

# Interview: Cecilie Fritzvold

By Kockice



Cecilie Fritzvold is one of the prominent builders from Brikkelauget, and one of the not so many FFOLs (Female Fan of LEGO®) around the world. Her creative work stuns many of us in the community so we were eager to talk to her.

**Kockice:** Cecilie, welcome! First things first, tell us something about yourself.

**Cecilie Fritzvold:** My name is Cecilie, I am 33 years old and I come from Norway. My LEGO® hobby is funded by my job as a software developer. I am a member of the Norwegian LUG Brikkelauget, for which I am the ambassador and part of the steering group.

**K:** What is your earliest recollection of having LEGO® – maybe you remember your first LEGO® set?

**CF:** I have been a fan of LEGO® for as long as I can remember. My parents bought me a whole lot of DUPLO and later LEGO® sets. One of the first LEGO® sets I can remember owning is the yellow airport (6392) which was released in 1985. Although I suspect I was a little older than two years old when I got it, I'm pretty sure I had this set from a very young age. I later passed through all the stages of LEGO® sets through to Technic and MINDSTORMS, before leaving my LEGO® behind when I moved out and went to university.

**K:** So the common 'dark age' didn't pass you by? Usually there is a story around the return to LEGO. Can you share yours with us?

**CF:** My dark age lasted through my days of being a poor student, but I never stopped having this special connection to the brick. Sometimes I would go to a local toy store that used to have some larger LEGO® displays in their window, and just look at those, or grab a catalogue when nobody was watching. But a couple of years after I had gotten my first job, I came across a LEGO® X-wing on one of my toy store escapades. I went back to look at that set several times before I finally caved in and bought it, deciding I could spend my money anyway I wanted to now. But it was still another year after that before I took my second step towards being a true AFOL. For some reason I randomly went online to search for images of a large LEGO® model that had been on display outside the cafeteria at my university the last couple of years of my studies, and which I had admired every time I had passed it to go get lunch. And after looking at those images online for a while, I just decided that this was what I wanted to do. Create cool stuff out of LEGO® bricks. This was in December, so I decided to ask my brother for LEGO® for Christmas that year, and he delivered! After that it quickly went downhill, as it didn't take me long to realize I needed a lot of LEGO® bricks to be able to create all the stuff that my brain was able to think up. That was now a little over seven years ago, and I have created a lot of MOCs in that timeframe.

**K:** What drives you to create? Looking at your MOCs, the inspiration seems to be flying all over different themes.

**CF:** My drive to create comes from many sources. For one I really enjoy having this outlet for creativity through LEGO® bricks. Seeing what it is possible to do. But I also really enjoy being able to create things that come from my other interests, such as characters or scenes from video games I enjoy. Which is why I often build stuff that is recognizable from some media source. But I also enjoy creating something original, it all depends on what I'm feeling like at the moment. I also have quite a competitive mind, so I enjoy the thrill and challenges provided by entering MOC contests, and that also drives my creativity quite a lot, being bound by the limitations and rules of a contest and trying to be creative within those limits.

**K:** Can you describe to us a typical process around a certain idea?

**CF:** When working on a MOC, I usually have a pretty clear idea in my head for how I want it to look, although the end result might not always end up like that! I usually search for images online for inspiration but I don't do a lot of sketching. Sometimes I might draw a rough sketch or outline if I feel like I need it, but mostly I will just build. I also rarely use digital building tools.

**K:** Do you aim to inspire or create a sense of wonder with your MOCs?

**CF:** My process of creating is very much driven by wanting the result to be as accurate and visually pleasing as possible. I don't try especially to be creative with the parts usage, but I try as hard as I can to find the best part possible for a certain purpose, which will often lead to creative parts usage. I am quite the perfectionist, so sometimes it can be hard to accept that I have to compromise on some detail to be able to finish a build. I don't mind using 'illegal' building techniques, but I do consider myself a purist in that I don't want to modify parts or use non-LEGO® elements in my builds, although I can't hide that it has happened a couple of times.

**K:** To be able to create as much as you do, do you buy lots of LEGO? Would you say your collection is big?

**CF:** I do buy quite a lot of LEGO, both as sets and loose parts. I have quite a backlog of unsorted LEGO! But I also have a pretty sizeable sorted collection. People who visit me tend to agree that I have a lot of LEGO.

**K:** With all this variety of themes, do you have a special one, a favourite one?

**CF:** I don't really have a favourite theme; I'll build anything and everything, from Space to Castle to pop culture and beyond.

**K:** As previously mentioned, your work is stunning to a lot of people in the Community. That also means bloggers and magazines. How did the blogging start?

**CF:** I didn't get blogged so much in my first years as an AFOL, but lately, as my building skills have improved, I have had quite a few of my MOCs featured on LEGO® blogs, which I find to be a great honour. One thing I have improved a lot on over the years is my photography and the presentation of my MOCs, and this I think is also part of why I have been blogged more lately. Good presentation sells a MOC much better. I always try to find the best angle to photograph my MOC from, and a background colour that works well with the colours of the MOC.

