

CITY 2020



by Lluís Gibert

One more year we will analyse some CITY sets from 2020, to take the pulse of the line.

I could say there is “nothing new under the sun”. Policemen, firemen and vehicles. But there is something new and worrying in my opinion:

Juniorisation: I see the police station and I notice simplicity, too much. The construction site looks empty. Four walls (well 3) and something inside. And I think the problem is in the 4 walls. There is nothing that makes the building “nice”. Straight lines, simple, square. . .

Too much emphasis on vehicles and not enough on buildings. I think many of us were looking forward to seeing the new service station. And when the first images arrived. . .the great

disappointment. A fuel pump post and a tiny shop, which doesn't even have a roof. And what to say about the sign announcing the gas station. . . Honestly, it's something a five-year-old could have designed.

The same happens with other sets, such as the one that reproduces the bank robbery, which is again three simple walls with something inside. The Monster truck is bigger than the bank, which barely has a table, a chair and some safety boxes.

Although it is true that some vehicles are interesting, such as the ice cream truck or the street sweeper, what I see is that too much importance is given to vehicles, and little (or very little) importance is given to buildings. I don't know if the CITY team has many designers of vehicles and few (or none) of buildings, but the reality is that there is a decline in the line that

is beginning to remind me of times that I prefer to forget.

I will end the introduction with another comment, perhaps more local, but which I fear may happen in more markets and which alienates potential buyers: price. Two of the sets I will comment on below are 25% more expensive in Spain than in countries where the economy works better. As a customer, I would feel cheated paying 25 €, for example, for the helicopter set 60248, which we will also see doesn't fly. There is hardly any building work and if the recommended price in Germany (20 €) already seems to me to be too high, the 25 € price in Spain is simply an insult. In general, many prices in Spain are above the European average and this only scares off potential parents as it gives the impression that it is becoming a toy for the rich.



First semester

We are going to see three sets with vehicles from this first semester, since I did not consider any of the sets with buildings interesting enough.

60248 • Fire Helicopter Response

When I saw the first images of the set, I was very curious about it. A helicopter that flies! I had had a toy like this as a child, and I was interested to see how it worked. The reality? It doesn't fly.

The helicopter consists of four pieces: a one-piece chassis, the front glass, the propeller and the tail made of a plastic sheet. Only one minifig fits inside the helicopter.

The set includes a quad and a small accessory.

In flight tests, with the strength of an adult, the helicopter falls to the ground. Although it falls "on its feet", in my opinion it does not meet expectations. The problem lies in the size of the propellers. The diameter is too small and no matter how fast they turn, they do not generate enough lift to fly for a couple of seconds.

60251 • Monster Truck

It seems that LEGO likes monster trucks, as we have had many types over the last few years. This one complements the one launched in 2014 (60055). I was surprised by the colour scheme, which coincides more with the Hidden Side theme than with CITY.

The construction is quite simple, and does not present a great challenge even for a young child. The model, once assembled, looks great. It has no special function and it is missing a ramp or some accessory to create an obstacle.

It is an eye-catching vehicle, and the advantage is that, even if it does not have any accessories, with these large wheels it can go over any obstacle that is built with four slopes that we have at home.



60256 • Racing Cars

This set includes two racing cars. In my opinion, one of them is the complement to set 60053 (Le Mans 24-hour car), and the other is the complement to set 60113 (Rally car). I think it is good that they have put both cars in one box, as it provides more possibilities of building and creating alternative models than with just one car.

In this case the vehicles are quite well made. They have beautiful lines, inspired by real racing cars. The colours are also nice, different from the typical "Octan" green, and red. In fact, in the endurance car we find the Octan logo with a new colour scheme, read cyan and orange, which corresponds to the electric car division, or Octan-e.

To put a but, in the resistance car I see that at the back of the front wing there is a gap. I don't know if it's a budget issue but the car looks incomplete to me. It lacks something. Regarding the rally car, I have to say that the car is nice, but the air intake completely covers the view to the driver, and it looks a bit strange.



Second Semester

You know from other articles I have written that the second semester usually offers us different sets than vehicles, police and firemen. In the past we have seen subjects such as the airport, the farm, mining, underwater exploration, space. . .

This year we have had a pleasant surprise in the form of collaboration with National Geographic on a series of ocean exploration sets. According to the press release, "New LEGO® City and LEGO® Friends sets have been developed to raise awareness about exploring and protecting endangered species in the world's forests and oceans."

60266 • Ocean Exploration Ship

This set is the star of the theme, a large ocean exploration boat, with many accessories that allow children to recreate a whole underwater exploration adventure. These include: a bathysphere, a wreck, a cage for swimming with sharks, a shark, a manta ray and several divers.

