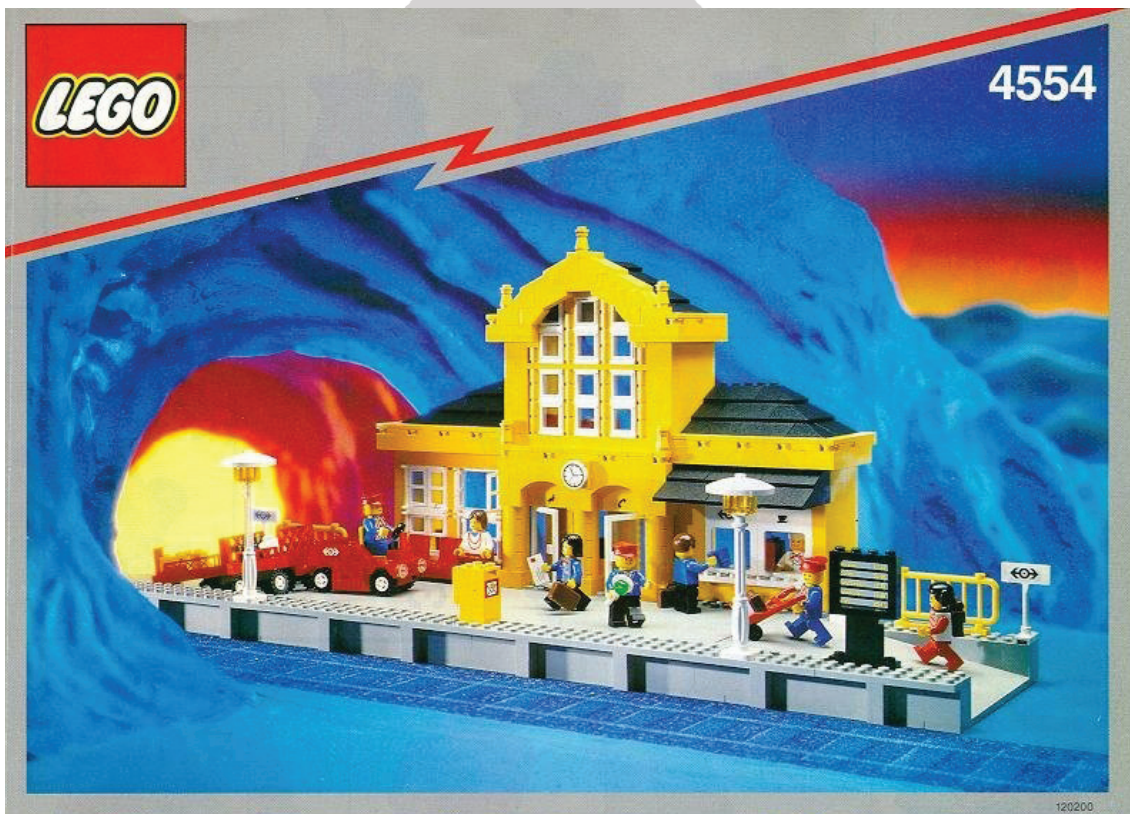


Remembering 9V

All aboard!

By Vicente Lis

Images by Vicente Lis and Brickset



More than 25 years ago, and lasting for more than a decade, LEGO® brought to the market a new collection of sets dedicated to the railway world. This sub-theme has remained in everyone's memory as 9V (9 volts).

This new system was the replacement for the 12 and 4.5 volt systems that were in the LEGO® catalog for 20 years, until 1986. The new 9V system improved the way trains worked, since (unlike the 4.5V which used batteries) this new system took its power from the rails which were connected to a 9V transformer/regulator, without any need for central rails as was the case with the 12V system. But the biggest change was the design of the rolling stock and other railway material.

In this series of nostalgia articles, the most outstanding sets of 9V system will be remembered, beginning in this article with the beautiful 4554 Metro Station.

The Metro Station is probably the best train station that LEGO® has ever designed. It was released in 1991 and contains approximately 600 pieces and 8 minifigures, with a selling price of about €75.

The set is an easy build, with the instruction manual not exceeding 25 pages. This kind of construction is what nostalgic LEGO® fans remember from old sets, without numbered parts bags or call-out boxes indicating the pieces needed for each step. That means opening the bags, mixing all the pieces together, and then guessing the parts added in each step of the instructions before having to search and rummage through all of them. Oh the memories... that noise of the parts moving from one place to another of the drawer while looking for the corresponding piece...

The main part of the assembly is the station building, which is complemented with the platform and the luggage vehicle. The station building has four rooms: the waiting room, the main hall, the coffee shop and tickets area, with windows to the outside of the facade, and upstairs, the railway control room. The set is open at the back to increase playability and to recreate different scenes within the station.

The set has eight minifigures, which for the size of the set may look like enough, but there are certainly none to spare. It must be remembered that in those years the minifigures all had the same face – the standard smiling face – so the character and personality were entirely given by the torso and what covered their heads. Those were good times... There is the chef, who is in charge of the station's coffee shop, three passengers (the man with the briefcase, the girl with a backpack and those curious pigtails, and the woman with a necklace), and four station employees (two operators with red striped torsos, a sales clerk, and the station manager).



Some minifigures of the set 4554

Despite the simplicity of the assembly, which consists mainly of raising the building's perimeter, there are many details which enhance this set; such as the simple but very aesthetic finishes of the cornices, or the access stairs to the first floor, especially if one considers that most building sets of that time did not communicate between floors. And of course there are other details like the flowers, the information panel, and the lampposts.



Front Façade



Rear Façade

In 1996 LEGO® released a set that was a red version of the same station (2150), but it has not reached the hearts of fans in the same way as this one. This is a pity as it is a hard-to-get set, and quite expensive on the second hand market. So although it qualifies as a 'must have', unless LEGO® decides to do a re-release (or a similar set with the current techniques, just saying...) this set will have to remain on the wish-list of many fans.



In short, the aesthetics of the building's facade reminds you of countless classic train stations, and that is where the success of this set lies. The two-story façade with the clock in the middle, the gabled roof, and the central body finishing in a front arch in front of the gabled roof, together with the colour combination of a yellow façade with black roofs, make this set one of the most beloved of fans.

See you at our next stop on this railroad trip around the 9V system.

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