

Worldwide Collectors of Exclusive Minifigures

By Lluís Gibert

Images by Marc-André Bazergui, William Wong and Shawn Storoe



Marc-André Bazergui's Linked-in LEGO® Style

There is a small group of people whose life is a mess. They try to collect all those minifigures that are not in the regular channels. Minifigures like Employee Business Cards, event and promo related. In the next pages you will understand why they decided to collect them and how they try to improve their collections.

HispaBrick Magazine: Name, country and occupation?

Marc-André Bazergui (BAZ): Montreal, Technical Support Services, IBM Canada (also a freelance consultant working on MINDSTORMS related events and community engagement).

Lluís Gibert (LLG): Barcelona, Software Engineer in automotive industry. Founder and editor of HispaBrick Magazine®.

Shawn Storoe (SS): United States, Software Developer.

William Wong (WW): Hong Kong, Freelancer / Consultant.

HispaBrick Magazine: How did you start with LEGO®?

WW: I started with the set 6522 Highway Patrol as birthday present from my parents. Then continued with LEGO as a hobby for nearly 30 years.

BAZ: I fell back into LEGO in 2004 with the discovery of the MINDSTORMS RCX.

SS: I started with Lego Expert Builder sets in 1978 when I was 9 years old. My parents bought me the 952 Farm Tractor set and I was immediately hooked. I graduated to a few other Expert Builder sets and I eventually received the 956 Expert Builder Auto Chassis on Christmas of 1979 and fell in love with creating gearboxes and creating gear reduction contraptions. I settled on building a six-wheeled car with the two wheels from the tractor and the four wheels from the auto chassis, and I used to push

the chairs around in our dining room. The car moved so slowly and once in a while it would break an axle when I made it too powerful. In my early years, I never had any minifigures.

Once I entered high school a few years later, my love and collecting was focused on comic books and I went into my LEGO® dark age around about 1982.

Flash forward to the year 2000 and I was at Target. My wife and I were looking at playpens for our soon to be born son and I passed the toy aisle and was mesmerized by the most amazing set I had ever seen: The Lego UCS X-Wing fighter. I picked it up and started to walk towards my wife to put it in the cart, but I decided that this would not go well. "Hi Hun, I would like to buy this \$150 Lego set on a whim." I reluctantly put the set down and we went home with our playpen.

However, the damage was done. I thought about the UCS 7191 X-Wing Fighter all night and finally went back in the morning to target at 9 AM and purchased the set. I carefully picked out a perfect box and brought it home where it sat on a shelf and still sits today. I tried to build the set a few times, but I could not tear open the box and I eventually bought a used one on eBay in 2002 which I was able to build. Along with the UCS set, I started to buy all of the other UCS sets and all of the other Star Wars sets as they came out over the years.

At some point, I started organizing and collecting the minifigures into display cases which I placed on the shelves in my office. I carefully inventoried and displayed every Star Wars figure and continued to do this while carefully following the inventory in BrickLink and Minifigs.nl. I collected only Star Wars figures until 2012 when Lego started creating Marvel and DC Super Hero minifigures. At this point I was overwhelmed with just trying to keep track of my Star Wars collection and now I was going to add Super Heroes to the mix. I started collecting rare minifigures when Lego decided to release only 125 copies of the New York Toy Fair Iron Man and Captain America figures. I sat up all night watching eBay and eventually picked a set up for a reasonable price that night, even though it was a lot at the time to pay for a minifigure.

I started having problems keeping track of the figure variants that BrickLink and Brickset did not list on their websites. I decided to create my own list on a website to list all of my figures and that is how the priceguide on www.minifigpriceguide.com was born. It was originally just a list of all of the figures that I owned and then eventually a list of all of the figures that I was also looking for as well. I later started the blog to also talk about the figures that I wanted and would never be able to get. For example the 14K Solid Gold C-3PO.

LLG: I started at the age of six. Due to a lack of mobility in my hands, my parents bought me some sets to help make my hands work. My first set was the 6610 Gas Pump, and this set changed my life forever.



William with Mr. Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen at Skærbæk FanWeekend



Shawn's Life on Mars minifig

HBM: Which was the first minifig of your collection?

LLG: I think my first minifig was Jan Beyer. He gave me his Employee minifig in Ballabio 2009, when these kind of figures were still not as available as they are today.

SS: R2-D2 from the UCS X-Wing Fighter.

WW: Jan Beyer

BAZ: My very special minifigures are certainly those of LEGO Employees. I think my first ones were of Camilla and Henrik from the MINDSTORMS Team when I met them back in 2010 at my first LEGO World event.

HBM: What was the reason to start collecting them?

SS: If I knew that I could possibly control myself. It is a disease and I must attempt to complete the collection at some point in my life. I am not yet coming to terms with the fact that I may not be able to get them all.



BAZ's NASA Minifigure

special people they will have their own personal minifig, and if you can get one from them it means you have had 'special' contact with them, like meeting them at a LEGO fan event, or having a workshop with them or a personal meeting! Each of their minifigs stores very special memory in it.

HBM: What is your main source for special minifigs?

WW: Organising or attending LEGO fans events / workshops / meetings, as LEGO User Group Ambassador.

LLG: I have two main sources. The first one is meetings and interviews I have with different LEGO departments and employees. It's great to see how happy the employees are when they offer you their minifigs. The second source is the fan community. I have established links with several people around the world, and I usually trade minifigures with all these people (some of them are included in this article).

