

“10.000s”: A wink to the AFOL



Text by Otum

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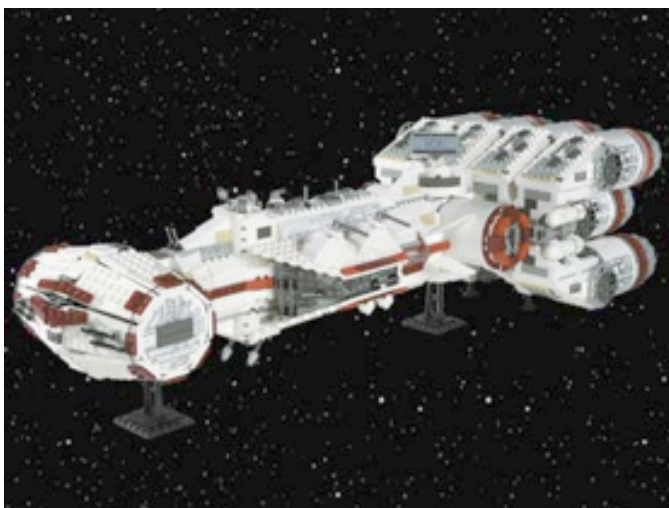
Keep this year in mind, 2001. No it's not related to a space odyssey, but with one of the LEGO®'s initiatives deciding to launch a theme that is commonly known as the “10,000s”.

It has been over a decade since LEGO started the 10,000 series that was clearly aimed at the AFOL community. The start of this series was centred on three themes, legends, with re-editions of the mythical Metroliner and Club Car, as well as the set that started the 10,000 series, the Guarded Inn.



Another theme that was launched at the beginning was “My own train, which presented a series of wagons to create your own train set, but what really captivated the AFOLs was the third theme, Star Wars™, with the edition of a bust of Darth Maul and the Rebel Blockade Runner, starter of a series later known as the UCS (Ultimate Collectors Series).

The next year the existing train theme was continued, bringing the Santa Fe to the market, with an engine and two wagons.



These wagons allowed for the possibility of creating up to five different wagon designs. A steam engine was also added to the “My own train” theme, with the possibility of changing the colour scheme. The legend theme incorporated sets like Pizza to go, Breezeway café, the Black Falcon Fortress and the also mythical Black Seas Barracude. For Star Wars it was extended to include the Naboo Starfighter and the magnificent Imperial Star Destroyer, one of the sets with the largest piece counts in the history of LEGO: approximately 3100.

That year two new themes were added, sculptures, with the 10.024 Red Baron, a sculpture of the trideck Red Baron plane and the Seasonal sets, mainly centred on festivities like Christmas, Easter or Halloween. This new theme had sets like Santa Claus and Christmas Tree and a Reindeer.

We have arrived to 2003, the year in which LEGO launched the Cloud City set which showed a diorama of different Star Wars scenes that occur in cloud city and, to top it all off, a UCS Snowspeeder. In the Legends theme Main Street was brought out, a marvellous set that is a must-have in any City display. Also for City, although without much logic to be honest, LEGO included two sets that were more typical of Trains, the Train Engine Shed and the Train Level Crossing.

More Seasonal sets were brought out, including Mr. Bunny, Snowman and an Angel, adding other small sets under the name Birthday Pack, which include a heart or a star among other designs. As a new theme in this series the Bionicle Takutanuva was launched as well as the Sports series with the NBA Basketball Teams and the NHL Action Set. Also another of the sets that today is considered mythical was launched, the U.S.S. Constellation, not forgetting the occasional incursions LEGO made into space related sets with the 10029 Lunar Lander.

2004 as a year is hard to place, but the explanation is simple: from the point of view of the 10.000s the feeling is that LEGO has changed the way it organises these sets as with the exception of the 1011 Hot Rod “Blue Fury”, a Brickmaster set and two seasonal sets (Elf Boy and Elf Girl) it looks like LEGO has decided to launch only ‘normal’ sets in existing themes. Legends disappears. The Clickits theme brings accessory and decoration sets. There are also a couple of Bionicle sets, Toa Lhikan & Kikanalo and Ultimate Dume. For City there is Sow Truck and City Airport (10159) and a high speed train divided into two sets, one with the engine and the other with the passenger car, 10157 and 10158 respectively. A special mention for the star of the year, the Maersk Sealand, another one of the must-haves.

As far as licensed sets are concerned there was the motorized Hogwarts Express and two Star Wars sets, the TIE Fighter Collection with minifig scale sets and the UCS Y-Wing Attack Starfighter that deserves a spot in the top 10.



2005 was a very thin year as far as the number of sets that were issued is concerned, but incredibly interesting from the AFOL point of view. In addition to the already traditional Bionicle, Vaporak, and two Seasonal sets, Mrs Bunny and Chicken and Chicks, LEGO® brings out four sets that are included in the top 25, the Death Star II and the Sandcrawler for Star Wars™ and the BNSF GP-38 Locomotive and the great TTX Intermodal Double-Stack Car for Trains, as well as the 2005 version of the previously mentioned Maersk Sealand. As you can see, limited in number, but of great quality.

