

Pillars of the Community:



By HispaBrick Magazine®

Pictures by Joe Meno

If you ask an AFOL for a publication on the LEGO® world, unfortunately for us Hispabrick Magazine® will probably not be their first choice. BrickJournal is the reference. It had its beginnings in the online world, that announced it globally, made the leap to the printed word and then to the official LEGO distribution channels. It came to cover a space that had so far been empty, and has been the inspiration for the written medium about the LEGO world. From the first moment, Joe Meno, the man behind the project, has been watching us smiling from behind a frame in his editorial.

HBM: How did the idea of Brickjournal come up and what was its original purpose?

JM: BrickJournal began as an effort to document the LEGO fan community, but changed its mission not only to document but also provide an introduction of the AFOL community to the general public.

HBM: To what degree has that goal been fulfilled ?

JM: It's an ongoing effort.

HBM: How many people are working on the journal?

JM: There is a handful of people who work on the magazine, with a regular set of constant articles from Jared Burks (minifigure customization), Christopher Deck (miniscale model) Greg Hyland (AFOLs cartoon) and now Tommy Williamson (pop culture model) After that, there are correspondents around the world that bring in content.



HBM: How do you distribute the work?

JM: The writing and photos are done by correspondents. From there, everything is sent to me where I set up the pages, make digital models as needed, and layout the magazine.

HBM: What was the reason for the transition from a free magazine to a paid one?

JM: BrickJournal was planned to become a printed magazine from its start, so the online edition was an initial proof of concept of a LEGO® fan mag and its online run was proof that there was a constant amount of content to publish.

In order to become a printed magazine, services and supplies need to be purchased, such as the printing, paper and shipping. Advertising isn't a viable way to finance the magazine, so it became a paid magazine.

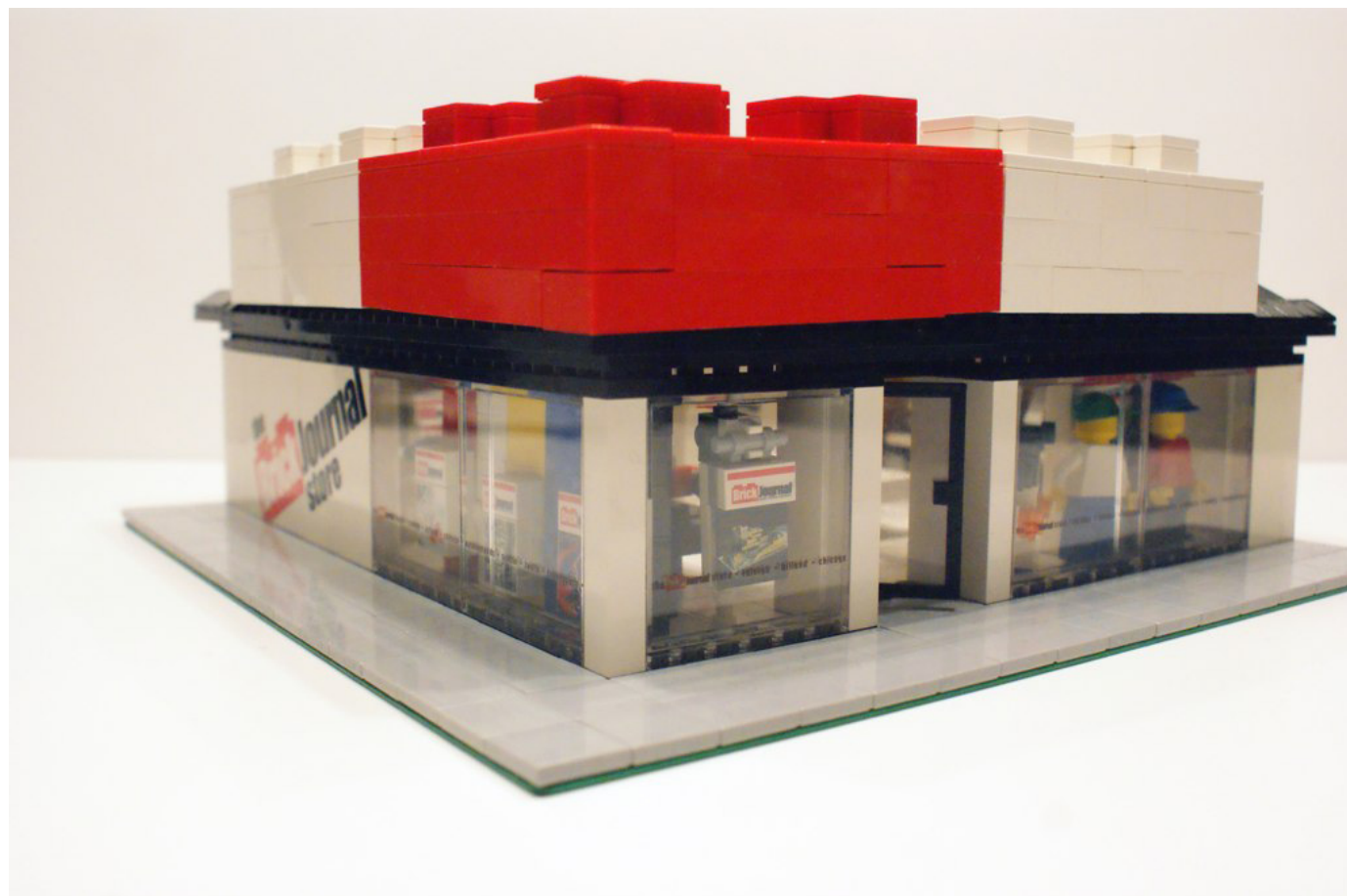
HBM: How has the availability of the magazine through LEGO sales channels affected the magazine?

