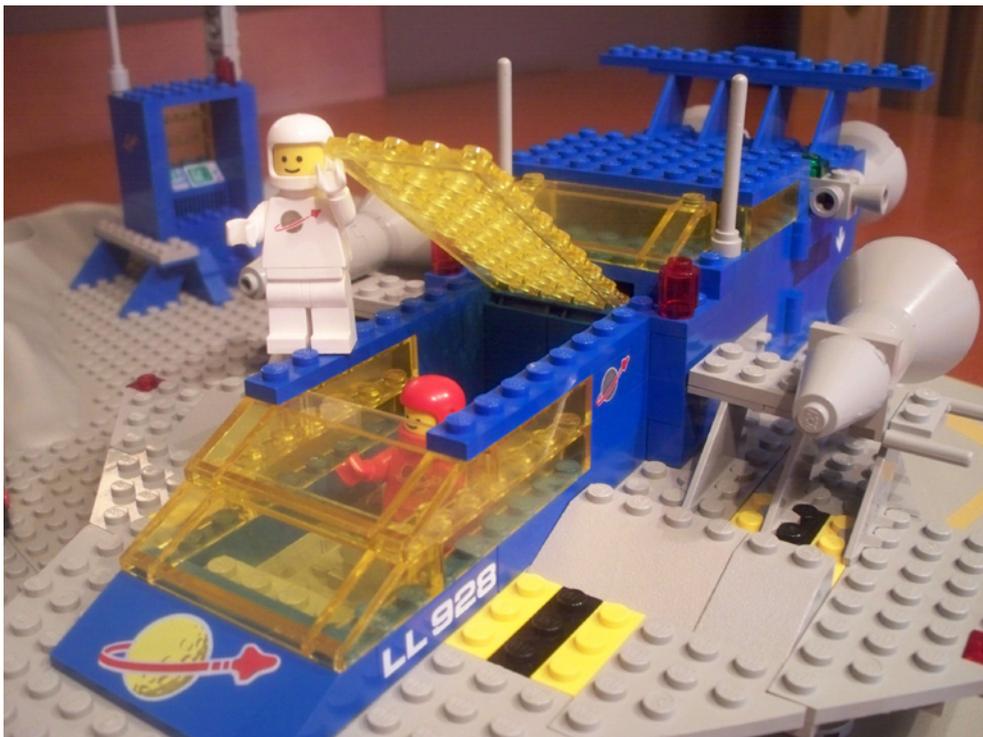
The fact that the children of those days are today's AFOLs is certainly one of them. The emotional value of these sets makes us remember our childhood with nostalgia.

The fact that over time the Space theme evolved into a number of themes with less continuity and with subjects closer to a struggle between "races" is also a factor. Above all taking into account that those themes coincided with a dark LEGO time when juniorisation of parts reduce the attractiveness of our hobby. It's pity that some very interesting sets were lost because they arrived at a bad time, but that is a different story.

I suppose another factor is how 'balanced' the series of sets was. Although all the sets fitted in with the visual identifiers of the theme, there was an incredible variety of sizes and functions. It didn't matter if you preferred small or large space ships, vehicles for transportation or to collect samples, bases or launch platforms, it was all there, complete with smiling astronauts to remind you that wherever they were, it was a better place. Who doesn't remember those photos in catalogues where the sets were shown together? It made you want to rob a bank, kick your brother out of the room and build your own space port right there, next to your bed.

And of course there was the logo. "Round" in all senses.

But lets describe the most important sets of this theme. First of all, the differences between European and American catalogues are important, affecting even the numbering, which is completely different in the first series as are the sets on sale. And from that first series, the flag ship cannot go unmentioned. The 928 (497 in the USA) "Galaxy Explorer". The biggest space ship in the first series, it included a small vehicle that could be carried on board, and a small base with four minifigs. A very playable set in all respects and which formed a balanced whole together with the 924 (487) "Space Transporter" and the 918 "One Man Space Ship", both in size and in aesthetics which make it the distinguishing mark of the first stage. Did I say first stage? Yes, and that's another story we'll see later. This triumvirate of space ships was accompanied by two bases, the "Space Commander Center" 926 (493 in the USA with a first version that included a flat baseplate instead of the one with the craters) and





the 920 (483 in the USA) "Alpha-1 Rocket Base" and a number of medium and small-sized vehicles including the 894 (452 in the USA) "Mobile Tracking Station" and the 897 (462) "Rocket Launcher" of which I have fond memories.

There were few novelties in the 1980 catalogue, just a few small vehicles which introduced the possibility of looking for minerals in our new colonies, but little else. It's curious that the novelties of that year are completely different in the American and European catalogues. The first one shows a small ship and a lab on stilts to substitute the vehicles of the European version. And for me, that's where the first stage finishes.

