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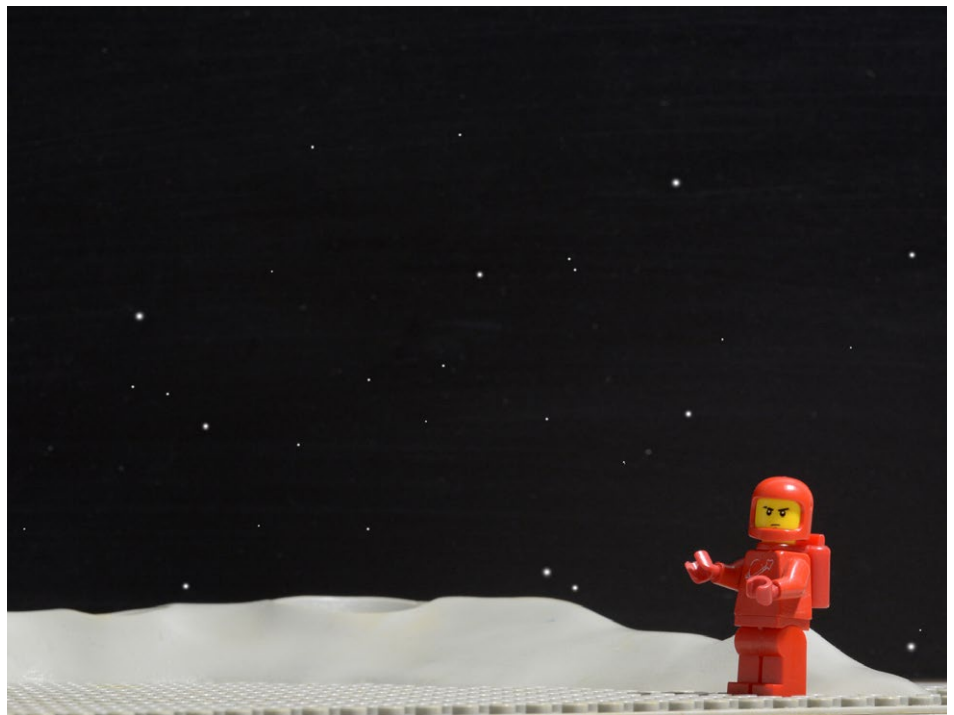
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# EDITORIAL

**W**e all love LEGO for different reasons. Some like to collect it, some enjoy building sets, and others love to create MOCs. For many (if not all) there is also a clear link to their childhood. And depending on when that was they will feel a strong link to one theme or another that they enjoyed when they were little. Although I am an ardent Technic fan, that link in my case is with Classic Space. There was something in that theme that sparked my imagination, and even though I only ever had a handful of Classic Space sets, the memory of the many hours I spent exploring space is still strong.

I am not the only one with a strong link to Classic Space. Recently LEGO reached out to its fans through the Ideas platform and asked them to choose the theme they felt was most suited to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the LEGO Group. Classic Space came in a solid second. In fact, that same Ideas platform has just completed the submission stage of a contest to design a 150-250 piece Space themed set. Space is still a strong theme with LEGO fans, even though it doesn't currently have a dedicated theme. From its inception as Cuusoo, the LEGO Ideas platform has given us the Hayabusa satellite, and more recently the Apollo Saturn V, the Moon Lander and the LEGO Ideas 10 year anniversary set, the International Space Station. City has had a number of Space related sets, and 2019 saw a series of sets inspired by NASA's life on Mars program, one of which you will see in this

edition. Creator 3-in-1 currently has a Space Rover Explorer as well as a Space Mining Mech that nicely fit the scheme. Is Space coming back full force? Maybe not as a theme, but there are options for Space fans.

Then there is the aftermarket. If you couldn't get that Classic Space set back when, or your dog ate the pieces, you can now relive that moment and get yourself a MISB copy of the set you always wanted, or the parts you are missing. Where do you look for those? For most AFOLs that isn't really a question. The obvious choice is BrickLink. Daunting when you take your first look, but you get in there, learn the lay of the land, and somehow figure out how to make it work for you. No thanks to any clear documentation. Even so, it's Silk Road for AFOLs and many feel fiercely protective of it: it belongs to the community. Along comes LEGO, buys the site and promises to make it even better. Did they? Will they? Time will tell, but in this issue we attempt to take the current temperature of BrickLink members. We are immensely grateful for all the feedback we got from our survey on BrickLink and are eager to share our findings in full. Spoiler alert: is there a doctor in the house?

As always, we hope you will enjoy this issue and look forward to your feedback, suggestions and article proposals through our site and social media.

—Jetro de Château, 9 March 2021



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## IN THIS ISSUE

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2 Editorial

### Features

4 Classic Space, Staff Edition

15 Spaceship Design Essentials

18 LEGO® BrickLink® One Year In

29 Every Mention of XP

### Programming and Robotics

30 Programming The RI5 with Python

### LUGs

32 TICOLUG

36 BayLUG

38 Zbudujmy To

40 KLUG

42 Houston Brick Club

### Community

45 Space Fan

48 Q&A with Johan Alexanderson

54 Kat Sipe

### Techniques

56 Making the Shot: Getting  
Enough Light into Your Photos

61 Cover Shot

### Reviews

62 60228 One Small Step

### MOCs

66 Top MOC Space

### Humor

73 Beyond Desmontados

# CLASSIC SPACE

## Staff Edition HispaBrick Magazine Staff takes a look back at their Classic Space sets.

It was the late seventies. And the middle eighties. And the other years in between, too. Probably. Hair was big. Mutually Assured Destruction was a thing. MTV actually was Music Television. The despicable Helvetica clone, Arial, was in its infancy, not yet ready to besmirch the world with its gawdawful blandness. Into this void rose a beloved LEGO theme.

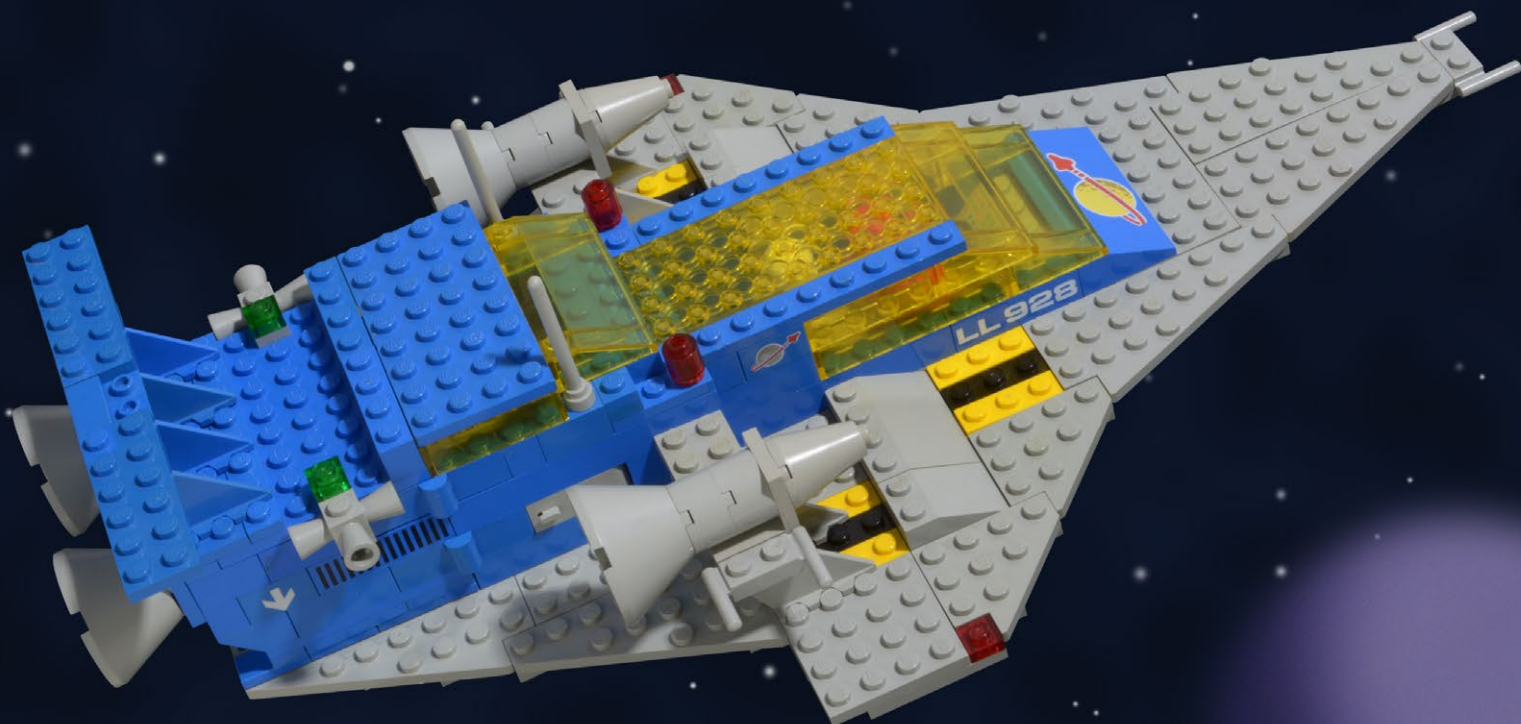
Much like Rock and Roll of that era was just plain Rock, the LEGO theme then was just plain Space. Those of us old enough to remember when Rock was Rock heave a heavy eyeroll at the label *Classic Rock*.

