

Interview: LEGO® Technic

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Images by HispaBrick Magazine®



During the LEGO® Fan Media Days in Billund we had a chance to meet up with a former collaborator of HispaBrick Magazine®, **Milan Reindl**. He is now a designer for LEGO® Technic. He was accompanied by **Samuel Tacchi** and together they answered a number of questions about LEGO® Technic.

HBM: Thank you for taking the time to talk to us. Can you tell us a little about yourselves?

ST: My name is Samuel, and I'm the freshman in LEGO® Technic. I came in last year in January so I've been here for a year and a half now. I trained as an industrial designer focussing on vehicle design – cars, motorcycles boats, etc. Before working here, I was a motorcycle designer and a LEGO® enthusiast.

HBM: How did you make it into LEGO®?

ST: I saw online that they were offering a position. I was invited to do a workshop here in Billund. We were about 40 people

at the LEGO®LAND Hotel. At the end, we received a task to do at home. We were given some bags and we had to invent and create a model in two months. We then had to present this model in front of everyone.

MR: My name is Milan, I'm from the Czech Republic and I've been with the LEGO® Group for five years. I used to be a teacher and was one of the Czech AFOLs showing LEGO® Technic based creations online and at exhibitions.

HBM: The transition from AFOL to LEGO® Designer... How much does your world change in terms of your hobby?

MR: The pace slowed down somewhat, but there are moments when I still build like crazy at home, even though I am not able to show everything I build. What changes is the approach; your standards change so much, the way you build and think, how you combine different elements and the way you introduce different element colours in the volume of the set. When you are an AFOL, you are not restricted by any rules,



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Technic designers Milan and Samuel with Vintage Technic sets

so you can build a whole model in a single colour and don't have to worry about anyone being able to recreate it after you. When you become a Technic designer, you have to take care of those people who want to build it after you design it. You need to make sure they get the best possible build and play experience. For example, they shouldn't need to spend a lot of time trying to find an element and end up not finishing the model because they couldn't find it. They should really enjoy what they are doing and what you were passionate about when you designed the set. Different rules apply and you have to learn loads of them. The standards for stability are also very different. As an AFOL, you sometimes arrange bits so they look nice in a photo, but when you grab the model, it might fall apart. This cannot happen with a LEGO® Technic model. The model needs to be playable, sturdy and functional after repeated use.

HBM: Can a LEGO® designer also be an AFOL?

MR: Yes. I am the perfect example. I'm still following fan forums every morning.



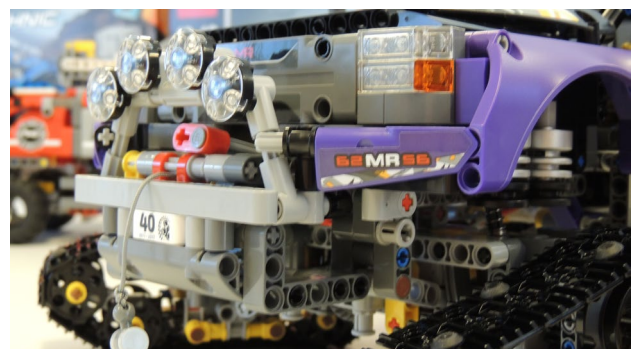
HBM: What was the learning curve like when you got here?

ST: It was very steep. The first project I was part of was the BMW bike, particularly the B model. We have to offer the best experience we possibly can. I think it took me a year to create my first model in LEGO® Technic, and that is coming up in January. That's an important achievement for me! I knew how to follow the building instructions, but when you are creating

the model, you have to think about how to build it. All the team around you gives you input and then you start seeing it all come together.