BAZ: Being fortunate to attend events such as LEGO WORLD Copenhagen or WRO or FLL Championship, I get to meet some LEGO Employees and sometimes they have some of the very special business 'cards' in their pocket! But all of my special minifigs I managed to get through networking over the years.

SS: Bricklink, eBay and people on Facebook.

HBM: Which minifig do you like the most from your collection?

SS: The framed Life on Mars minifigure that went to the International Space Station

WW: This is a very difficult question because I really love all my collected minifigs. I love them all! And each of them has a different story behind it! It is my own experience! Like Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen and Jørgen Vig, which I got in 2014 LFW, face to face. Or like the LEGO house worker version I got in 2016 in SFW Monday activity. Or like Tormod, which I got in 2013 in his office.

If I needed to choose one as my most-liked minifig from my collection, I would choose Jan Beyer's one. He was the CEE team manager supervising Asia at that time and the first foreign manager I met in Hong Kong. With his caring and support for the LEGO fan community in Hong Kong, we had a highly developed relationship and the LEGO fan community environment has changed a lot in recent years. He also invited me to attend the LFW in 2013 and truly opened my mindset about LEGO exhibitions and the real LEGO culture. Of course, we had several great times during the years.

BAZ: I'm particularly fond of my Kjeld and Thomas Kirk Kristiansen minifigs. I think it's a big deal to have those as they remind me how far I've come since my LEGO set under the Xmas tree many years ago. I'm very lucky to have met Kjeld several times; he is an extraordinary man. In 2015 at the WRO in Qatar I had the honour to meet his son Thomas.

LLG: Well, it is difficult to choose only one. Of course, I like the first figure very much (the one from Jan Beyer). Actually I have three minifigures of Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, which are a great reminder of the different times I have meet him. The same with many other employees and events.

BAZ: When you start getting those unique minifigs there is no doubt they belong in a class apart from any LEGO you might have laying around. I later received one from Tormod, Jan Beyer and Kevin Hinkle :) I Also started to collect minifigs from events or LUGs such as the very cool HispaBrick guy, the LUG Ambassador dude, our QUELUG mascot, Brickfête, CinéBrique, LEGO World event minifigs and so on...

LLG: After the first figure, I got a minifig from Skaerbaek 2009 when attending the event, and during the same event I was lucky enough to get my second 'employee': Mr. Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen. I think this unique minifig was the reason to start collecting. If I was lucky enough to get this fig, why not try to get more of them? After some visits to Billund and attending other events, my collection started to grow and then I couldn't go back :)

WW: As you know, in Asia we have few chances to contact or meet with the management-grade people from TLG. For



Shawn's Collection



William's collection

But perhaps the ones I most like are not official minifigures. They are my custom printed LEGO Ambassador minifigures. I was LEGO Ambassador on Cycles 5, 6 and 7 (Mar 2007 - Dec 2010) and also one year on LAN. It was one of my greatest times as an AFOL, and everytime I see them I can only show a smile on my face. Of course they are not the rarest or most special ones, but there is no minifig that stores more memories for me than those ones.

HBM: What are you most proud of regarding your collection?

BAZ: I call my collection LinkedIn LEGO Style ;) I'm very proud to have so many of these unique minifigs. I'm also very proud of my own created event prints as well as my collection of printed 2x2 tiles (on homemade 2x2 brick magnets).

I'm also proud to have convinced the owner of this site <http://www.minifigpriceguide.com/EMPLOYEES.0.html> to remove the default \$50 value on all LEGO Employee minifigs. I'm happy to see now "Not Sold Anywhere" instead of a price tag ;)

WW: Of course it is the LEGO Fan Weekend 10th year Anniversary minifig and the Skaerbaek Fan Weekend 1st Anniversary minifig. It is not easy for Asian AFOLs to attend a European fan event with flying for more than 12 hours from Hong Kong. It was truly a great experience when I first attended in 2013. Due to different types of building styles, the experience in LFW is totally different from the events in Asia. I was so surprised when I could attend again in 2014, hold a workshop, show my MOCs and get the great LEGOLAND train set as a 10th anniversary prize, although we had the news saying that TLG would no longer be organizing the fan weekend.

However, with the fans' passion and hard work from several people, the fan weekend transformed to become Skaerbaek Fan Weekend. Continuing with the culture, the AFOLs, the great MOCs, everything became better and greater! And this is a must-see LEGO fan event. I am truly proud that as an Asian LEGO fan I have attended the event from 2013 - 2016 and been a part of it.

LLG: I have a very decent collection and I don't really spend money on it. My collection is based on getting the minifigures directly from the source (employees, events and/or AFOLs), and also trading them. I only bought some of the LEGOWorld minifigures, and one fake version of Mr. Gold (I was not lucky enough to get it), but the \$40 I paid went to Creations For Charity. In the end, it was not a bad deal. So I am happy to have my collection 'almost' for free.

But coming back to my previous answers, most of my minifigures come with a story, and I am happy to have had many LEGO experiences which are condensed in several cases with some plastic mini-men. If my collection keeps growing in the next few years, it will mean I have met a lot of wonderful people with the same passion for LEGO bricks. What more can I ask for?



Marc-André Bazergui

SS: My favorite thing about collecting all of these minifigures is the research and the hunt that goes into finding all of them. So I am most proud of the figures that gave me the longest hunt to find. A few examples are the International Space Station figure mentioned earlier, Zach the Lego Maniac Minifigure and Lego Mr Gold.

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