I tell you, whippersnappers and their need to invent new names for things that don't need

new names. Take note! These young'uns are members of exactly the same generation that eschewed Helvetica for Arial, and we all know how that turned out. Not pretty. At all. Also, Comic Sans. I rest my case.

So, with the whippersnapping new name that denotes oldness and exudes a certain *je ne sais quoi* coolness...well, to whippersnappers, anyway...a bunch of old AFOLs take a look back at their cool Space kits, fully aware that they were mighty cool long before they were *classic*.

Also, this article is typeset in the era-appropriate and design-accurate font Neue Haas Grotesk. Because. Suck it, Arial.





## 6820 Starfire 1

1986 • 34 pieces

So many cool pieces in this one... all retired. The bracket seat. The sloped-front cockpit block, printed two-color, no sticker! The 4x4 angled plates with the 1x1 cutouts. The standing control panel thingy. The 1x6 bar with the four open studs. Would be nice to see Classic Space win the 90th Anniversary Theme Set voting and have some of these classic pieces come back, but that's probably wishful thinking.



## 6809 XT-5 and Droid

1987 • some number of pieces  
BrickLink lists this set as having 37 pieces, BrickSet as 52 and Peeron as 34. I counted, because, controversy! Droid has 15 pieces... 17 if you count the antennas and the nubs as separate. XT-5 has 17, and spaceman has 5 (I'm counting the torso assembly as one piece), for a total of 37 or 39, depending on how you skin cats. In any event, it's about 9000 less than the Colosseum, and mercifully so.



## 6824 Space Dart 1

1984 • 47 pieces

As with Starfire 1, Space Dart 1 was never followed by a version 2. Starfire 1 was followed by 1449 Twin Starfire, which in no way other than perhaps being predominantly white, resembled its earlier namesake. Space Dart 1 looks fast and the center certainly resembles a dart. One has to love the lawn-dart inspired missiles at the wing tips. Also notable is the little-bit-tricky rear loudhailer assemblies.

## 6805 Astro Dasher

1985 • 29 pieces

Blue Spaceman MacGyvered this contraption together out of spare medical parts one very early Monday morning after he had too much coffee and an episode of the original MacGyver under his belt...long before the double-decker couch was even a twinkle in Emmett's eye. Who says imagination-powered flight isn't possible? On the positive side, when it crashes, Spaceman will have five crutches at the ready.



## 1557 Scooter

1986 • 26 pieces

Red Spaceman definitely one upped Blue Spaceman's Astro Dasher with the Scooter. This design makes clever use of the rocker assembly to connect the nose cone and the light gray monochrome monotony of some earlier small-set models yields to some touches of blue and white.



## 6891 Gamma V Laser Craft

1985 • 135 pieces

The most notable aspect of this model is the detachable aft end. Held together by a pin into two 2x1 Technic bricks, the sections slide apart easily so Blue Robot can tinker while Black Spaceman takes off.





## 442 Space Shuttle

1979 • 39 pieces

This set was sold in the US as 442 Space Shuttle and elsewhere as the much more appropriately named 891 Two-Seater Space Scooter. A two-seater hardly qualifies as a shuttle; it doesn't even qualify for the carpool lane. And don't get me started about how you fly a thing with two steering wheels. This set shipped with only one minifig...Cap'n Clean doesn't want any side-seat driver!



## 6849 Satellite Patroller

1987 • 43 pieces

If you need your satellites patrolled, look no further than this 1987 single seat model, complete with dual control panels, multi-directional sensor array, hinged chassis and ribbed mag wheels. The only thing this baby is missing is rich Corinthian Leather. If you don't get the reference, you'll have to look it up.



## 6871 Star Patrol Launcher

1984 • 70 pieces

Satellite Patrol, Star Patrol, there's no end to what needs patrolling in space. The blue winged craft glides easily off the hinged bracket assembly of the launcher. This vehicle's center pivoting assembly is a turntable where other sets in the series use hinge plates. Let's hope Red Spaceman has the vehicle in park and isn't using his bazooka camera while driving. Safety first!

# 1558 Mobile Command Trailer

1986 • 68 pieces

Such a fun set. The vehicle sports the hinge plate center typical for the mid-sized wheeled space vehicles, we get the not-seen-before angled assembly on the trailer, and the spacemen have jet packs with antennae. Jet packs!



# 886 Space Buggy

1979 • 16 pieces

While the general public back in 1979 held onto the quaint notion of *buggy* being a conveyance of sorts, *buggy* now has a whole different meaning. What do you say we rename this one The Reliable? The last thing anyone wants is a buggy space vehicle.

# 6823 Surface Transport

1983 • 27 pieces

Yellow Spaceman can safely and securely transport his space anomalies in the cargo box on the back of this rig. The flashing red light on top notifies the other Spacemen to take care when near. Okay. The light doesn't really flash, but we can pretend, right?





## 885 Space Scooter

1979 • 20 pieces

Red Spaceman here is riding his earliest scooter. This monochromatic minimalist version does have trans-blue 1x1 cylinders, though. This was the only Space set to have trans blue parts that year...all the other sets had trans red or trans green.



## 6807 Space Sledge with Astronaut and Robot

1985 • 24 pieces

Given that a sledge is for sliding down hills, does this thing really need three-rocket propulsion? Well, yes it does, and if you don't think so you're obviously...well, I was going to say yellow...but clearly that doesn't track.



## 889 Radar Truck

1979 • 25 pieces

This kit was obviously named by a blue ribbon steering committee after intensive market research while hopped up on amphetamines and caffeine. This little kit's name is just as ebulliently colorful as its body. C'mon. Radar Truck? Truck? How about Open Top Space Radar Chariot...something like that.

## 6931 FX-Star Patroller

1985 • 221 pieces

A very playable ship in this set, with many cool features. This starship can be split into two parts. The forward part of the ship is an aggressive looking ship. The rear part is a cargo compartment which holds a small 6-wheeled vehicle driven by a robot. The whole ship is very detailed with plenty of printed parts, hoses, and transparent elements.



## 6286 Crater Crawler

1985 • 32 pieces

Yellow Spaceman has a definite upgrade with this ride over his 6807 Sledge. The center seat section lifts out of the wheeled chassis for exploring where the wheeled vehicle can't go. The trans-red parts are welcome detailing on yet another dreary gray wheeled vehicle.

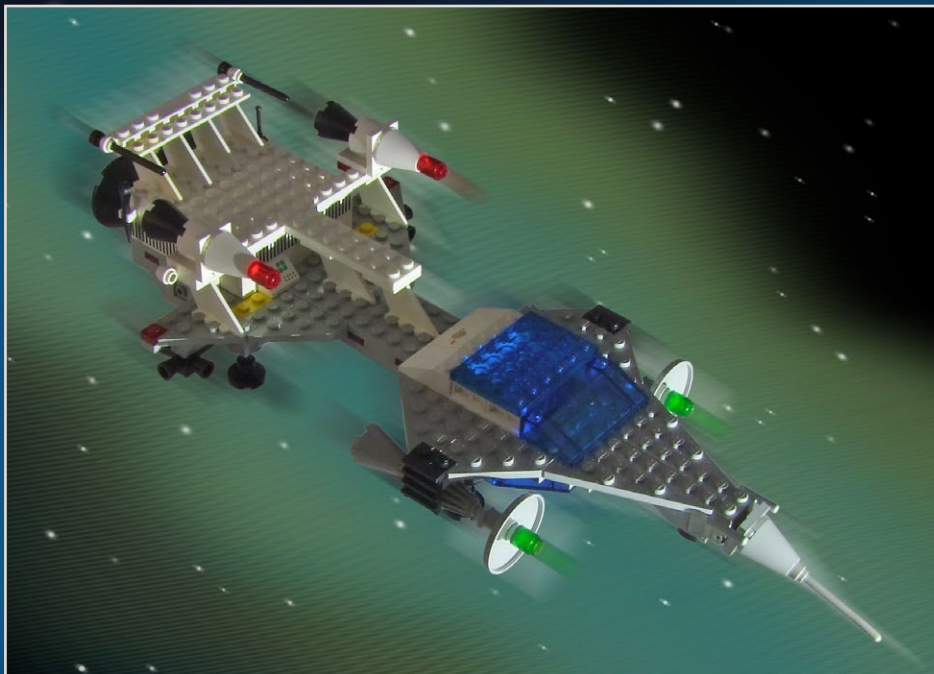


## 6808 Galaxy Trekkor

1987 • 29 pieces

This little set's cool factor comes in the form of hinged wings and some black tubes. Trans yellow tubes appearing in sets from the previous two years are gone.