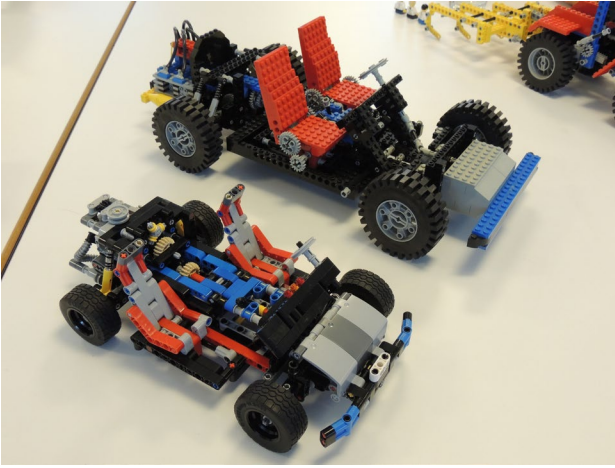
HBM: What inspired LEGO® Technic to choose these models for 2H2017?

MR: Offering something new that we hadn't done before. We haven't had a fire truck for ages and we have never had the Airport Rescue Vehicle. That's why this model was chosen. As for the extreme adventure, we haven't done a proper 4x4 vehicle in quite some time, and never on tracks, and we never pushed the limit as far as we did with this one. This set is more about enjoying the pieces and building many functions into the model with lots of attention to detail, whereas the All-Terrain Tow Truck is more about the immersive play experience with RC Power Functions. It also has a quite complex gearbox to change between the functions, and all the functions are controlled by the motors.



HBM: There are no licence plates on these models?

MR: That was a trend for 2017. The 40th anniversary brick kind of asks to be used as a licence plate and that's what I did with the homage model. In that model I have used it three times, as a front and rear licence plate and also as a stamp on the chassis on the bottom. We wanted to use the commemorative brick in a cool way and that's why these two models (42069 and 42070) also use it as a licence plate.



HBM: What are you doing to celebrate 40 years of LEGO® Technic?

MR: First of all, there is a commemorative brick in all the boxes for 2017. During Easter, we launched the building instructions for the homage 8860 Car chassis from 1980 and there is social media content, a poster and stuff like that.

HBM: What is your all-time favourite LEGO® Technic model?

MR: Mine is the second control centre with the dinosaur. It was released in my dark ages, but when I was doing research for the 40th anniversary celebration and looking for the coolest sets in the eyes of AFOLs, I realised that was the coolest set and I got a copy right away. It's pure joy to play with. It has very diverse models. Aside from the dinosaur, there is a hovercraft and a helicopter simulator. It's all I could ask for.

ST: My favourite is probably the black supercar with 4-wheel steering, the 8880, that I built with my cousin back in the day. He is a really big fan of LEGO® Technic and I think he brought me into this. I really have to thank him very much. I think the 8880 was the first Technic model I built as a kid.

HBM: How do you decide what the licence plate on any model is going to be?

MR: Usually it uses the initials of the lead designer of the set plus the SKU number (the number on the box), but sometimes we hide some special messages for family members or other people that are special to us. Or it could be something that is special to the designer, like a birth date.

ST: It's our final touch.

HBM: The 42056 Porsche was one of the bestselling sets for 2016. What do you think made it such a popular set?

MR: Overall I think it's because it appeals not only to Porsche owners and enthusiasts, but also to anyone who likes cars and anyone who likes LEGO® Technic. In addition, it looks really cool. There has been a lot of media attention; we could not have asked for something better. Everyone was sharing it online when the model was announced. There was a lot of hype about it. It's territory we hadn't explored before. We hadn't done such a huge supercar ever before, nor in such an exclusive packaging as we did for the Porsche. The care for both brands in the marketing campaign that went with the set also showed that they fitted together so well. And it is the first time a really immersive LEGO® Technic experience has been linked together with a licensed car.

ST: A lot of my friends have this set because they are car enthusiasts. The set appealed to a lot of people who were not into LEGO® or LEGO® Technic before. The box is just beautiful, really, and I've put it behind the model where I have it on display. So it's the whole experience behind the model that is exciting.



HBM: New elements?

MR: They were all used in the first half. Recolours of panels; colour on the all terrain tow truck. Completely new blue.

HBM: The wheel arches are very nice parts, but how much sense do purple wheel arches make to the assortment for AFOLs?