**K:** Is there something you don't see yourself building?

**CF:** There are probably many things I don't like building, but I will never say never on anything. Some things that currently don't interest me in terms of building are GBCs and mosaics. GBCs put a lot of stress on the bricks and I'd much rather build interesting movement into my regular MOCs than to just move balls from A to B. Mosaics I just don't find challenging enough, as most of the ways of creating mosaics come down to using computer software to figure out how to build the image, and then just putting down the parts in a grid. I find it much more interesting to have to experiment with various different parts, and I quickly get bored covering a large area with basic parts. Although I do acknowledge that there are some really good mosaics out there that have taken a lot of work, it's just not a type of work that I think I would personally enjoy.

**K:** Which MOC of yours would you say was the most challenging one?

**CF:** Every MOC is challenging in its own way, although some do present challenges greater than others. It's hard to say which has been the most challenging overall, but of my most recent MOCs, I'd say the sushi bar (Itadakimasu!) that I created as my final build for Iron Builder has been the most challenging, mostly due to wanting the sushi conveyer belt to actually move around. This turned out to be a lot harder than I thought it would be, as I needed it to not only work, but also look good, and I had to do it in a very short amount of time. Once I had a prototype working, I thought it would be smooth sailing from there, but for every part I added to try and make it look good, I created a new problem with the movement that I had to solve. The whole build was made in about four evenings worth of work, including a very late night on the last day to get all the last details in place and make the photo and video (I wasn't in bed until 4 a.m.!)



*"Itadakimasu!" built for "Iron Builder"*

**CF:** With getting well-deserved appraisal for your MOCs, you've been approached by the community for collaborations. Can you tell us something about that experience?

**CF:** I have participated in a few collaborations, from the StarCraft collaboration to participating in the Eurobricks collaboration for Brickworld the last 5 years. Those are all coordinated online as the different contributors live around the world. Of course, this is a challenge, as we have to make sure everything comes together on site, but it all comes down to defining standards for scale and connections that we can all use to make sure everything will fit together.



*StarCraft Group Project*

**K:** Recently, you were chosen for the Iron Builder competition, a month long head-to-head competition between two builders. Just reading about it sounds stressful. How was it from your point of view, as a contestant?

**CF:** Participating in Iron Builder was a very thrilling but also exhausting experience. Having to be creative and build at a high pace every day puts quite a strain on the brain, and sleeping was not in abundance during that month! The first week or so, however, it was not much of a problem, as I had a lot of adrenaline driving me, but as the contest progressed, it became harder to stay motivated and keep going. I wasn't lacking in ideas, but I was at one point lacking in ideas for builds that really interested me, and that hurts the motivation and quality of the builds. I also had to push my limits in terms of what I thought I could build, and I had several creations during that month which were far outside my comfort zone. But in a way, it's all part of the fun, and I am happy to have been able to participate in this. It has probably been my biggest challenge as a builder yet!

**K:** Taking into consideration your previously mentioned trips to Chicago, you can be found on many international gatherings of AFOLs. Did you sometimes stop and think you could use that money to get more LEGO? And do you have a favourite event?

**CF:** I enjoy travelling to events around the world, as this has enabled me to meet many people I otherwise would have only known online, and also make a lot of new friends, in fact some of my best friends. It's also interesting to see how events are being done around the world, and to bring some of those experiences back with me to my own LUG. I would never consider dropping events so I could buy more LEGO, and frankly, I think it's wise of me not to buy more LEGO® than I already do anyway, as I am running out of space! My favourite event is probably Brickworld in Chicago, mostly because of all the people I have gotten to know there and who I enjoy hanging out with very much, but also because it's a great event for AFOLs. It's quite a long trip to make from Norway though! But it has been well worth it to me.

**K:** Listening to you, it would seem that everything goes as smooth as you plan. Is that actually the case? Or do you sometimes find yourself 'overly' challenged or limited?

**CF:** I regularly meet challenges I think I can't overcome. Sometimes I just need a good night's sleep or to think about something else for a while to get past the hurdle and figure it out, and other times I will end up giving up for quite a while before being able to come back to it and figure it out.

**K:** So maybe new elements would be helpful?

**CF:** As an AFOL there are always new parts I'd like to see, or parts I'd like in more colors, but if the part you want doesn't exist, there's usually another way the problem can be solved!

**K:** Any unfinished projects?

**CF:** I do have some half-finished builds lying around that may or may not ever be completed. The limitations sometimes come from a lack of parts in the colors I need, but most often they come from my own negative thinking that I can't solve something, so I just need to come back to it with a more positive mindset another day.

**K:** Have you considered 'getting out' of the hobby part with LEGO? There are a few MOCs you've created for your family and friends. Maybe in the near future we might see your commissioned work?

**CF:** I have built gifts for some of my closest family members a few times, to very positive responses. But I wouldn't gift something built out of LEGO® to someone I didn't know would appreciate it. I have also built gifts for some AFOL friends. But I don't see myself making a living out of LEGO. It is a hobby and something I use to unwind from my job and any other stresses in my life, and I'd like to keep it that way.

**K:** To wrap things up, maybe you have some tips for all of us out there in the Community?

**CF:** The most important thing for improving one's building skills is to keep building and not be discouraged by what other people are building. And presentation is important, so think about how you want to present your MOC while you build it, and don't let the photos be an afterthought.

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