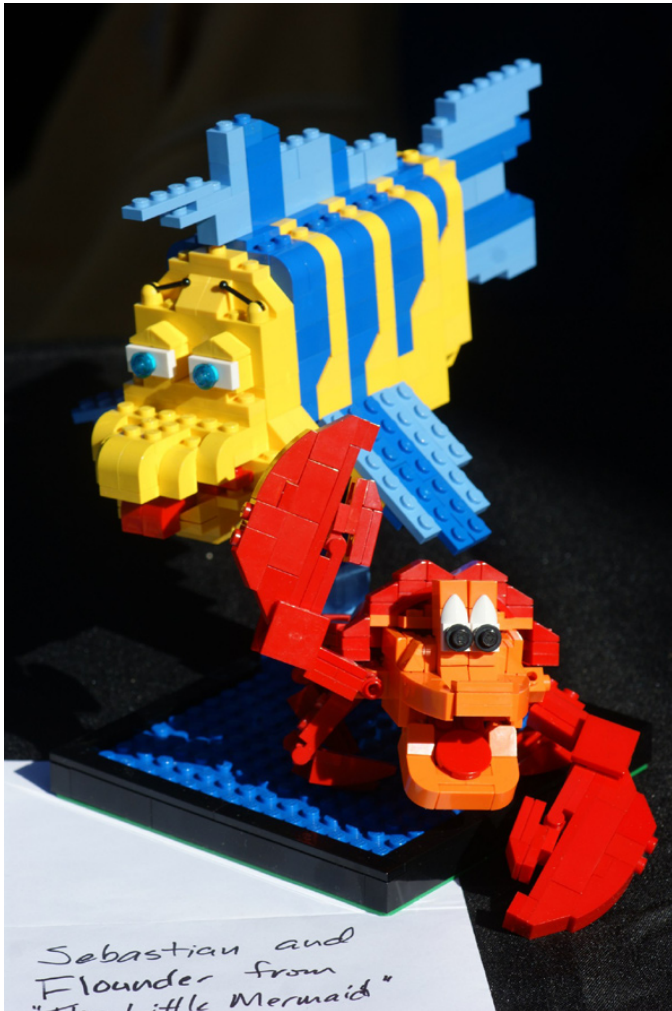
JM: BrickJournal, thanks to its presence in the LEGO stores and LEGOLAND parks, can be seen by the people most likely to read the magazine, so it's increased sales tremendously.

HBM: With the backing of LEGO for distribution, do you still have the same freedom to choose content as before?

JM: We generally have to adhere to LEGO's Fair Play rules, so there are some things that we will not put on the covers. However, we do have a pretty good amount of freedom in content.

HBM: During these years of daily following the LEGO





Sebastian and Flounder from "The Little Mermaid"

community, which do you think are the main changes that have occurred in the AFOL community?

JM: The community that I started in split into a bunch of communities. This has created fragmentation that has become more and more of an issue in terms of working with the LEGO® Group. Instead of having one or a few large voices, there are a multitude of small voices. Because of that, the power of the AFOL community is smaller than it could be.

An example of that could be seen in the LEGO CUUSOO website. The ideas that have been selected came from properties that had large audiences outside the fan community - the Minecraft set made 10,000 votes in a week! The AFOL community has yet to get a fraction of that in terms of votes for a project.

HBM: Have you done any activities in "real life"? Can you explain them?

JM: Before the magazine started I was pretty active in the fan community in the US, as a member of the North Carolina LEGO Users Group. I coordinated BrickFest (a LEGO fan event in Washington, DC) in 2006 and was one of the event coordinators for BrickMagic (a LEGO fan event in Raleigh, NC) from 2010 to 2013.

I have done presentations about the LEGO community and the magazine at San Diego Comic-Con and North Carolina Comicon. For the LEGO Group, I have been involved with a few projects, including LEGO Factory (assisting in the original release online and also designing part of the Cool Car Garage set), and LEGO MINDSTORMS.

My current activities involve volunteer activities with a school assisting their FIRST LEGO League teams and upcoming displays in North Carolina.

HBM: Can you explain any interesting anecdotes related to Brickjournal?

JM: It's pretty funny to me. I have been recognized at the oddest places by readers, including San Diego Comic-Con. Besides that, what has been astonishing for me has been what opportunities BrickJournal has given me in visiting people and places I wouldn't have been before, like meeting futurist Syd Mead at his studio or visiting Walt Disney Animation Studios.

The funniest thing that happened to me was when I did the first Comic-Con BrickJournal panel with Bryce McGlone, Brandon Griffith, and Jessi Pastor. We gathered at the door to the room where we were speaking, which had about 400 seats and entered to set up. Inside, the room was filled, and we thought we barged in early - but the room was filled for us!

HBM: In your opinion, which is the key point for Brickjournal having become a reference journal in the AFOL Community?

JM: I think the main point of the magazine is a reference for both the community and the public to the LEGO hobby. The voice of the magazine is meant for those that are in the community and those wanting to enter the community.

HBM: How much time do you spend to keep Brickjournal running?

JM: This is my job, so it's always not too far away from mind. I spend time daily online getting material and production of the magazine usually takes two weeks.

HBM: How do you see the future of Brickjournal?

JM: I see the magazine becoming a digital publication eventually, with video and model renderings that can be manipulated on the screen. Outside of the magazine, I see BrickJournal providing resources to LEGO-related community projects, such as FIRST LEGO League.

#