

LEGO CITY 2016

By *lluigib*

Pictures by *lluigib* and *LEGO® System A/S*

LEGO CITY started in 2005 as a “new life” for a theme that was almost dead. After the success of LEGO® Town in the 80s and early 90s, the theme turned towards juniorisation, and it almost disappeared. After that, there came the first attempt to resurrect the theme with “World City” sets. I can’t say that I didn’t like those sets, but I still see them as somewhat juniorised. The theme only existed for 2 years, and in my opinion the train sets were the best sets during this transition.

CITY started with firefighters, policemen and construction workers - the most repeated sub-themes ever. I can perfectly understand the reason for this choice. It is what kids repeatedly ask for. The second year added some of the other classical sub-themes, like a hospital and an airport. Once LEGO had the ‘infrastructure’ of the CITY down, new sub-themes started to appear more frequently, together with new versions of the first and most successful themes. The sub-themes have been very useful in making a complete city where people can live, go shopping, travel, etc. One of the shortcomings I saw at the beginning, however, was the lack of houses to live in. Interestingly, CREATOR covered this shortcoming, together with the only CITY House, in 2010.

Sub-themes include:

- Arctic
- Coast-guard
- Cargo
- Farm
- Mining
- Spaceport
- Volcano explorers

Some of those sub-themes have also had their own evolution and some sets have been renewed while others are unique in their theme.

The last few years have shown that January is the month in which the “classic city” sets appear, sets like Police and Firefighters, and also a sub-theme we could name as “vehicles”. These include trucks, cars, vans, sport cars, etc. In June there is typically a mixture of other renewed themes like airport, and new ones like Volcano Explorers, Mining or Arctic. June has been also the month of the “surprise” CITY set. Normally it is a set that complements City with models that don’t appear in regular sub-themes. This year we have 65 CITY sets in the catalog. That’s simply amazing. CITY turned from a residual theme to a core theme. I am very pleased to be able to open the catalog and see pages and pages of the most celebrated theme ever.

January 2016

Last January we had perhaps the biggest launch of CITY sets ever. We saw 8 new firefighters sets, including a station,

a helicopter, a boat and several vehicles, 6 new Police sets including a Prison Island, a boat and 7 new vehicles, with a Ferry as the most surprising one.

The **60110 - Fire Station** is a new version of the well known



fire station, and it includes the building, a Helicopter, a Fire truck and a Fire car. What is new in this set is the appearance of a small model to be extinguished - a hot dog stand. The set is modular allowing you to build up to 9 different configurations. IMHO this set is dispensable for the CITY collectors, but it’s a nice set for a kid that is starting to get into the CITY theme. Perhaps more interesting is the new **60130 - Prison Island**. It



certainly isn’t your normal police station given that it’s located on an island, like Alcatraz, and the play features are also new and interesting. Besides the building, it includes a police helicopter, a police boat, a small boat and a hot air balloon the prisoners can escape with. There are different escape ways like a tunnel and the possibility to break walls. It gives great value and playability for its price, and I am very happy to see new, fresh ideas in sub-themes that fans usually consider boring.

But despite seeing more police and firefighters, I put all my hopes every January on the new sets from the “vehicle” sub-theme. This year the 7 sets launched in January are all amazing. I don’t really see any set in the catalog that can be called a “filler”, as each set complements the core sets well.



60113 - Rally Car is a 6-wide car inspired by the Pikes Peak rally cars and it looks very aggressive. It has a new part - a round tile 1x1 printed with "LIGHT" pattern. It has new sponsors like Expedite (an energy drink?) and Air Borne, which seems to be an airshow club. Octan is also present. It's easy to modify the car with the same parts of the set and get a new car to complete your race.



60115 - 4x4 Off Roader is another racing car, in this case inspired by the Dakar race. This set contains the car itself, 2 minifigures (male and female) and a tool stand. The car looks quite similar to the Desert Rally Cars: 4x4 model with huge wheels, the spare wheel in the boot, the reinforcement structure... The car has the Octan livery.



60118 - Garbage Truck is a new and fresh design of this service vehicle. The 2 prior versions (we could count 3 if we include the model from The LEGO® Movie) were designed for rear loading of the garbage. In this case the truck loads the container from the front. This means that both the truck and the container have a completely new design. The colour scheme of the truck is white-orange. The set includes 2 minifigures and some interesting garbage like fish, a bottle and a banana.



