

# Great creators of the world: Stephan Sander

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Pictures by Stephan Sander

Our guest in this issue is Stephan Sander, alias x\_Speed, a fantastic Miniland scale builder, responsible for the spectacular Brick-Valley.

**HispaBrick Magazine:** Name?

**Stephan Sander,** "x\_Speed"

**HBM:** Age?

**Stephan:** 42

**HBM:** Nationality?

**Stephan:** German

**HBM:** What do you do normally?

**Stephan:** Normally I'm building cool stuff with LEGO®, but sometimes I'm working as an IT Specialist for a German banking datacentre. Mostly I'm doing this from Monday to Friday.

**HBM:** When did you first start building with LEGO?

**Stephan:** I'm a big fan of LEGO since I've been a kid, but I can't name the exact age. Sadly I entered my dark ages when other things became more important. Luckily the Ferrari #2556 breached the wall of darkness and got me out. That was about 1998 and since then I'm completely lost in the bricks.

**HBM:** When did you decide to build at Miniland scale?

**Stephan:** It started in 2006 after a discussion with two other AFOLs about a car displayed in LEGOLAND Billund. I started to build the Ferrari Testarossa to get the prove that the model showed in Miniland is not a Ferrari Testarossa (in fact it's a Ferrari 348).

**HBM:** Which was the motivation to build at this scale?

**Stephan:** After finishing the Testarossa, I figured out, that 1:20 is a brilliant scale for building cars. It gives you many more capabilities to include details, but it's not too big that it will take years and thousands of bricks just to finish one model. I'm not just a LEGO fan since, but I'm also a petrol head since I've been able to say the word "car" (german translation, of course :). So it was more than obvious to make more cars and I never stopped since and I don't think that I will stop in the future.

**HBM:** When did you start posting your models online?

**Stephan:** My website x-brick.de is online since 2000, so my first online postings of moc's might be a little bit older. Loads of things happened since then...

**HBM:** What is the last set you have purchased?

**Stephan:** Gorzan's Gorilla Striker #70008. It was a hard way to get off the drug of collecting Star Wars sets, which I managed a couple of years ago (I'm still clean!). So because of too less space I've stopped buying usual sets and decided to build my own stuff instead. But from time to time I buy sets and still enjoy to build them, like that brilliant Mecha kind of thing. I love the banana cannon and the colour combination which give the model a very special look.

**HBM:** What is your favourite commercial LEGO building theme?

**Stephan:** Classic space is my all-time favourite, because back in my childhood I've been a million times to my local toy dealer,





just to take a look at the 928 Galaxy Explorer, before I've gathered enough money to buy this fantastic set. Beside to this, I love the 1997 divers theme. The Deep Reef Refuge #6441 is a fantastic set and I still got some 10+ years old moc's according to this theme. The sets remind me about one of my favourite movies: "The abyss".

**HBM:** What is your favourite theme for building?

**Stephan:** This might be a bit surprising: cars!

**HBM:** Which reason did you have to create Brick-Valley?

**Stephan:** At the first event where I've shown my cars in Frechen (Germany, 2006), they were simply placed at the table. It looked quite boring and not many people recognized them and I wouldn't blame them. For the next time, I've made some background creations, based on 32x32 baseplates. That was way better and made the cars looking more interesting. Since the number of cars were growing, the need for a proper background became more important. And what is better than showing cars in their natural environment? So I started to build some streets and a very simple gas station, basing on 48x48 baseplates. This was basically the birth of Brick-Valley. The streets became more detailed and there were more buildings, including a model of the "Anzeiger Hochhaus" (popular building in my hometown), which is made of ~35.000 1x2 plates. So after all Brick-Valley is "just" the background to give the cars a nice environment.

**HBM:** During the last years, Brick-Valley has grown a lot, with new cars, buildings and characters, what are the next objectives for the upcoming years?

**Stephan:** My collection contains now 74 cars, but whenever I finish one car, two new cars pop up at my todo list. But this list is more a reminder, than a real todo list. I'm building whatever I come to my. There are still some gaps in my Ferrari timeline and a pink, six wheeled Rolls Royce which has been started a long time ago and still waits to be finished. So I'm not afraid of not knowing what to build next.