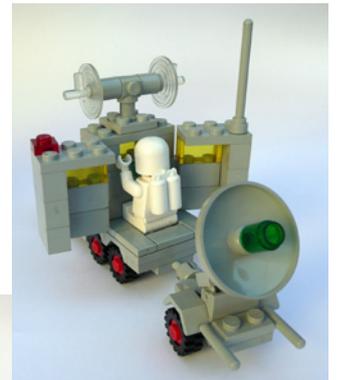
In 1981 for the first time a new colour combination was introduced in the space ships. The 'bodies' of the ships, blue till now, become white, and the trans yellow cabins become trans blue. In the engines, grey is substituted by black. The change is introduced very subtly, with both colour schemes appearing even in a single set, like in the 6927 "Mobile Tracking Station", where the vehicle has the new colour scheme and the base it transports the old one. Maybe the most important sets are the 6929 "Starfleet Voyager", the first to break with the triangular shape of the ships, and the 6970 "Beta-1 Command Base", to me the most mythical of all, which included a small manual monorail and a medium sized space ship of spectacular design.

In 1982, in addition to the appearance of yellow minifigs, the 6950 "Mobile Rocket Transport" came out, using the old colour scheme, but with an original design in which a giant 8-wheeled vehicle serves as a mobile rocket launching platform. The first

impression is that the scale is wrong with respect to other sets in the theme, but having a closer look and taking into account its function you soon get used to it. It's hard not to like the little monster.

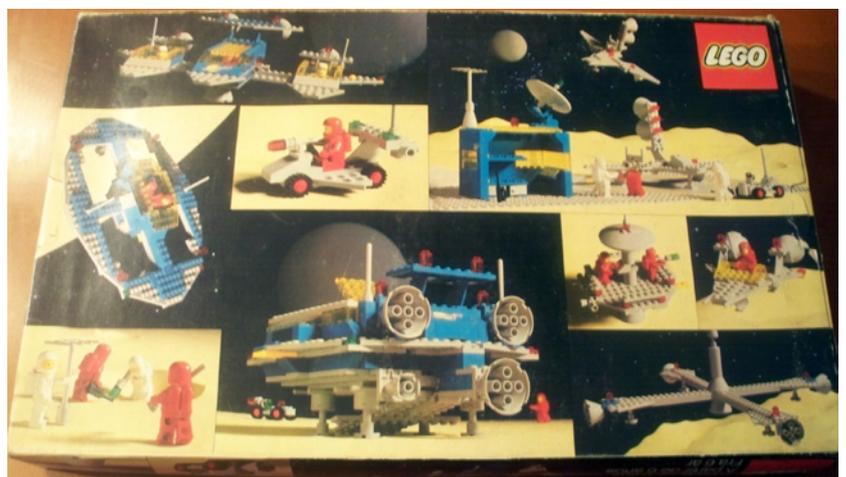


In 1983 the first base with the new colour scheme appears, the 6930 "Space Supply Station" and what could be considered the flag ship of the fleet, the 6980 "Galaxy Commander". This ship can be divided into three sections: the front part with cockpit, a base which is transported in the rear and the structure that covers the base during transport. Incredible as it may seem, the 928 is still in the catalogue, for the fourth time, and as spectacular as the first year.



In 1984 the first set with a robot look stands out: the 6951 "Robot Command Center" and the 6971 "Inter-Galactic Command Base". And blue and back minifigs make their appearance.

1985 brings a new colour scheme, with trans green cabins and ships that are mainly grey and black and with little robots at minifig scale. The series starts with the 6952 "Solar Power Transporter" and the 6891 "Gamma-V Laser Craft". But there are still sets with the colour scheme of the original series, the





second series and now the third... maybe the beginning of the end?

1986 sees the appearance of the 6985 "Cosmic Fleet Voyager". Its colour scheme was a kind of undefined mutation between the first and second series, but the size is very definitely huge.

In 1987 the first sets with light and sound appear. In general, as far as design is concerned, the theme is in free fall and catalogues show the first images of what will become the Blacktron theme. With a completely different colour scheme

and minifigs, it will coexist with the Space Classic sets and the new Space series. This new stage starts with a change in the uniform of the minifigs, the supremacy of white and trans blue and the arrival of the monorail. What a pity that did not come out a little earlier so it would have had the classic colours and minifigs. It would have been the perfect end to the theme.

In my personal opinion, after 1984 few sets can really be considered Space Classic, but there will be those who do not even consider the sets from the second series to be Space Classic as the grey blue trans yellow scheme was abandoned. But that is up to each of you individually. My opinion is clear: 928 forever!
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