60119 - Ferry was the most surprising set when I saw the catalog. We have never had a Ferry in the LEGO CITY range. I think that the design of this Ferry can be recognized around the world. The Ferry can be accessed from both sides and it can transport 2 cars, although the set includes only one car (I suppose this is because of the price target of the set). The two minifigures included are also nice. These include the captain, new for this set, and a woman driving the car, with a smartphone as an accessory. The set also includes a new colour for the tile 8x16: bright green.

June 2016

At the Nürnberg (DE) Toy Fair, in January 2016, the June CITY sets are shown together with the January ones in the CITY corner of the booth. When it comes to the CITY theme, one set gets people more excited than ever. There is no press release, no special presentation even. Perhaps this "normality" is what attracts more journalists. In June LEGO will launch a set with a disabled citizen in a wheelchair, and also a baby. Journalists only payed attention to the wheelchair, but LEGO fans also celebrated the new baby, as it expands the possibilities for our displays.

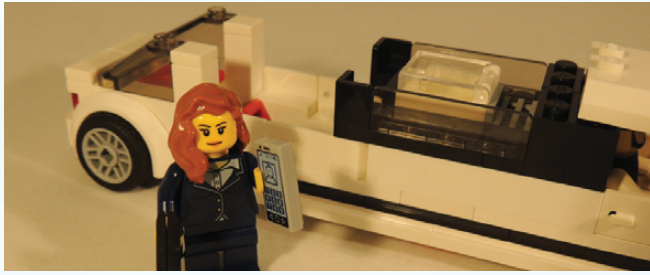
Besides this wonderful set, June came with new Airport sets, a new sub-theme - Volcano Explorers - and a new Gas Station. **60102 - Airport VIP service** is the second version of this



set, although the first one (3222 - Helicopter and Limousine) included a helicopter instead of a Jet. The set includes a VIP jet with a serious black and white colour scheme compared to the airlines of the airport (blue - orange - white). The Jet is a smaller version of 2010's Passenger Plane (3181) with some slight changes like the engines and the wings. The limo is also a renewed version of the previous one.

Both the jet and the limo have a different interior compared to the prior sets. They have VIP services inside and reduce the space for minifigures in order to include more stuff, like bar

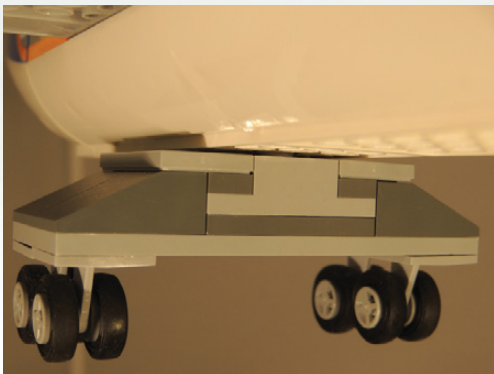
service, TVs, computers and a refrigerator. There is another novelty in this set - a support vehicle with a



ground crew. The vehicle has a "Follow Me" sign. **60104 - Airport Terminal Service** is a little disappointing.

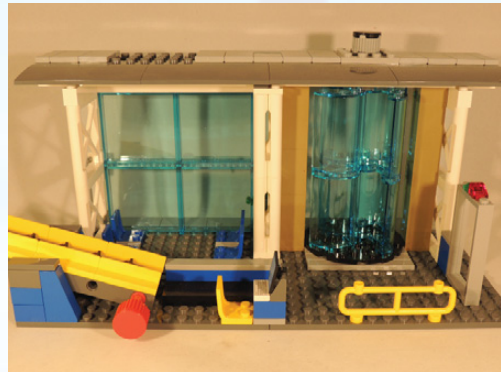


The airplane included has a new livery in blue and white, with orange lines, but it is almost identical compared to the prior ones. I have to admit that there is an improvement inside the cabin, where we can find a toilet, a kitchen for the cabin crew and the seat in an opposing direction where the cabin crew sit for take off and landing. The landing gear is something that LEGO has no perfect solution for. The front one is fine, but the rear gear assembly is connected to the airplane with technic pins and it doesn't perfectly fit on the plane, so the plane swings during taxi operations.