## 6929 Starfleet Voyager

1981 • 247 pieces

One has to guess that this ship's design was in part influenced by the Concorde. The slightly down-pointing nose and narrow tail are SST characteristics. The opening-box tail end is a fairly direct pickup from the 928/947 Galaxy Cruiser. The bulbous cockpit was more interesting from the bottom than the top, but the overall design obscured that element.



## 6804 Surface Rover

1984 • 17 pieces

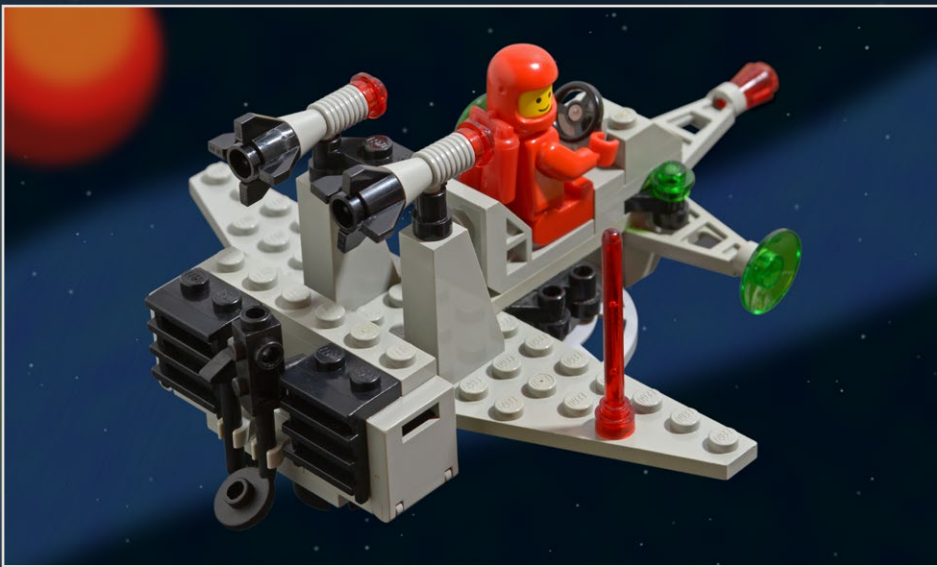
After a three-year absence of wheeled vehicles in sets with 25-parts-or-under, the Surface Rover debuted in 1984, and with it the welcome introduction of a color that was not gray. In 10 years of Classic Space, it is the only non-gray wheeled vehicle in this size category.



## 6841 Mineral Detector

1980 • 38 pieces

Undoubtedly once the minerals had been detected, the 6821 Shovel Buggy would have been called in to dig. But then what? I guess the 6901 Mobile Lab would mobile its way over to the pile as there was no craft to haul the minerals to the lab. Clearly time to invent an appropriate MOC!



## 6848 Interplanetary Shuttle

1985 • 54 pieces

Either this ship is crazy fast or Spaceman has some super special air tanks there, because in 1985 an interplanetary trip would take at least four months. And I don't see much in the way of radiation protection for Spaceman either. Oh well.

## 928 Space Cruiser and Moonbase

1979 • 338 pieces

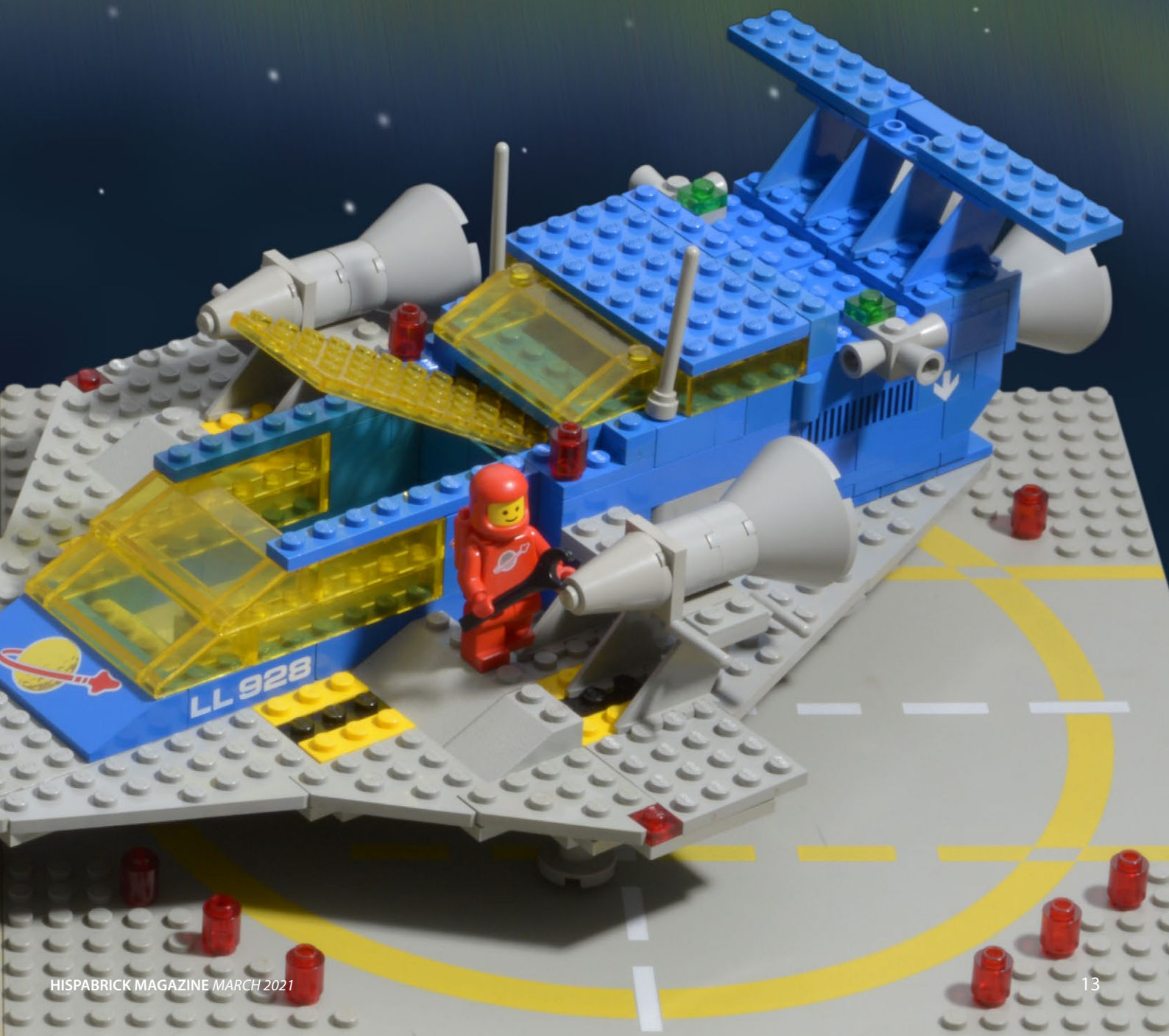
Released in the USA as 947 Galaxy Cruiser, this was the big set for its time and to this day it holds a special place in the hearts of fans. The design and charm of this kit wouldn't be matched by 1983's 6980 Galaxy Commander and certainly not by the everything-and-the-kitchen-sink Frankenstein of parts that was 1986's 6985 Cosmic Fleet Voyager.



# 6802 Space Probe

1986 • 22 pieces

Yellow Spaceman and Robot return a year later with another small kit. We don't know what has happened with Robot this time around as he isn't credited in the set name like he was the previous year. Come to think of it, neither is Astronaut. I bet you thought we were going to make up a joke about probes. Nope. You will have to do that yourself.