The boat's hull is made up of two U-shaped halves joined together, leaving a hole in the centre of the boat. This allows you to put the bathysphere or shark cage in the water using the crane on the boat. It also has a hold to store the bathysphere, a heliport, a crane and a complete navigation bridge, with the wheelhouse, a scientific laboratory with sonars and an adjacent meeting room, and well a room with two beds.

There are also interesting details such as fish tanks in the different rooms and a shark that can eat a minifig. The mould has existed since agents 2008, although it now has a different printed decoration. There is also a manta ray, which is a new mould. The wreck is small, but it simulates the remains of the stern of a wooden ship with some gold ingots inside.

The crane can be moved along the entire length of the hole in the centre of the hull, allowing it to take the bathysphere from the hold and put it in the water.

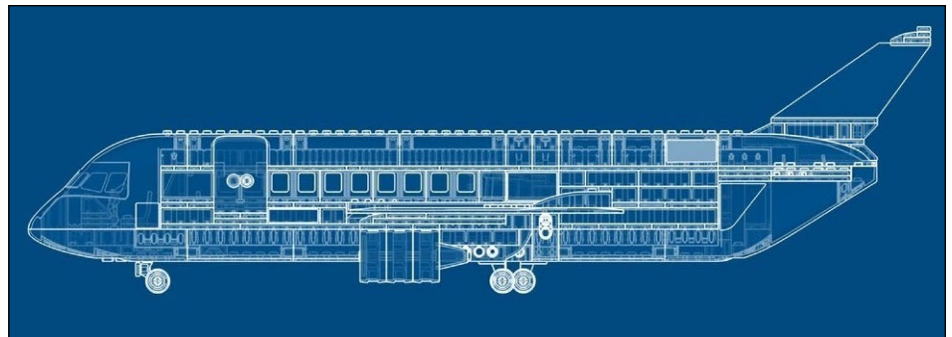
The set contains 8 minifigures, including divers, the captain and a character linked to the LEGO CITY TV series. I am surprised that there are still five men and three women, when they could perfectly have made it four and four.

It's a very playable set, and if you put it together with the rest of the sets in the line you can build a complete and very realistic underwater world.





Terminal from set 60104



60262 • Passenger airplane

The last set I will look at is the new airliner. It follows the line of the latest passenger planes, in terms of massive size, and also includes new parts that allow the plane to be one brick taller than the previous ones.

The plane has a small passenger cabin, which fits three minifigs. Behind this cabin there is a service cabin, with a receptacle to store the luggage, the area to park the cabin service trolleys, and a toilet. Also, as a novelty, at the back of the wing, there is a storage area where a sports car is loaded.

I have to say that there is a major design flaw, although it is easily solvable. The landing gear is so low, that it does not allow the plane to take off. While the design of the aircraft is very good, I think they could have spent a few pieces (I think no more than six-eight bricks) on a landing gear that would allow for more realistic behaviour.

The ground support vehicle is small and includes a trailer for the car that is loaded in the hold. This trailer has a mechanism to lift the car to the height of the cargo bay. There is also a basic access ladder to the plane.

There are nine minifigures, two of which are related to the TV series. I find it hard to

understand why LEGO CITY needs a TV series to support it, but it may be of another generation and I don't understand that today, without TV there is no product. In any case, I think this dependence on a TV series is a pity.

The set includes a small terminal. And this is where my reticence about the set comes from. Returning to what I said at the beginning of the article, I think that the airport is insufficient. The set is sold as a passenger plane, the terminal is a mere accessory. But it is too basic a terminal. In 2016 we had set 60104, which included an aircraft, support vehicles and a decent terminal. The set had 694 pieces for 99 €. The new plane has 669 pieces for the same price, and we get a much smaller terminal. The importance of the buildings is decreasing dramatically in the CITY line, both in terms of design and in terms of their decreasing size. I am also surprised that the planes are getting bigger and bigger. I don't know what homes are like in other countries, but in the case of Spain, many of us live in flats that are not very big and a plane of this size hardly fits into a child's room and you don't know where to put it. I'm not saying that four-stud aircraft are the solution, but maybe six-stud aircraft, like the 3181, would be

the perfect balance between size, construction without huge parts (like the wings) and detail.

Conclusion

Overall, I find CITY 2020 disappointing. Too many vehicles, way too many. Very simple buildings, not enough detail and endless repetitions of the same topics. The only breath of fresh air is the collaboration with National Geographic, where we can find detailed and newer sets.

It is a pity that CITY is taking this turn and that, somehow, it is making some of the mistakes of the late 90's again. And I'm not a romantic who thinks that the 80's were better (well, a little). You only need to look at the CITY sets from 2008-2014 to see that you can do things right with current, market-oriented designs. I hope that there will be some reflection within LEGO and that they manage to recover a "core" theme for the company, which should continue to be a "flagship" for the LEGO, instead of so much licensing.

I would like to thank LEGO for providing the sets for review. The opinions expressed are mine alone.