The terminal is... empty! The building looks quite nice, but there is almost nothing inside. There is one revolving door and one big glass wall. From the exterior, the terminal looks modern. On the inside, there is one check-in desk, a waiting room, seats and a security door. No bar, no lockers. In my opinion the interior is poor. The luggage belt is oversized

compared to the rest of the terminal, and although it works, it is the only element you can see when looking at the terminal. Above it, there is the control tower. Nothing new here. It is integrated in the building and has one controller, one seat and one radar. What is strange is that looking at the whole terminal, the control tower is looking out toward the front of the airport, not toward the runway. Of course you can turn it, but it has no meaning.



There is also a support vehicle that carries a luggage trailer, a small fuel tanker and a mobile stairway. The design of the vehicle is compact and fits very well in the model. This is the nicest submodel of the set and, together with the other sets of the year, you have a complete support vehicle set.



60103 - Airport Air Show has been the nice surprise of the Airport sub-theme. There is only one prior reference of this set, back in the 90s (6345 - Aerial Acrobats). In this case, there is one old plane (a throwback to the old set), two new Airshow Jets, a service vehicle and a hangar.



The old airplane is a compact acrobatic biplane - the kind of airplane that can write a message in the sky with smoke. The design is very classical, although the colour pattern, in orange and black, looks quite modern. The cabin is closed with a dome and there is a fence over the top wing to place a minifig to do exciting acrobatics.

I really appreciate the effort of the designers on the two jets. Instead of modifying last year's training jet (**60079 - Training Jet Transporter**), they have designed two brand new aerobatic jets, and both jets are completely different.



One of them has the wings at the center of the body, and it has two jet engines and two small tail fins. The jet is red, black and white. It is very interesting to see how the designers have drawn black lines using wedge plates. The tail fins are at around 30° from the vertical line.



The other jet has the wings at the rear of the body and it has one jet engine and one big tail. It has the same colour scheme, although it could have had different colours to give more variety to the set. The cockpit is the same as in the other jet. Just behind the cockpit there are two small stabilizing wings, just in front of the main wings.



The other star of the set is the hangar. It is something completely new in the CITY range. It's an open building, based on a structure built with a mixture of system and technic parts, and covered with plates. The Hangar doesn't have any services or furniture inside. You have plenty of room to put any of the three planes inside of it, add the mechanic with the tool trolley, and repair it. There is also a support vehicle with a fuel pump to refuel the planes.



The set comes with 6 minifigures and they look great: 2 pilots for the jet planes, one male and one female, a pilot and an acrobat for the old plane, one mechanic and one ground crew member. There are two new torsos, one belonging to the jet pilots, and another one belonging to the figures of the old plane. The design and quality of the printing is, as always, impressive.

It is a very good set, the best one in the 2016 Airport sub-theme and with the addition of older sets like **60019 - Stunt plane**, or some of the older Airline exclusive sets, you can reproduce a complete and exciting air show.



One of the surprises of the year was the set **60132 - Service Station**. It has been a long wait since 2007 when the set 7993 - Service Station was released. It was the last service station launched and we have had to wait almost a decade to get a new one. The good thing is that the new version is a completely new design. Nothing from the prior one has been reused.



The gas station has a modern look, and it has services adapted to current automotive technologies. It has two gas pumps. Each pump has different buttons to select fuel or diesel. Nothing new here. But on one side of the gas station building, there is a charging point for electrical cars. The car included with the gas station can be connected to the charging point. Then you can choose whether your car uses fuel or electrical power. Smart! The building has a cashier inside, together with a small restaurant and a LEGO corner, where you can find LEGO sets. Moreover, a board outside the gas station advertises LEGO products and "The LEGO News" newspaper.



The Service Station, for the first time, is not placed on a baseplate. We have seen over the last years that baseplates have disappeared from the LEGO CITY sets. Kim E. Thomsen, from the LCE Team, explained that baseplates are produced by a 3rd party and LEGO prefers to put the models on plates, which are produced by LEGO. I'd prefer a baseplate instead of the current method personally.