# 1498 Spy Bot

1987 • 62 pieces

One has to wonder how Spy Bot carries out a mission because this unit is anything but covert. Spy Bot is about three times taller than a spaceman and its “knees” bend side-to-side and not front-to-back. Then, maybe Spy Bot doesn’t need to have properly articulated legs given he has jets on his heels. Spy Bot’s head and arms do swivel 360°, and the arms are articulated at the shoulders and elbows.



# 918 Space Transport

1979 • 86 pieces

The baby sibling to 928 and 924, 918 brings us to the end of our staff edition classic space review. We hope your journey has been a pleasant one.





Landing a large starship on a planet's surface would usually be an enormous construction problem. Keep it in orbit, and have it dispatch smaller task groups.

# Spaceship Design Essentials

by Oton Ribić

“Realistic” is a slightly unusual adjective to use in the context of spaceships, isn't it? After all, we as a race don't have much of a spacefaring history (yet). But you may be one of those technically-minded builders who prefer even their wildest space creations to follow at least some principles of science and engineering. Or, in other words, one who wants to emphasize “sci” in their sci-fi, at least to the extent of space engineering as we can envision it today.

## What goes where

If you like the idea but have no clue where to start, let's consider the general spaceship design first—its layout, shape and form.

It is very convenient indeed to build spaceships from their floor upward, similar to any building. This typically leads to long (and possibly wide) but low, flat designs. They may look cool on the landing pad, but they are rather impractical in reality. The primary reason is their cumbersomeness: such designs actually provide relatively low usable interior volume in relation to the material needed for their hull. And any extra

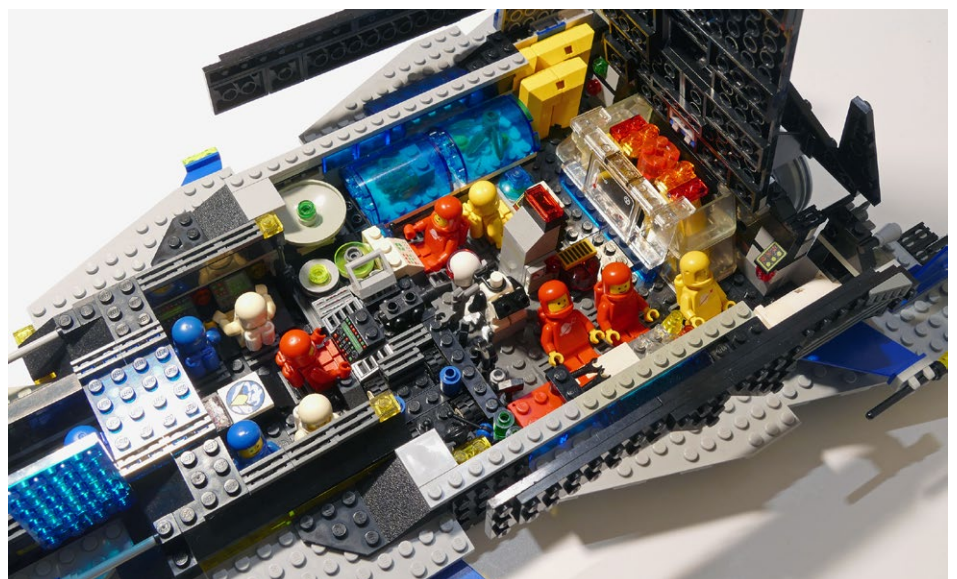
hull means extra weight, which means more fuel, which in turn brings much more complexity.

Therefore, efficient spaceship designs are rather chunky and compact. A perfect sphere would be a theoretical ideal case with the most volume enclosed in the lightest hull, but this is impractical for other reasons—within or beyond LEGO. The usual reason against such a design is the possible need for the ship to fly efficiently

through an atmosphere—which would require it to be aerodynamic—and therefore usually more elongated, as is the case with most rockets fired from the Earth today. In such cases, a suitable compromise is needed.

## Gravity and its directions

While on the topic of hulls, unless working with gravity generators, spaceships would spend



A classic problem with the crew sitting on the “floor”. When the engines at the side start, that floor becomes a wall for the crew! Better prepare some gravity generators!

most of the time either at zero gravity or at light acceleration. This means there is no need for distinct floors and ceilings—everything is a potential work surface, just like in the real world, i.e. the International Space Station.

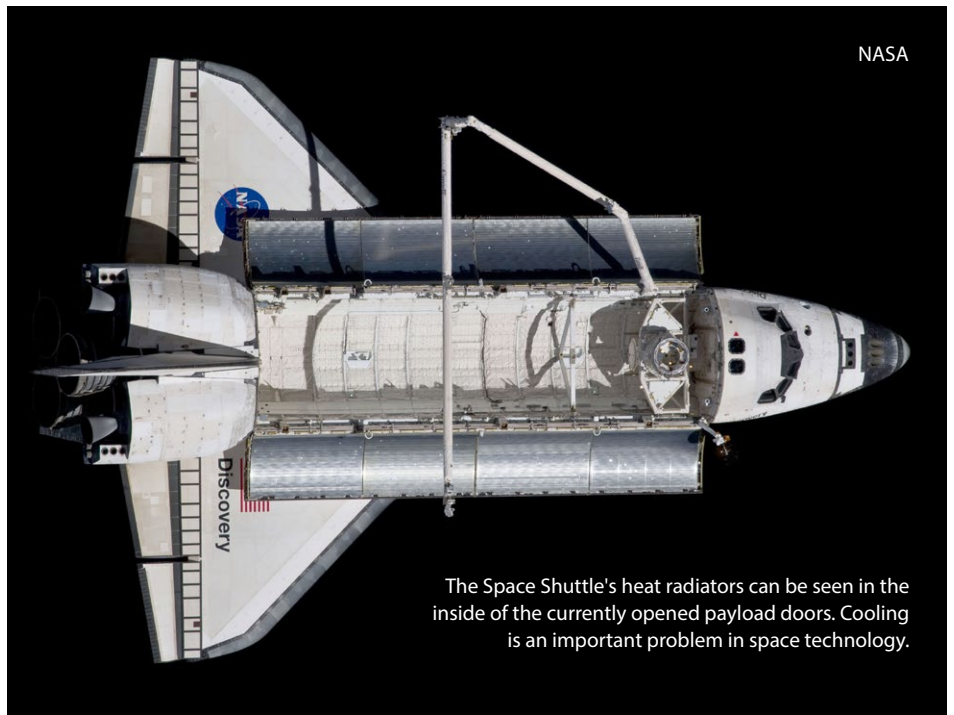
Furthermore, if there is some notion of gravity due to the acceleration by the engines, the “floor” will point in the contrary direction, towards the engines themselves. This is contrary to the usual design of the cabin floor pointing down, but the engines driving the ship sideways. That works fine for cars where the Earth gravity always points downward—but in space, it would make the spacefarers feel as if they were sitting on a wall.

An advanced trick, well-known to passionate fans of sci-fi movies, is to disregard these and create a proper artificial gravity environment by rotating the crew cabins, where the centrifugal force takes the same role. In LEGO ships, making the entire crew compartment rotatable requires some tough and proper, but when successful, very satisfying engineering!

### Wings? No. Or actually, yes

The next point is—perhaps surprisingly?—the wings. Many aspiring Classic Space builders have been wrongly ridiculed for fitting wings onto their starships, with snarky comments about the space having no atmosphere, nor strong gravity to lift against. Those observations aren’t incorrect, but the wings conundrum is not that simple.

In space technology, cooling is a serious problem. Very serious. In contrast to to aeroplanes which can at least transmit some of their heat to



The Space Shuttle's heat radiators can be seen in the inside of the currently opened payload doors. Cooling is an important problem in space technology.

the air they are passing through, space vehicles have no such luxury. One possible solution is to fit heat radiators to the ship, and these should be thin yet have a large surface area for efficiency—and wings fit that description perfectly. Even the real-life Space Shuttle had such radiators at the inside of its bay doors, and a hypothetical large spaceship dealing with much higher energies would need even larger ones.

Therefore, some kind of heat dissipation system would be needed, perhaps looking exactly like wings—and thus vindicating their presence on starships. By the way, every now and then, when filming a Sci-fi movie, writers who have done

their homework will specify that the ships will need to have heat dissipators, only to have them removed later by production personnel for fear of being ridiculed by the misinformed—why would a spaceship need wings?

### Space drivin’

Spaceship propulsion systems are another complex problem to consider. With our current knowledge, ships that require strong acceleration, or the ability to take off from a planet, require massive amounts of fuel. It is not without reason that the majority of today’s spacecraft are, as someone pithily put it: “flying fuel tanks with some additions”.