MR: The LEGO® Technic product line isn't targeted just at adult fans. We are mostly here for the kids, and this is what appeals to them right now. If you have a vehicle that is called Extreme Adventure then it should really be extreme – in colours, functions and everything. That's why we picked a colour in which we only had a few parts in the past. With the introduction of the purple panels in the Race Kart (42048) last year, this was a logical step to follow up. And this is what we tend to do: if we launch a set in a particular colour you can pretty much expect the same elements to be used later on and also additional elements in the same colour. That's what happened with the Hot Rod (42022) in 2014. You got a few light blue panels. Then those were used on the Street Motorcycle (42036) in 2015 and this year there have been plenty of recolours in light blue in the Air Race Jet (42066). We tend to not waste what we started when it comes to new elements, so sooner or later you might see the wheel arches in different colours as well.

HBM: It is also good to see the large tires that came on the Claas Xerion tractor (42054) being reused on the All-Terrain Tow Truck (42070).

MR: Although they come from a licenced set, they were designed as generic tractor tires. There is no Claas LOGO on the tire. The wheel arches first appeared in the Porsche set, but again, there is no Porsche logo on them so we have reused them. The Porsche rims however are specific to Porsche, to add extra authenticity. Plus, it is an important icon of the real car – like how you would have a proper-looking Darth Vader helmet in a Star Wars model. On the whole we try to make sure that we create generic elements that we can reuse in the future.

HBM: Do the axles in new colours make your life easier when you are designing a set?

MR: Yes. We received a number of calls where people were missing 7 or 9 module axles in a build and the other length had extra spares. This is because people tend to mix them up. That's why the decision was made that you can have two colours to choose from to make things easier for the designers and for the target consumers. Sometimes it also opens new possibilities to expose the cross axles in the new colour where you would have hidden it in the original colour. If you have a yellow model, for instance, then you could use the yellow cross axles for visible parts and make it more visually appealing.

HBM: Are there any functions you especially like or are particularly proud of in the new sets?

MR: I'm really proud of the doors on the Extreme Adventure set. That's the best part of it. I think it is one of the coolest mechanisms we have done in

LEGO® Technic. There have been similar kinds of doors, but they have never rotated around the a-pillar and dropped the running board as well. The roof tent is also a great function and the winch has been done in a different way. I thought, why not do it like in real life? You just release it and take it as far as you need and afterwards the only thing you do is wind it back.

HBM: Supposing I had to choose between the Extreme Adventure and the All-Terrain Tow Truck, it is going to be a really tough choice.

MR: They are different and they offer a different play experience. The Extreme Adventure is purely manual, trying to show functions that we didn't do before. The All-Terrain Tow Truck is more about having fun with remote controlled functions.

ST: I think the Extreme Adventure is the model I enjoyed most. I built it with Milan at a certain point and I enjoyed it very much. I said I would get this model as soon as it is in the shop.

HBM: For people who are not very much into Technic, what would you say to recommend it?

MR: If you are interested in authenticity and how things work, in things that function as they do in real life, and you are interested in the challenge of building something that is more complicated than a regular system model, then give it a try. And if you don't like the main model you can always rebuild it, because we provide instructions for a second model as well.

ST: LEGO® Technic is a great experience. It can be really inspiring to build a model that actually moves. You can see for example a crane on the street and you can build one out of LEGO® Technic. It's a good door to open.

MR: You always learn something. Even being part of the LEGO® Technic design team, when you build a model that a colleague has designed you learn something new.

HBM: WeDo and Boost have introduced LEGO® Power Functions 2.0. Why is Technic still using the 'old' Power Functions?

MR: Right now Power Functions 1 is definitely sufficient for what we need. We of course try to evolve. If we didn't Technic would still look like the original 8860, with studded bricks that are not even part of the Technic platform. We don't know if and when anything is going to happen, but we always try to look ahead and ensure the best play experience possible.

HBM: When did you start designing the models for 2017.

MR: That pretty much depended on the size of the model. It can vary, depending on the size and complexity of the model.
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