**HBM:** What is your favourite LEGO® element and why?

**Stephan:** Good question. The jumper plate? Very useful, very often in use. The Earling/washmaschine brick? Love the way it can be used. But the best of all might be the standard 1x2 plate. I think this is the most useful element of all. If this one exists in a new colour, only a few more will be needed to build a car.

**HBM:** Which part would you like LEGO to produce?

**Stephan:** A new upside-down converter, like the old finger hinges. The company which must not be named has a fantastic 2x2 plate with studs on top and at the bottom in their program. That would be very helpful! But since there is the wrong name on the stud, there must alternative solutions be found.

**HBM:** How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?



**Stephan:** Depends who you ask: I would say not enough; my wife would answer way too much. The truth might be somewhere in between. Sometimes it depends on my mood and on the progress of a model. If I'm satisfied with it, I usually can't stop building until it's finished, but when it still looks ridiculous after several hours, I prefer to watch a good movie instead. I don't count the hours of building, the only thing I can say is that to build one car takes roughly about 20 hours, 10 hours until a first draft is finished and another 10 hours to do refinements.

**HBM:** Could you explain us how you have designed your last creation?

**Stephan:** It's only half new, because it's a mashup from Back to the Future and Doctor Who. In Skærbæk last year, a nice friend gave me a T-Shirt showing the mixture of two timemachines: the DeLorean and the TARDIS. Normally I not a big fan of mashups, but somehow this one was different. So I decided to build my 5th DeLorean in TARDIS blue. It was great fun to build it and the combination of dark blue and black works extremely good. The timey wimey stuff above the engine is supposed to be parts of a Dalek. Actually I'm quite curious what visitors at LEGO® World will think about it.

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

**Stephan:** Well, my colleagues first starred at me like if I had three eyes, but now they've got used to it when I take a day off to go to Billund for a day trip without taking my kids with me. My son loves my hobby, which doesn't sound very surprising. My daughter is not yet a teen-ager, so it's ok for her, but still not uncool. I tried every trick to get her into LEGO, but at the end I failed.

Lately I needed to setup about 7meter of miniland scaled train tracks within our living room. When my wife came home and saw the "surprise", she just started to smile. I mean honestly, can I expect more?

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

**Stephan:** No. Yes. Well, I'm not very good at drawing and I don't draw anything before I start to build. Not with pen and paper, neither with LDD. I need the bricks in my hand to figure out how to use them best. But when I build cars, I print out their outline to make sure that they'll be in the right scale and have the correct proportions.





**HBM:** If you had to choose one among all your creations, which one would you choose and why?

**Stephan:** Without the need of thinking about it, it would be the DeLorean. I've build it a couple of years ago, but I'm still very happy with the model and it's still one of my cars I've spend the most time to build it and it's the model I'm most proud of. Even the colour of the bricks fits perfectly to the non painted stainless steel surface of the original. The car is build with pearl-light-grey elements, which are hard to find and it took loads of afford to get enough of them. This is also the only model I've build in five variations: Back to the Future I, II, III, a "non timemachine" and the latest one is a Doctor Who mashup.



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

**Stephan:** Yes, great, love them – as long, as they stay away from me. I mean especially for the old American cars it would be great to have more chromed elements, but LEGO didn't make them anymore. In my eyes there is no difference between coating elements with chrome, or to paint them. And where would be the fun, if all elements would exist in all colours? It's part of the hobby to search for rare parts and try to build stuff even if just a few useful elements exist. My pink Cadillac is the best example: usually I use tons of jumper plates within one car, but they are extremely rare in that old pink. So I had to build it with just three (!) jumpers. The only exception are the license plates for my cars. If possible I try to get printed tiles, but this is only a very small detail. The cars would work as well, if they just got a plain tile. So I'm obviously very puristic, but if people want to cut, paint, or do whatever to their bricks – it's up to them. At the end it's a hobby and everybody just should have fun with the bricks.  
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