Even if we assume the future will bring much more efficient engines, and therefore require much less fuel, some kind of fuel will still be needed. But then the fuel tanks will have to either be directly in front of the engines, or spread symmetrically around the ship. Otherwise, as the fuel gets expended during the journey, the ship’s center of mass will shift, either deviating the ship off its course, or requiring constant corrections (again, using more fuel). This is actually a significant design problem in aeronautic engineering as well.

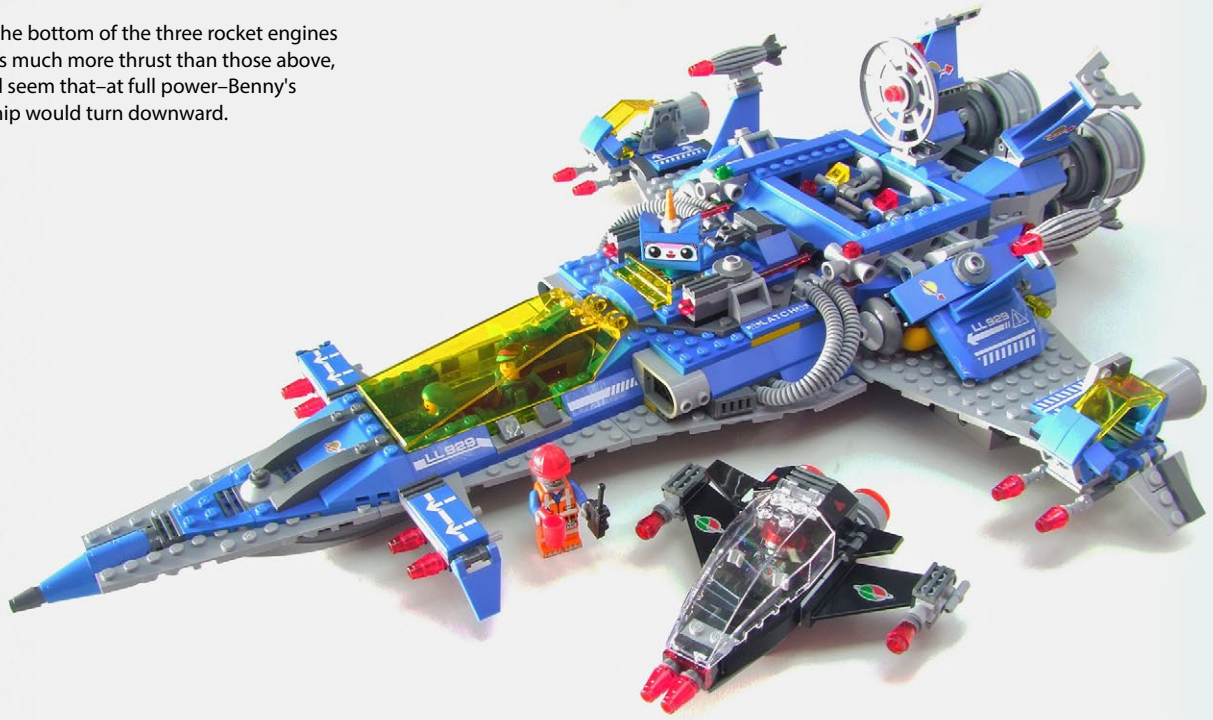
Furthermore, a ship with at least moderate maneuverability requires some kind of side thrusters to rotate it around its three main axes. They don’t need to be large because spaceships don’t need to fly through an obstacle course, but they should be there—and it’s delightful to see that The LEGO Group acknowledged this too in some of their Classic Space sets.



Space's Middle Ages, in this case the Explorien, detracted from the raw utilitarian construction of its predecessors in favor of more flashy stuff.



Unless the bottom of the three rocket engines provides much more thrust than those above, it would seem that—at full power—Benny's Spaceship would turn downward.



### Keeping people alive (and happy)

Unless we're going for an automated vehicle, which is a rather rare occurrence in Classic Space, there will be a need for some kind of life support, at least if it is to house a crew for more than just several hours.

Many potential problems can be circumvented via the classic trick: assuming the hibernation technology is available and possible to implement in confined and energy-limited spaceship conditions.

But otherwise, if you want to keep your creation viable, keep in mind that any starship destined for long journeys requires a dramatic amount of life support goods. An average human will hardly survive without at least 2-3 kilograms of nutrition (food and drink) a day. With twenty crew members and the planned maximum mission time of one year, it amounts to no less than 15 metric tons of goods, or the size of a chunky van. Even with dehydration, recycling and rehydration of food, it cannot be shrunk by more than a half.

At least air can be compressed, and even filtered and reused providing there is enough energy. But any sensibly designed ship would at least have some emergency oxygen to recompress the cabin in the case of leakage, or worse, battle damage.

If you would like to keep the crew happy, an important aspect of life support is keeping them sane, as already well-known by designers of submarines, ships and similar vehicles. Long stays in confined space, especially with limited

communication, tend to make people unstable—therefore, it is wise to dedicate some space to their pastimes, regardless of how expensive the mass and volume of starships actually are.

### No planetary excursions, please

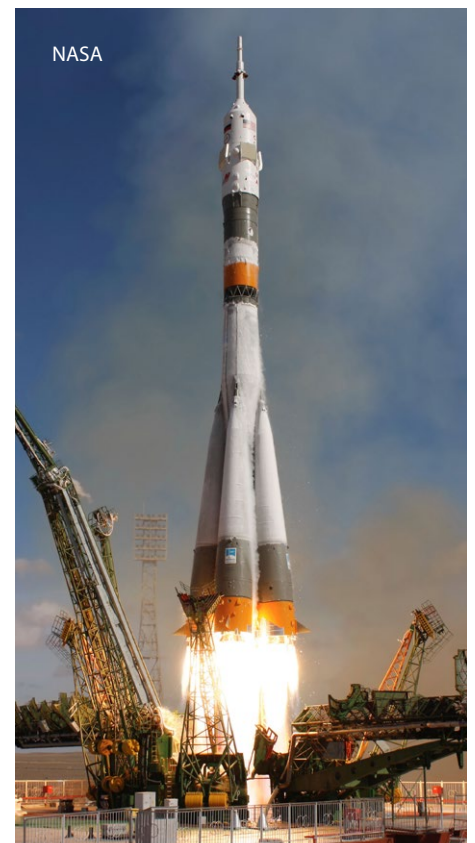
The requirement for a starship to be able to land on surfaces of planets is a devastating one for the spaceship builders. It requires the hull to be much, much more sturdy, and also the engines require enormous power in order to lift all that reinforced hull from the surface when it's time to go home.

As a consequence, a more sensible approach is to keep the large mothership in orbit, free from significant gravity and atmosphere, and have smaller ships, fit for landing on planets, do the actual transportation from the mothership to the surface and back.

This also lets the large mothership's propulsion systems be smaller. In fact, if the mothership gets assembled in zero gravity, and only ever travels to other stellar systems and their orbits, never to actually land on a planet, it can do so with only very slight acceleration (providing there is no rush). Standard movie scenes of the crew slamming back against their seats under the brutal acceleration of their massive starship undoubtedly look cool, but that would never be really needed.

However, they say that any crazy assumption is perfectly acceptable in science fiction as long as it serves a good plot. Therefore, the point is not necessarily to always follow everything that

common-sense engineering might demand. Yet trying to balance many such requirements when designing a spaceship, especially those that are partially contradictory, brings its own delights as well. And even if you get asked why there are computers on the ceiling, or why three-quarters of the ship is just fuel tanks and food stores, at least you'll have a good answer ready.



Until a much more powerful or efficient fuel or propulsion is invented, spacecraft will largely remain "flying fuel tanks"

# LEGO BRICKLINK one year in

by the HispaBrick Magazine Staff

At the end of November 2019, LEGO Group announced the acquisition of BrickLink. A year later we wanted to know what the community is thinking about how that acquisition is working out. We put a survey on line and got some answers. Here's what the community had to say.

# The LEGO Group acquires BrickLink, the world's largest online LEGO® fan community and marketplace to strengthen ties with adult fans

f in t

See all assets



Acquisition will strengthen the LEGO Group's engagement with its growing community of adult fans.

BILLLUND, Denmark, November 26, 2019: The LEGO Group today announced it has

LEGO's 2019 announcement of the BrickLink acquisition. Source: lego.com

## Introduction

The LEGO® Group acquired the BrickLink online marketplace in late 2019. For the most part we will assume most AFOLs are familiar with BrickLink, and this article is primarily directed at that audience. If you are not familiar with the BrickLink story, head on over to <https://www.bricklink.com/> and follow the "about us" link at the bottom of the page.

