

76052-1: Batman™ Classic TV Series – Batcave

By Jetro

Pictures by Jetro and LEGO System A/S



Batman is back in glorious 60s style and in a large 2526pc set that includes a total of 9 minifigs. Is it a collectors item? A playset? Or is there too much nostalgia for either option? This review will (hopefully) give you the answer.

Even though I wasn't even around when the original Batman TV series aired in the 60s (January 1966 to March 1968), the iconic images of Batman and Robin chasing villains in loud colours, accompanied by large speech bubbles emphasising the power of their punches are still etched in my memory from the many reruns of this iconic show. As a result the 76052 Batman Classic TV Series Batcave is instantly recognisable, if only because of the classic lines of the Batmobile – they don't make cars like that anymore.

Today's Batman is a much darker knight, but even so, the colourful lines of the original TV series as represented in this set have an instant appeal, and not only those of us who saw the series on TV. I wanted to know if it was just my memories that drew me to the set (despite not being much of a super heroes fan, at least not when it comes to LEGO), so I sat down with my kids to build the set together and see what their reactions were.

The instruction manual for this set is one hefty volume. On the one hand this has the important advantage that it is less likely to bend and deteriorate inside the box. The plastic film that protects it is also very helpful in this sense. On the other hand it has the drawback that only one builder can use the book at any given time making a group build a little more complicated. Fortunately LEGO instructions are now easily available through the website which has also recently been revamped and finding and accessing the right instruction manual is now even easier than before.

Of course the main interest of my kids were the minifigs that appear at different stages of the building process. Batman is instantly recognisable, even for them, although my 5-year-old wanted to know if one of his super powers is looking with his forehead: the slit in the mask Batman wears is at that height. I did not provide too much information about who is who and what each character is about and I found my kids came to some interesting conclusions: after learning Bruce Wayne is in fact Batman, they thought Alfred must be the daytime version of the Joker, seeing as they have the same hair, only in a different colour. They were also pretty sure Catwoman must be good and the rest could be persuaded to behave – if you hadn't guessed it by now, both my kids are girls :D



The building process starts with the Batmobile, which we found to be a thoroughly enjoyable build. Despite having studied the images on the box, it turned out to be considerably larger than we had anticipated. With 8 studs in width and a length of 26 it certainly is a massive vehicle, but it certainly doesn't feel too large and fits in nicely with other elements in the set. More about that later. A particularly cool element are the two blaster/shooters on the hood, adding some extra action to the model.



The next stage turned out to be more interesting to me as an AFOL than to my kids. Building the large structure that holds the study on top seemed like a tedious and boring task. While some of it wasn't particularly inspiring, it turned out to be a lot more interesting than I had expected. The image that stuck in my mind from the first time I saw the set was that of lots of tan structures and some accents in the shape of vehicles, minifigs and scene elements (mainly the power plant and the study). What I had somehow completely missed is that backside of the "study-structure" is actually the façade of Wayne Manor. It was very interesting to see how much of the structure is built as vertical plates, with windows built in bricks in the usual direction. Some of the bricks used in those windows structures are later completely hidden, which made me think a more simple, "cheap" solution might have been used, but the tile and plate mosaic conveys the impression of a brick building with relief very well.



The structure also houses our favourite play element in the set: the 32-long spiral poles Batman and Robin use to descend from to study to the Batcave. A simple Technic mechanism is used to create a platform for each of the superheroes. The structure of the cave almost hides them so when you pull on the lever for each of the platform they suddenly appear flying down the pole.

Next up is the study, which is a very nicely decorated and full of little play elements. The desk with the red phone, the bust that hides the button to open bookcase that slides to one side reveal the top of the poles our masked friends use to access the Batcave.

There is no connection between the twisted poles and the study, which is actually a plus. This way Bruce and Dick can go to their respective poles behind the bookcase and "disappear", to emerge as superheroes entering the Batcave.

Aside from those play elements the study also contains the portraits of Bruce's parents with lamps on either side, made with the new "nipple" tile in pearl gold: a very nice use of this new element. Another fabulous new element is the 1x4 brick with sand green wallpaper print – no less than 16 of these are used giving the study a very special feel. All in the study is an exquisitely detailed build and stands in stark contrast with the sober base it is built on; a great way to compensate the boring part of the Batcave structure. This is a recurring feature in the set, in the sense that less interesting structural builds are alternated with more attractive details, like the study, the power plant or the Batcopter.



On the whole, the structural parts of the build are relatively quick and uneventful. They contain a considerable number of Tan supports 2x2x13 (16 in total) and lots of Tan and Dark Tan plates, wedges and slopes, in addition to a few BURPs that are all used to create quick, but reasonably interesting shapes to outline the walls of the Batcave.



The power plant has an 8-sided core (based on a 4-sided core and using hinges to add 4 more sides) and uses lots of brackets to add on to it in different directions, adding a lower level platform that reminded me of the Doctor Who playset and a sturdy top with orange trimming, each with ringed with sand green fences that again provide a beautiful contrast. The sides of this part of the cave are built with the help of BURPs that could do with some more detailing, but the number of computers and other control elements (all with stickers) more than make up for it.



The final structural element is the helicopter platform.

The level of detailing on the pillars that hold up the platform is especially attractive in this part of the build, but the structure is otherwise pretty boring and uneventful. A nice detail is the fact that there is a kind of road/parking area for the Batmobile under the helicopter platform.

The final touches of the set are two more vehicles, the Batcopter and the Batcycle and a well-equipped lab. Initially I was a little disappointed with the use of one large piece for the landing gear of the Batcopter. However, despite the odd collection of parts used, the finished model looks very good (wings included!). The piece de resistance for me is the Batcycle. It uses a new top that gives it a cool vintage look and the spare wheel on the back of the sidecar is another great detail. The different lab elements (shelf, computer, lab stand on table) add a lot of play to the set, but they don't have a particular place in it: they are simply a bunch of accessories that don't "fit" anywhere. They are really nice and detailed, but I prefer sets that are more "tidy".

The final verdict? Lots of nice details, an interesting lesson in the use of vertical plates, a cool façade and a lovely study. Aside from that and the very recognisable vehicles, the rest of the set is really lost on me. The power generator uses nice techniques, but I had a hard time answering my kids' question "what is it for" (as in "how do we play with this?") and the large number of tan and dark tan elements will no doubt find their way into other MOCs.

As always, your mileage may vary...

I would like to thank LEGO for providing this set for review. This opinions in this review ar of course entirely my own.

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