

Review: 41314 - Stephanie's House

By Jetro de Château

Images by Richard Jones and LEGO® System A/S

Stephanie's is the 3rd of the Friends houses. As an adult I particularly like these houses because they include the Friend's parents as well, adding to the mix of diverse minidolls. Stephanie's parents are Alice and James. The stylish glasses on Alice's face are a nice touch; there are only a few minidoll heads with glasses available. Her hairstyle is also more adult as she features a nice short(ish) sideways sweep. James's torso is my favourite piece for this minidoll, but then who doesn't love sand green? His face is possibly a little young to be Stephanie's father, but we can all dream, can't we? Unfortunately, there is nothing new about Stephanie herself.



I am torn about the instruction book(let). There is a trend of producing single volume instruction books rather than including two or more booklets for larger builds. I see both advantages and disadvantages. The larger, single-volume books are frequently packed in their own bag (as is the case in this set), meaning they will arrive in perfect condition – no dog-ears or worse before you even open the box. On the downside, if there is more than one person involved in the build (I often have two builders engaged at the same time) this makes it harder to share the instructions. Fortunately, there are digital instructions available online, although the colour and definition of those instructions is usually quite poor. In this case however, they were fine and we could work on different parts of the house at the same time.



The sticker sheet is bundled with the book and has some cool prints that are used mostly to liven up the interior of the house. This means that most of the pieces which receive stickers are either panels or tiles. The panels are easily reused in alternative builds that won't immediately show the sticker (remember, it's on the inside) and the tiles are decorative elements (a doormat, a bed cover and a sofa seat) that liven up the house.

They will be much appreciated by the primary audience and help tell the story around the house. The really important decorations are printed on the parts themselves. This is especially nice in the case of the bay window, but we'll get there...

The build itself is split into five parts and there is one numbered bag for each stage, plus a bag with large plates for each floor of the house. **Bag one** builds the right side of the ground floor,



with the dining room/kitchen, and contains the beautiful bay window. As you may already have read in the interview with the Friends designers, this was a feature they really wanted to include in this house, but the original bay window was too closed. This was improved in the second concept for this set, using hinges. Unfortunately, that made the build a lot more complex. The new design – using a new Door Frame 4x4x6 corner, which was new in 2017 – allows you to look into (and out of) the dining room and the printed window panes make it something special. Three window panes are used for the bay window and another three appear in different parts of this same set. Bag one also contains Stephanie's rabbit and pieces to build a hutch for it, adding to the overall play experience.



Bag two contains the parts for the other half of the ground floor. In contrast with Olivia's house, the ground floor is not split into two modules, and this allows for a separate hall area in the middle of the build. The swing on the veranda is another feature of the house that was present from the very first concept. It has been streamlined, widened to allow space for all three characters, and panels with center dividers have been added to make sure they won't fall off. The fence on this side of the build was also removed to allow better access to the swing.



Bag three is mostly decoration: cupcakes, kitchen tools and other finishes for the ground floor. It adds a winding staircase in lavender, built with two large staircase sections. This section is built on a separate plate and attaches to the structure of the house with hinges, giving the house a little more depth. The TV is placed on that same plate so the living room can be opened to allow better access and more playability. The vacuum cleaner is the signature piece for this build and of course the perfect place to store it is under the stairs!



Bags four and five are used to build the two upstairs sections, and again we see a number of elements that were inherited from the original concept builds. The bay window almost requires a balcony to top it off. A hot tub that appeared in an earlier version has been removed – it had already been used in the Heartlake Hotel – just like the barbecue that was present in a number of other sets. Stephanie's bedroom is still recessed one stud from the rest of the build, creating space for the balcony without losing space in her room. A lot of the decoration in this room depends on stickers. A picture of Stephanie with Chili (her pet rabbit), a calendar on the wall, a shelf with trophies and a mirror on another wall, the bed cover...

The stickers really make the place come together, but I am left wondering if this couldn't have been achieved with fewer stickers and one or two more brick-built details, as could be seen in some of the concept builds. Overall it should be said though that one thing that stands out in the progression from concept to final model is how in general the rooms have become less cluttered and easier to access. The gable roof on top of the bedroom is a separate section, which is handy if you want to store the set.



In the second upstairs module the bathtub from the concept builds has given way to a shower, creating space for a study area. I feel this is a big improvement. Oddly enough this means that in this particular case while there are now more (different) play elements available than in the concept builds, the final result is still more sleek. The bathroom still has a washbasin, a toilet and a shower with hot and cold taps and a bottle of

shampoo. There is also a very large and transparent window in the bathroom – an odd choice, considering there is no shower curtain, but seen from the outside it makes sense with the rest of the façade. The study includes a computer and a large sticker with a map of the world. It looks like Stephanie is planning a holiday. The swivel chair at Stephanie's desk is a nice touch, even if it is really hard to get a minidoll to sit on it (and not fall off).



Conclusions

Overall Stephanie's house is a nice addition to the suburbs of Heartlake City. It has a distinctive style and colour palette and a clear, modern interior. There are too many stickers for my liking, but you can always choose not to apply them. Still, the overall level of brick detail is good. There are also plenty of play features in the house. I particularly like the depth created by the addition of a staircase, the swing, and the space for the balcony – a result of combining the space on top of the bay windows and recessing the bedroom. But where do the parents sleep? Well, that is up to you to build!

I would like to thank the LEGO® AFOL Relations & Programs Team for providing the set for review. However, LEGO® does not approve nor endorse the opinions we publish about their sets.

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