A year after the acquisition, we wondered how the BrickLink community was feeling about the current state of affairs. We decided to run a survey to see what we could find out.

We introduced our survey with the following:

A year ago with the BrickLink acquisition, LEGO stated that:

1. they wanted to strengthen the LEGO Group's engagement with its community of adult fans.
2. they plan to continue to support the active marketplace.
3. they have worked closely with the community for many years and look forward to deepening their collaboration.
4. BrickLink provides the LEGO Group with a unique opportunity to connect with adult fans through new channels and exciting experiences.

In BrickLink's press release at the time of acquisition they stated:

5. "...the direction is clear.
6. The LEGO Group shares our ambition to create

the best possible platform/experience for adult fans."

Our questions then followed those points.

Responses were collected by means of an online form into a database. We received something over 175 responses. On one hand we would have liked to get more. On the other hand it was quite a bit of information to sift through and it took days to get through it. On balance we do feel we did receive enough responses to make the undertaking worthwhile. There was some initial concern that we wouldn't get enough responses and we would end up in egg-faced embarrassment. Thankfully the community came through for us, and we appreciate every participant and every answer.

The tone of the data itself presented us with some challenges. We debated how and whether to present some of the comments. The responses were candid, often untempered and incendiary, and showed a passion for the marketplace.

After some degree of hand-wringing (and fortunately no neck-wringing) amongst the staff, multiple drafts and reviews, conversation and debate, we settled on what and how we would present the material.

In the data collection, there were some blanks, duplicates, and spam. Those were removed. We then crunched the numbers and did the best we could to make sense of the responses. Results were discussed by magazine staff members.

We decided to present quotes more-or-less

verbatim. For presentation purposes in the magazine, typos, misspellings, capitalization, and punctuation were in some instances fixed. Language has been altered in a very few instances for purposes of clarity. Some responses were quite lengthy; in some instances portions of those responses were selected out for presentation. We have done our best to not misrepresent anybody's meanings or intentions.

Some answers got... personal. Some colorful language, ungracious metaphors, and frankly pointed statements were aimed directly at BrickLink staff and LEGO. We decided not to print those. We can hear the groans of disappointment from some sections of the audience.

On the other hand, all the colorful language, ungracious metaphors, and frankly pointed statements we do feel are of value, and those along with the rest of the survey data—minus the respondents personal info—has been passed onto LEGO via the LEGO Ambassador Network.

With that said, on to the results!

## Survey Results

### 1) Do you feel that your engagement with LEGO Group has strengthened due to the BrickLink acquisition? Yes/No.

1 Overall 17 Yes 154 No



#### Years as BrickLink Member

1-5 8 Yes 21 No

5-10 4 Yes 53 No

10-15 2 Yes 42 No

15+ 3 Yes 38 No

#### BrickLink Usage Level

rare 1 Yes 4 No

occasional 4 Yes 24 No

frequent 4 Yes 65 No

heavy 4 Yes 65 No

#### Relationship to BrickLink

Buyer 9 Yes 75 No

Buy-Sell 8 Yes 72 No

Seller 0 Yes 6 No

Neither 0 Yes 1 No

## 2) In what ways have you seen LEGO Group providing additional direct support to the BrickLink marketplace?

The bulk of the responses stated that they had effectively seen no additional direct support from LEGO to BrickLink. There were six that didn't answer, thirteen mentions of the AFOL Designer Program/Failed Ideas project, and a few mentions of TLG using BL as an advertising platform and vice-versa.

Other things that came up, but which the magazine staff feels are probably BrickLink's doing and not due to LEGO support, are six mentions of legal/tax compliance and a few mentions of the platform becoming more stable.

There were several mentions of catalog restrictions and changes running the gamut of being pro, con, and indifferent to the fact. One respondent felt LEGO wasn't providing anything other than lip service in terms of support to BL.

Rounding out this question are comments that the catalog additions/inventories now happen either slower or faster, the site is more reliable or less reliable, and the admin presence on the forum is either increased or decreased, depending on who is asked. Some quotes:

"I haven't noticed any changes except removal of third party parts."

"Keeping non LEGO items out. Some of them deserve to exist, but not on BrickLink."

"...new LEGO sets can only be listed once officially released...same goes for inventory. Some sets will probably never get inventories. Custom items are completely gone—a big loss to the AFOL community even if those were original designs printed on LEGO bricks etc., custom stickers..."

"LEGO people/channels being used for BL announcement."

"I haven't used the BrickLink marketplace enough to form an opinion."

"I see this as a liability, not support."

"I think a lot of it has been more like meddling than support. I had hoped for effective fixes of long known issues but that didn't happen."

"They [LEGO] appear to be using BrickLink as another marketing medium."

"They've all but shuttered the [volunteer associates] from saying anything of interest or use, and it's very clear [BrickLink has] no interest in supporting their sellers right now."

"Engagement/communication was non-existent from BrickLink before the Lego acquisition, so anything at all is better. I've heard that the larger BrickLink sellers get to have

private meetings with Lego, so smaller sellers get information via word-of-mouth. I guess that's better than nothing."

"...my request for help with a tax issue has gone unanswered going on a few weeks. Multiple outreaches have gone ignored."

## 3) Cite any examples of a deepening collaboration that you have had with LEGO Group due to the BrickLink acquisition.

Nine people provided no answers. A few responses that our questions are dumb. Again, the majority, by a lot, said they had no deepening collaboration with the LEGO Group. There was another smattering of AFOL Designer Program/Ideas comments. There were a number of responses to this question that had nothing to do with the question. There was, however, witness to intent:

"During AFOL events I have heard LEGO employees and management talk about and be excited about BrickLink. The fact that they are excited about it should say something. It's not just an acquisition to solve a problem."

There was the bottom line: "They get more of my money, in the form of BL fees."

"They now get more of my money."

"I buy a lot more black Technic "art" bricks instead of building them myself!"

There was disappointment: "More like cutting collaboration. Several sellers were forced off the platform due to LEGO changing the platform."

"More like weakening collaboration, since LEGO made it much harder to acquire custom-chromed pieces."

"Odd decisions, removing Brick Arms, withholding sets' parts lists... I am against this union."

"Frustration."

There was a single ray of apparent sunshine: "LEGO has allowed digital model submissions using BrickLink Studio in addition to LDD for some small contests."

## 4a) What unique opportunities have you found to connect with LEGO Group due to their acquisition of BrickLink?

Nine people didn't answer. We enjoyed some more responses that were about how dumb our questions are and another bunch of answers having to nothing to do with the question, and a couple more mentions of ADP/Ideas. The resounding bulk of the answers to this question was again "none" but this time in three different languages! Some highlights follow:

"I have not found any connections. Despite the promises, from my perspective other than seeing the LEGO name here and there in the footers, I still treat BrickLink and LEGO as two separate places where I buy sets and parts."

"The Christmas ornament build challenge, I guess? Honestly didn't know the LEGO group was behind anything on BrickLink."

"Well, there were a couple of times when I wanted to call them and ask how to use their new website, but I didn't bother."

## 4b) What exciting experiences have you had with LEGO Group due to their acquisition of BrickLink?

Nine non answers. Yep. Same nine respondents if you're keeping track. Again we got comment about the dumb question, same question, ADP/Ideas, and a heaping pile of "none".

This is what qualified as exciting experiences with LEGO Group:

"Can't buy third party parts there any more."

"...we haven't had any exciting experiences, because there was nothing that helped us feel the change. If nothing, we felt more neglected during the transition period."

"Happy to buy and sell everything I want."

"Hoping LEGO would give it back."

"I have not had any experiences with the LEGO group via BrickLink beyond the occasional forum threads. My own question in the AMA thread was not answered at all."

"I was really pissed I was not able to buy new bricks due to LEGO freezing the BrickLink catalog after acquisition."

"I was very excited to see that [the] manufacturer of new parts acquired [a] large part of [the] reselling market. Yay!" (Author's note: Trust us, this is sarcasm. This guy's whole sheet had the sarcasm turned up to 11. Maybe 12. Maybe higher.)

"I, like many others, was afraid that LEGO intended to squash BrickLink, so I guess the exciting news is that BrickLink is still operating."

"Just stress."

"Listening to the corporate speak of Julia..."

"Longer waiting times on servers responding. Really excited my anger."

"No good ones."

"To be honest, found it more difficult to deal with."

"Not able to get custom items."

