



ALIENS

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Pictures by Andrew F. (Missing Brick)

In 1986 I was a bit young to go to the cinema to see the movie Aliens. So the first time I saw the movie was on VHS in my living room. I remember I saw it three times that weekend. In my opinion it is one of the best examples of movies that combine action and science fiction, and when I started to see scenes from the film recreated with LEGO® bricks on Flickr, I could not help but contact the authors and ask them to talk about their project.

HBM: Tell us a little about yourselves, your name, where you are from, what you do for a living, ...

I'm **Andrew**, a product designer from the United Kingdom, I built the Aliens dioramas.
And I'm **Matthias** from Germany – I made the custom Aliens minifigures.





HBM: How did you come up with the idea of faithfully recreating scenes from the Aliens movie?

Andrew: I've been a huge fan of Aliens ever since I first saw it on VHS tape (I was too young to see it in the Cinema). After I came out of my LEGO® dark ages I started to notice some fantastic LEGO Aliens vehicles on flickr by great builders like Larry Lars and Babalas Shipyards. I find there are two types of great MOCs: the ones that make you think "hmm, that's clever" and the ones that make you go "I want one of those!". Larry's Aliens models were all in the latter category – so I started by making copies of his APC and Powerloader.

At that time no-one had attempted to recreate any Aliens movie scenes – mostly due to the lack of suitable minifigs that matched the costumes and characters from the films. That was when I came across a post by minifig customization expert, Matthias, on the Eurobricks forum. He'd hand crafted an amazing set of Aliens minifigs – all instantly recognisable as characters from the film.

Matthias: When I was a kid I built all kinds of stuff with my LEGO bricks: vehicles from Star Wars™, Masters of the universe, Ghostbusters, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles™ (didn't want to wait 20 years for the LEGO License), Robocop and Aliens. I always found it difficult to build realistic figures for these vehicles from standard LEGO parts - so I started experimenting with figure customization very early. I used

Modelling Clay, Glue, paint and all kinds of weird stuff to create the characters I wanted. Later on I wasn't very proud of the terrible things I did to many of my LEGO figures, but it helped me getting my first modelling and sculpting practice. When I was about 15 I moved away from LEGO but stayed with figure customization with other toylines. When I got out of my dark ages and had fun building new MOCs again, I found some of my old LEGO minifigure experiments from my childhood in a box. Out of a nostalgic feeling I decided that I should try some of these characters again with today's modelling skills and materials. My first choice was the Colonial Marines from Aliens, because this is still one of my favorite movies and I felt I could do this so much better today.

HBM: How did you create the Aliens minifigs that give life to the characters of the movie?

Matthias: I used greenstuff for sculpting prototypes of all kinds of parts that connect to the LEGO Minifigures like helmets, chest armor etc. When I'm satisfied with the sculpt I usually create molds of these parts with silicone rubber to cast multiple copies with Epoxy Resin. I started with some generic Marines, moved on with the prominent Marines from the movie and later on came drop ship pilots and Smartgunners, which were the most difficult to build with their tiny headsets, targeting sights and Smartguns. I did a lot of different versions before I was satisfied with them. I offered some of these custom minifigures to fellow AFOLs because I realised there was a lot of interest

from other LEGO® and Aliens Fans out there. That's how I first got in touch with Andrew, who was building great dioramas and vehicles from Aliens. He asked me for some figures, I asked him for help with my first APC MOC. This way a great cooperation started and I'm very proud of the fact that some of my creations are a part of Andrew's amazing work today.

HBM: How did you decide which scenes to recreate?

Andrew: The movie's full of memorable characters, locations, vehicles and action – and all the scenes are on a relatively small, human scale – which makes them ideal for MOCing. You could pick just about any scene from the movie and turn it into a great MOC.

The scene where an Alien rears up out of the water behind Newt was one of the most visually memorable moments in the film, so that was high on my list of scenes to build. I started with the minifig posing – with Ripley and Hicks attempting to cut through the grate to rescue Newt from the flooded room below – then I built the room around the figures.

The scene where Bishop performs his famous knife trick on Hudson was another favourite to build - and a great opportunity to showcase Matthias' excellent Bishop and Vasquez figures.

HBM: One of the most important aspects is the lighting of the scenes, how do you plan it and what methods do you use?

Andrew: For most shots I build a roof with trans-clear bricks or grates where I want the lights to shine through, then I sit LED torches on top. For the shots in the alien hive I built a trans-clear floor, covered it with grille plates then stood LED torches underneath it to get an uplighting effect. To get coloured lighting I just shine the torches through trans-coloured plates. Whenever possible I like to include light sources in the scene





itself – so in the operations room I built powerfunctions LEDs into the table to recreate the table-top screen from the movie. And in the Newt rescue scene I used a powerfunctions LED as Hick's blowtorch. I use a lot of torch batteries but it's worth it because the models really come to life when you add lighting.

HBM: Do you use post processing of the photos or do you try to get the effects just with lighting?

Andrew: I like to do everything in-camera. To me it kinda feels like cheating to add a lot of post processing effects. But I'm not averse to using tricks like mirrors to extend views into the distance. I used mirrors in the Sulaco Hangar and Hypersleep shots.



HBM: What is the scene that has cost you most effort to recreate?

Andrew: The dropship took me several months to complete and many bricklink orders. The folding missile pods were the trickiest part: I must have rebuilt them six times before I came up with a design I was happy with. Rather than just photographing the ship on a blank background I wanted to capture it with some cool backdrops - so I built the Sulaco Hangar scene which required almost as much work as the ship itself. I also wanted to recreate the scene where Bishop Rescues Ripley and Newt from the atmosphere processing station which is exploding around them. So I suspended the dropship 4 feet off the ground on invisible thread wrapped around a broomstick propped up by two clothes airers in front of a 60" LCD displaying the background explosion. Photoshop would have been a lot easier!

HBM: Have you given up recreating a scene you had in mind because of its complexity?

Andrew: Yes – the dustoff scene where the Dropship lands and the APC drives off the ramp. It's one of the most impressive effects shots in the movie – and was all done in real time with models! But I found the dropship was very difficult to manoeuvre on wires – especially with the APC sitting on the ramp – so I gave up after a few crash landings.

HBM: Do you keep the scenes built or do you disassemble them after photographing it?

Andrew: I usually disassemble them to reuse the parts. I still have the dropship on my desk – but I'm slowly pulling parts off it for other models – so it's looking rather sad at the moment.

HBM: What plans do you have for the future?

Matthias: Until now I've built every character from Aliens from Ripley to Bishop with the only exception of Newt. And it seems it's not the end of the road. Right now I'm in the process of

sculpting my first Xeno prototype and have many ideas for future custom minifigures.

Andrew: There are still lots of scenes I'd like to build: The Hadley's Hope colony, Ripley battling the alien queen and the "Marines We Are Leaving" scene – although I may take a break from Sci-Fi and try my hand at some other genres in between Aliens MOCs

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