



Great creators of the world: Barney Main

A young artist with surprising new ideas about the use of parts and techniques to add realism to his creations.

By Hispabrick Magazine

Pictures by Barney Main



Hispabrick Magazine: ¿Nombre?

Barney Main aka SlyOwl

HM: Age?

BM: 18

HM: Nationality?

BM: English

HM: What do you do normally?

BM: Student - hoping to do engineering at university next year.

HM: When did you first start building with LEGO®?

BM: When I moved on from Duplo! Probably when I was 3 or 4, when I got a box of basic bricks with a few minifigs and trees. But there was also 6581 Dig 'n' Dump, which is still close to my heart. I still remember using the technic axles from it to try and make a Roborider when they came out a few years later!

HM: And your last set?

BM: Hmm... I don't really tend to buy sets anymore, instead Bricklinking the parts I need. I did recently buy my second 10192 Space Skulls - I'm not really a space fan, but I love the parts selection and design of this set.





HM: Your favorite commercial LEGO® building theme?

BM: I think I should probably say pirates, judging by what I tend to build! I probably prefer castle though, as it has more potential, but I also have a soft spot for Technic, even though I'm hopeless at it!

HM: What is your favorite LEGO element and why?

BM: I have a tray of parts that I invariably use when building - headlight bricks, lightsaber bars, clips, travis bricks - but I wouldn't really like to choose between them. Perhaps the 1x2 plate wins out in the end, as I'm always reaching for them to get me out of a mess.

HM: Which part would you like LEGO to produce?

BM: I haven't got a clue! I reckon that if there isn't a part, there's normally a way around it. Truth be told, with the quantity of great new parts that LEGO has been releasing lately, I'm really enjoying what there is, without wishing for more!

HM: How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?

BM: Too many! Probably about an hour a day on average.

HM: What do your family/friends think about this hobby?

BM: They're generally quite supportive, but I have to put up with some mild teasing now and again!

HM: Do you draw or pre-designs before you start building?

BM: I sometimes do an incredibly crude sketch, or even just jot down a few words, to remind myself later what I'd intended to build. Nonetheless, the finished model is rarely anything like I'd originally envisioned! Sometimes I have a model in my mind for month, or even years, and only start once I get a window of opportunity, but much more often I just start building without an idea, and just go with the flow...

HM: If you had to choose one among all your creations, which one would you choose and why? The topics of your constructions are very different lately, where do you find inspiration for these MOCS?

BM: Possibly British Brickie's Break (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/27444109@N04/5553445901/in/photostream>). It's a departure from my normal building style, but I love building at life-size scale, as there are so many possibilities. I'm also really happy with the way the photograph came out: we had builders outside our house, so I got to use an authentic backdrop! This one was for a contest on MOCpages, and it's contests like this that force me to try things I wouldn't normally, which is why I've been deviating from my normal diet of pirates and castle recently.



HM: The increase of AFOLs and lines like Star Wars™ create new possibilities not imagined before by LEGO®. What do you think about the old school LEGO and the new LEGO?

BM: Whilst I have a huge respect for the classic sets, I think that the modern ones beat them hands-down. The parts, the colours, the minifigs, the construction are just so much better! I think that maybe the classic LEGO ethos was better than the current one - that of stimulating children to build and play from their imaginations, rather than spoon-feeding them. I recall reading lately that Meccano used to put deliberate mistakes in their instructions to encourage children to think for themselves, and this is similar to the sort of thing I that I feel LEGO has lost out on recently.

HM: What do you think about the use of non-official parts (stickers, modified parts, non-LEGO elements,...)?

BM: I'm on the fence on customisation. At heart I'm a purist, but I have meddled in the dark arts a little!

HM: In your MOCS we can see that you like to find alternative uses to almost all the parts in the LEGO repertoire. How did you manage to find these applications? Pure inspiration? Do you play around with the parts until you find a new angle? ... Speaking of angles, in your dioramas there are often parts placed in angles that are difficult to obtain with LEGO, but that provide a great effect of realism to the set. How do you make the decision to include these angles in your dioramas?

BM: I wish I knew! When I'm building I just see the need for

something and then something clicks in my mind, and I have the solution. Whenever I get a new part, I do make sure that I "get the measure of it" - I try it out in various combinations, seeing what could be done with it, and maybe this helps when I'm trying to think of a way to do something. As adult collections go, mine is relatively small, and this actually forces you to innovate, when you don't have the parts that you want. Similarly, it also forces you to conserve parts whilst building, and this is why I often go for strange angles - it's not that I like building that way, it's just it often uses less parts! For example, when making a rock formation, putting tiles at angles using hinges can supplement using normal slope bricks. Maybe my collection is getting bigger now, but I still build the way I taught myself!

HM: Have you had a Dark Age? Do you think there is something that LEGO could do to prevent many young people from going through that stage?

BM: Not really, I've survived so far! But I can see how easy it is for people to lose their love of LEGO in their early teenage years - as to what can be done about that, I'm not sure. Discovering the online LEGO community was important in keeping me building, so perhaps finding an intermediate between the LEGO.com website and the adult forums that could foster building techniques and relationship skills, readying them for the world of the AFOL, would be a good thing. I can't see it as either a feasible or easy endeavour, however!

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