"Not being able to find stuff in BL because LEGO is moving things out of categories. Next up will be the color changing mess."

“Removing all custom-chromed pieces from the BrickLink was certainly exciting.”

“The overall aesthetics of the site have been improved. Navigation is improving and overall look-and-feel is a better experience.” (Author’s note: We don’t know what exactly this AFOL is experiencing because as far as we can tell the look and feel and the navigation is the same as it has been for about six years.)

“They [removed] all customized printed original LEGO parts and custom chromed parts. Sad story. These parts can make some MOCs a bit more unique.”

“They removed custom parts and sets. . . That’s ‘exciting’, but not in a positive way.”

### 5a) Cite an example of a clear direction that BrickLink moved in during the last year due to LEGO Group’s acquisition.

We’re not quite sure what to make of this set of answers. The answers are generally all over the place with a few exceptions, and select answers appear to be in keeping with the sense among some (or accusation by some) that BrickLink treats some members preferentially. We would think that there would be some sort of consensus of what a clear direction is if indeed there was a clear direction.

The following specific actions taken by the site, whether due to LEGO Group’s acquisition or not we don’t know, were mentioned:

Legal compliance, removal of various and sundry items from the catalog for various and sundry reasons, creation of rules, enforcement of rules, inconsistent enforcement of rules, the ADP/Ideas possibility, tax collection, “booting out ‘custom’ sellers”, color nomenclature, parts categories, payment processors, breaking of search functions, fixing of search functions, changing of search functions, “corporate things”, the surprise “fee collection” to “clear accounts” that has been unaddressed for seventeen years or something like that.

Changes to the buyer checkout process was cited. Some individuals consider this to be improvements, others not so much.

An influx of newbie buyers was categorized as being both good and bad.

Then there was daily maintenance, pushing XP, forcing a one-size-fits-all (US) paradigm onto the rest of the world, set inventory delays, third party links in and out, intellectual property “enforcement”, unwanted advertising, updating the Terms of Service, and chrome parts, chrome parts, chrome parts, and chrome parts. A lot

of people were very, very, very annoyed by the removal of chrome parts.

If the sum of these policies and procedures indicates a clear direction, we are hard pressed to define it. Some respondents note a direction:

“For me as a seller it only got worse and more labor intensive.”

“A direction away from sellers on the BrickLink platform: (“

“Away from usability for fans to connect and enjoy the product.”

“Bad.”

“Before LEGO acquired BrickLink, it just felt like a shopping website. Now with the contests and the Stud.io program and gallery, BrickLink feels a little more community-focused.”

“Hahaha. . . lack of support.”

“It moved in the direction of displaying a lot of ads that I’m not interested in.”

“It went in the terrible direction that many creators and sellers had their custom items ripped out of the database.”

“...my general impression is that LEGO isn’t interested in developing BrickLink, they’re just keeping it as it is.”

“Killing all things that [the] community made through [the] years? Because some corpo dude knows better?”

“Going down.”

### 5b) Do you think this is a good direction?

Go figure. Where question 5a was all over the place, 5b fairly neatly fell into distinct categories:

- 1 no answer
- 30 don’t know
- 80 no
- 28 yes
- 4 optimistic
- 3 skeptical
- 10 directionless, no change
- 5 indifferent
- 10 realize we are all impotent when it comes to the inevitability of government intervention

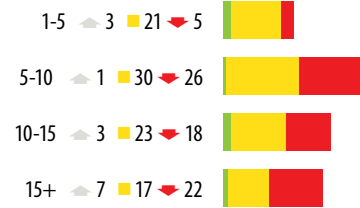
### 6a) Has the BrickLink platform improved/stayed about the same/gotten worse?

Now, saying that the platform has stayed about the same is not a resounding note of approval. The site has had poor performance for years, is riddled with bugs, inconsistencies, poor labeling, buried, incorrect, missing, and outdated information, intermittent performance issues, and is noted by some users as functionally the worst web site they visit regularly. Promised features are late or never come. Updates usually

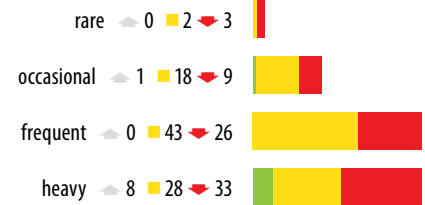
**6a Overall** 9 Improved 91 Same 71 Worse



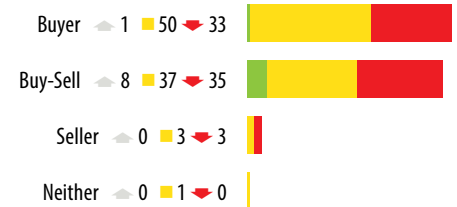
#### Years as BrickLink Member



#### BrickLink Usage Level



#### Relationship to BrickLink



break more things than they fix. Fixes to the problems aren’t addressed in a timely manner, if ever. The site relies on kludges discovered by enterprising members to resolve frequent, known, and admitted issues, particularly seller-side. Communication is reported as nil, haphazard, lazy, late, and a few other choice adjectives skewing negative. Staying the same is basically saying that the cancer that is riddling your body hasn’t gotten any worse. That’s harsh. But that is the reality of the situation.

The BrickLink press release stated: “The LEGO Group shares our ambition to create the best possible platform/experience for adult fans.” The responses here suggest that BrickLink and LEGO are something less than ambitious and they’re creating something less than the best possible platform and experience for their claimed target audience. Users with longer relationships and greater usage levels skew more negative.

### 6b) If you feel the BrickLink platform has changed, in what ways?

To some degree the opinions on the state of the platform have more to do with how specific policies implemented over the last year coincide with one’s predilections. These opinions are expressed across the survey answers and not

limited to Q6b. Purists applauded the restriction of catalog contents and enforcement of rules while the more broad-minded decried the same.

The restrictive policies and enforcement of those policies clearly narrowed rather than broadened the community and in doing so immediately reduced statements about strengthening engagement with the community, continuing to support the active marketplace, and connecting with fans through new channels to a masculine bovine falsehood. We at the magazine don't have any position pro, con, or indifferent relative to the decision other than to say that the actions don't correlate with the messaging, and when that happens community trust erodes.

Specifically of note again here at 6b is the continued mention of the disappointing removal of chrome parts. Other themes expressed are removal of parts from the catalog, restrictions on what can be sold, lack of user support, continued absence of buyer tools... particularly irksome to some as this was something promised to be coming soon five or six years ago... "zillions" of bugs, broken links, dismay with some staff leaving, comments to policy changes causing some of the community to be pushed away, poor documentation of changes, comments about anybody complaining on the forum being blocked, banned, or having their shop closed, higher prices, shops leaving, lack of payment options, and lack of debugging of new code.

Again there are conflicting opinions on the same topics mentioned earlier: some say the site is more responsive, others say it is less responsive, more reliable, less reliable, admins are more present, admins are less present, admins are more helpful, admins quicker to react more harshly. We don't have any idea who is meant by the term "admins"... whether that means BL staffer Russell (it is extraordinarily rare that any other staff member posts to the forum) or if they mean the volunteer associate "admins". Clearly some part of the responding group believes that somebody is doing something more or less, more or less.

There is one call for merging LEGO, LEGO Ideas and BrickLink IDs to facilitate tracking collections, purchases, and "etc." There are also a couple notes about the dissonance between the written TOS and actual practices.

Concluding the overview, there are a number of mentions of the site being the same or no different. Correlating these mentions with the data at 6a we note that this perception is greater with less frequent users of the site.

And now, some quotes:

"The community feels more hostile, which is really impressive."

"Stuff getting removed, set parts lists delayed. It is slower and worse. Aside from that, prices are skyrocketing but this is not TLG fault I guess."

"While the general business remains about the same for buyers, some of the changes being made are having an impact on sellers and with announced changes regarding payment methods, tax collection, and incessant changes being made to store management, it has made the transition very rocky."

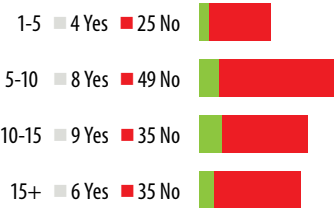
"All the changes have [done] is [to] make the buying process harder, frustrating, time consuming, and dysfunctional for buyers."