Together with the gas station, there are three vehicles and the gas station sign. The car, mentioned before, is a maroon, 4 stud wide, two-seater. It looks like a sports car and it is driven by a woman. There is also a 4WD blue tow truck, 4 studs wide. It is slightly different compared to other tow trucks, but has nothing special to highlight. I can't say the same about the street sweeper. It is a new design, a 2-part body vehicle in yellow. The front part has the cockpit and the sweeper. The rear part, joined to the front one, has the tank for the water and a porter to store the tools. A bicycle is also included in the set.



I think that this is a new and fresh design of the Service Station with lots of playability. It has nicely related to our hobby by including the small LEGO corner and even appealed to sustainability with the charging point.

The Volcano sub-theme is the newest to appear in the CITY range. It includes 6 sets, from a starter set to an Exploration Base. This sub-theme is similar to 2014's Arctic sub-theme, and there are some ideas reused. The colour scheme is lime-green based.



The **60123 - Volcano Supply Helicopter** is a mid-size set. It includes 3 minifigures, one helicopter and one excavator. The helicopter is similar to prior firefighters or Coast Guard helicopters but this doesn't mean that it is a bad design.



The helicopter is quite big and robust. It has the pilot's cabin, a winch, and a rear cabin. It can carry the lava boulders using a hook. It is possible also to put a load in the rear, where there is a ramp that you can unfold.

The excavator has two treads that allow it to move through the mountain and the lava. It includes the cabin, one articulated arm and one hook to pick up the lava boulders. There is also a small boulder rack where you can put the lava boulders and break them to extract the crystal elements.



There are 3 minifigures in the set: a helicopter pilot, a female volcano explorer and a worker. The minifigures are done in olive green and they have new decoration, with lots of tools and safety elements.

The set is not very difficult to build; there are no complicated building techniques. Once the set is built though, it looks very nice, with lots of playability. Perhaps it's a set more for kids to play with than for adult displays, just like the rest of the Volcano sub-theme.



I left the CITY set that generated the most noise for last. As I mentioned at the beginning, the set **60134 - Fun in the Park - City People Pack** was quite popular in the media. Internet sites and newspapers from all over the world were excited about the first LEGO wheelchair... MISTAKE! There have been some brick built wheelchairs in LEGO before, but let's say that it is the first specific LEGO part for a wheelchair.

The set is a compendium of 3 subsets, including 15 minifigures (10 adults, 4 kids and one baby).

The first subset includes 5 minifigures (hot dog seller, businesswoman, two adults and one kid), a hot dog stand with the new hot dog bread, a tiny merry-go-round, a bus stop sign, a bicycle and a tree. In this first subset there is the wheelchair. It includes two new parts, the chair and the big wheels. The minifigure fits perfectly in the wheelchair and it can also be pushed by another minifigure.

The second subset includes 5 minifigures (Grandpa, Grandma, two kids and a park maintenance employee), a bench, a football goal and a fence. There isn't really anything remarkable in this second subset.

A new citizen appears in the last subset: a baby. There was a lot of noise about the wheelchair, but for me the baby has the same level of importance. The baby is a 2 piece minifigure - a body and a head. The baby is placed in a brick-built stroller. There are also 4 more minifigs (father, mother, kid and a gardener). In this subset there is also a picnic table, a dog, a lawn mower, a tree and some food.

The set is a collection of minifigures and some accessories. It is interesting mainly because of the wheelchair and the baby,

although the baby is also available in another colour in the CMF16. The set is expensive for what you get. 15 minifigures and a handful of accessories. I understand that there are some new moulds, but I think that the addition of the baby and the wheelchair has inflated the price, which I think could be 30€ instead of 40€. Anyway it is a very nice set that includes great complements for our cities.

Conclusion

2016 has been a good year for the CITY fans. Renewed sets, new sets, new sub-themes, new moulds... This year you can build a complete city, police, firefighters, airport, gas station, leisure... Looking at the catalog, which combines this year's with last year's sets, we are in one of the best CITY years ever. After some years of lackluster designs, we have an explosion of new sets and new ideas. I am very happy to say that CITY is now returning to the best years of TOWN, with variety and good designs. CREATOR is the perfect complement for houses and some shops. I expect to have more surprises next year. But we will have to wait a little bit more until we will be able to see the new January sets on the net.

I would like to thank LEGO for providing some of the sets for review. The opinions expressed in this review are of course entirely my own.

#