The next year there is yet another edition of the Maersk Sealand. There are also the usual Bionicle sets, the Vezon & Kardas and the Seasonal set Snowflake.

In this year LEGO publishes two Star Wars UCS, the Imperial AT-ST and the Vader's TIE Advanced. There is a wink to the Castle fans with the King's Castle (10176), one of the best castles LEGO has ever made.

Special mention is deserved for two other sets that appeared that year, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, a type of UCS, but of a plane and the charming Holiday Train, a very complete and interesting steam train that includes an engine a passenger wagon several flat wagons and a truck in the same set, all with a Christmas design.

If in 2005 and 2006 the 10.000 sets were scarce, 2007 is even thinner with only 6 new sets, but what sets!! The Star Wars theme gets a motorized AT-AT and the unique Millennium Falcon, with a cool 5195 pieces, the biggest LEGO set ever.

In this year we see the beginning of a new way of cataloguing the 10.000 sets, as in addition to classic Star Wars there are three new series, the Landmarks theme with the Eiffel Tower, the Factory theme, with the interesting Hobby Train Set and a set, the Market Street, which although LEGO includes it here, ought to be in another new theme LEGO launches in this year, the Modular Buildings, with the Coffee Corner as a starter.

During 2008, the number of new sets increased. Following the new division, the Star Wars theme gets the mobile sculpture General Grievous and the indescribable Death Star which is incomparably better than the previous version. You simply can't NOT have this set! The Factory theme presents the Star Justice and Space Skulls, centred on a space theme, and the Custom Car Garage, for lovers of car tuning. There is also a new Landmark, the Taj Mahal with almost 6000 pieces... words cannot describe. We shouldn't forget the Volkswagen Beetle.

The highlights of that year are the Death Star, the inimitable Green Grocer for the modular buildings and the Town Plan commemorating the 50th anniversary of the LEGO Brick with three golden bricks and a recreation of the original box in a more modern version. Another must-have.

The launch of Town Plan could be seen as the start of a new series in the 10.000s which you might call "various" since looking at the new sets that appeared in 2009 there are several that don't really fit into any of the categories mentioned so far. Also there is Factory.

As mentioned previously, in 2009 there were three sets that could be included under "various" since each one of them belongs to an existing LEGO theme, but their design merits inclusion in the 10.000 series. The first of these is the Grand Carousel, interesting because of its circular design. Then there is another top 25 entry, the Emerald Night, a set that is even better than the Metroliner, and finally a set that has caused many to become followers of the medieval theme, the magnificent Medieval Market Village.



If we concentrate on the themes that are used currently, in Star Wars™ we have the Republican Dropship with AT-OT Walker and the Tantive IV, both in minifig scale. In the Modular Building theme what may be the least interesting set in this theme, the Fir Brigade.

This year marks the start of another theme that will be repeated each year, the Winter theme, with the Winter Village Toy Shop as the first set. Ahh and we shouldn't forget the gesture made to the MINDSTORMS fans, the NXT Intelligent Brick in black!

2010 is the year that brings us a new version of the Maersk Sealand, in case there was any doubt it was a hit among AFOLs and we were also presented with two new Star Wars UCS, the Obi-Wan Jedi's Starfighter and the Imperial Shuttle. Also there are two sets that only fit in the "various" group, the Shuttle Adventure, a set for space fans, and the Imperial Flagship, an excellent reproduction of a ship worthy of the most intrepid pirate.

Going back to traditional themes, we find another Landmark set, the Tower Bridge of London. In the Winter series there is the Winter Village Bakery, a set that goes a little further than the Toy Shop as it has more 'body', increasing the scenes compared to the previous set. Finally there is the Grand Emporium, a Modular Building, another must-have set that will be difficult to equal.

And so we reach the present, 2011. Here we find some interesting things for MINDSTORMS fans, the Compass Sensor and the Colour Sensor, as well as a modified re-edition of the Shuttle Expedition from 2010.

If we concentrate on the classic series of the last couple of years, Modular Buildings brings us the Pet Shop, a modular building that actually consists of two. The new UCS is a set that no doubt will end up in the top 10, the Super Star Destroyer; not as spectacular as the Imperial Star Destroyer, but certainly very attractive. The Winter series adds the Winter

Post Office, which, like previous years, is a notch better than the foregoing sets in the series.

Finally in 2011 there are three new sets that fit in the "various" group. The Diagon Alley in the Harry Potter theme is very interesting for the pieces it includes. There is also an attractive Volkswagen T1 Camper Van and a new delightful set for Train fans, the Maersk Train.



After all the foregoing one thing is clear: LEGO® knows the market of the AFOLs, and how demanding they can be. It is for this reason that each year again there is a lot of speculation about what the next modular building, UCS or, of late, Winter set will be. So I can only say one thing: 2012 is just around the corner. Yippee!!

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