### 6c) Do you think the current state of the BrickLink platform is the best possible experience for AFOLs?

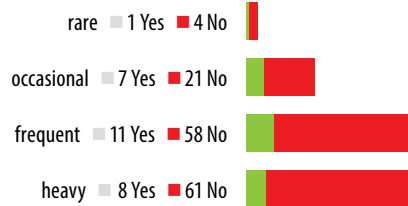
6c Overall 27 Yes 144 No



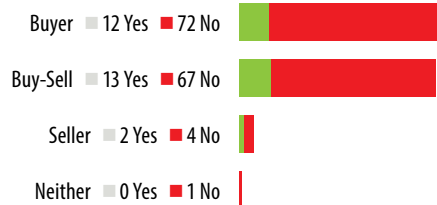
#### Years as BrickLink Member



#### BrickLink Usage Level



#### Relationship to BrickLink



This question. This question. Looking at the raw numbers on this question left us wondering to a degree just what exactly was going on. The numbers did not seem to reflect the positions of the earlier responses, basically indicating a three-fold increase in satisfaction with site performance. Then it occurred to us that perhaps the question wasn't worded correctly or wasn't

being interpreted correctly. A positive response to 6c was often in obvious conflict with opinions expressed elsewhere by the same respondent.

We were riffing on point six of the BrickLink premise: "The LEGO Group shares our ambition to create the best possible platform/experience for adult fans," basically asking if the community felt that the site as it is with the bugs, warts, pimples, communication issues, treatment of members, and everything else was the best possible experience.

We wondered if the question was interpreted as "is the classic interface preferred to the proposed XP interface." So we went back to the yes respondents who graciously said they were open to us following up on their submissions and whose other responses had shown some indication that there was room for improvement elsewhere in their survey.

We did not follow up with the "yes" respondents who indicated that they were infrequent users or they had a specific focus on Studio or otherwise left answers empty.

A number of the follow up emails were not answered. The answers that did come back were all similar and reflected what respondents felt were some key points. In general the response was that the question had been interpreted differently. The original responses seemed to hinge on the word "possible" being construed as "available". Respondents felt that here was definitely some room for improvement in the current site. There was noted dissatisfaction with the current functional state of the site. There was definite fear that any tinkering with the site would only result in worse performance. There was general agreement that the basic classic site design was an interface that they felt was useful and usable and didn't want to see any changes to that. There was general consensus that there was not a "better site" for AFOLs.

"I would prefer if they leave Bricklink untouched because I am worried they will break the site worse than its current state."

"In Question 6c, technically, there is always room for improvement in any platform, so sure, I should have responded 'No'—however, looking back, I must have interpreted the question as: 'is the current BrickLink platform the best possible experience for AFOL's available'. I don't know of any other site that is better for the AFOL, thus my answer of 'Yes'."

While we are displaying the chart with the original 27 Yes responses, the actual number is probably closer to that of 6a.

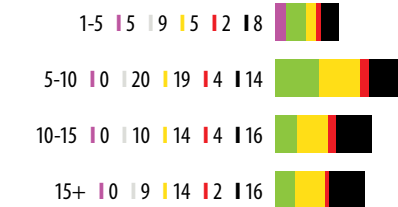
Recently there was a video communication about BrickLink's future plans.

7) What is your general feeling about the messaging in that communication?

- a. I'm very excited about this plan.
- b. This is new information and I'm cautiously optimistic for the future of BrickLink.
- c. I've heard this before and BrickLink hasn't delivered on promises in the past; I'm skeptical.
- d. This is a terrible plan.
- e. Is there a plan here?



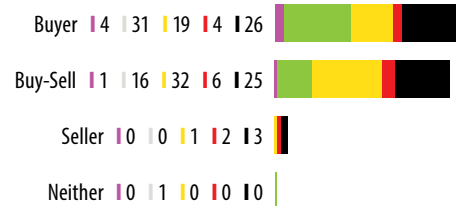
**Years as BrickLink Member**



**BrickLink Usage Level**



**Relationship to BrickLink**



Survey says. . .the only people excited about this plan are new users who have never experienced a BrickLink not built by the current management, and even at that we are looking at only one in six. If this new user market is the target demographic for the future, it looks like it is going to be a very long hill to climb to success.

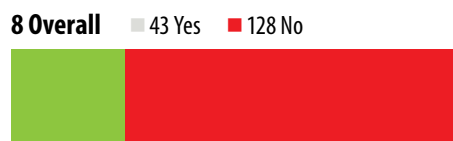
Two of the five people excited about the plan are specifically oriented towards the ADP offering. The other three state that they hope that BrickLink "stays the same" but fixes bugs.

In the optimistic group, there are five-and-one-half comments about XP. Two say that the move to XP should happen only if it has all the features

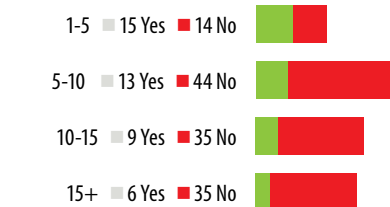
of the current site, two say forget XP, one says trash everything and rebuild from the ground up, and the half is extremely interested in and only interested in seeing an app and the mobile site developed.

The heavier users certainly don't see a plan, think it is a terrible plan or are skeptical. There is very little support among the sellers. We think it is safe to say that this messaging is not met with great enthusiasm by the membership. While it might not be a lead balloon, it isn't going to get off the ground easily.

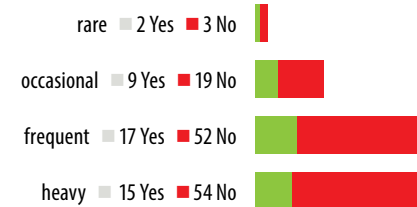
8) Do you think this plan for the BrickLink platform will result in the best possible experience for AFOLs?



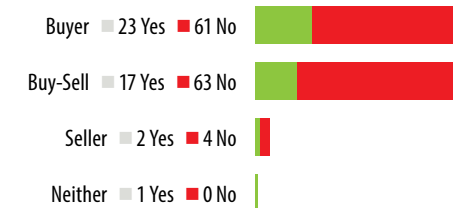
**Years as BrickLink Member**



**BrickLink Usage Level**



**Relationship to BrickLink**



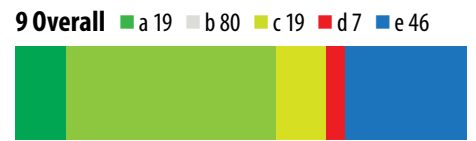
It's nice to see that the results here closely echo what we found in Q7, although strictly speaking at Q7 we have a total of 53 enthusiastic or optimistic, that would-be equivalent number here is only 43.

9) If you could prioritize one aspect of site development at BrickLink, what would it be?

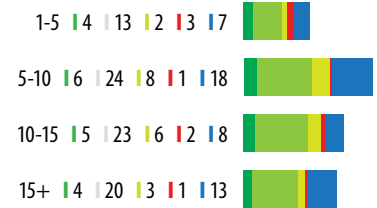
- a. Make the site more mobile friendly.
- b. Fix the existing but broken site functionality. Test code updates before deploying; make sure updates don't

break any existing functionality.

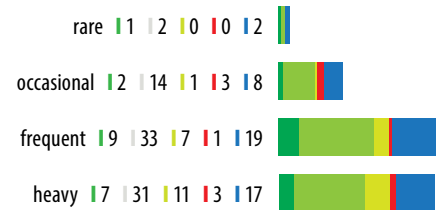
- c. Create a suite of seller tools.
- d. Forget the legacy site, focus completely on XP.
- e. other



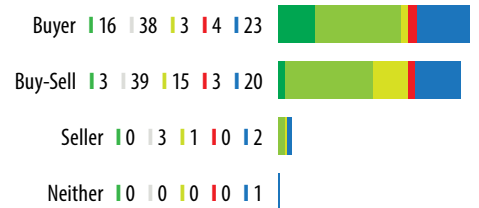
**Years as BrickLink Member**



**BrickLink Usage Level**



**Relationship to BrickLink**



What is clear here is that the majority of users simply want the existing functionality fixed. What is not apparent from the chart is that of the 46 "other" responses we have a dozen calls for a combination of a and b, or b and c, or a, b, and c. Taken together, 75% of the respondents prioritize fixing the core functionality of the site. The general theme of "BrickLink is okay as it is, just fix the broken bits," reverberates throughout the survey. To be fair, just fixing the broken bits is probably technically a less cost-effective solution. . .and far more fear-fraught and troublesome. . .than rewriting the entirety of the underlying code, but that is a technical consideration and not the general thrust of the expressed sentiment here. The priority is to get the existing functionality and feature set stabilized and working as intended. There are three mentions either explicitly or effectively stating the site should be overhauled from scratch but keeping all the features.

Additionally, there are 14 calls for interface and/or functional updates related to the catalog

to improve discovery, three calls for the return of custom items to the catalog, two people want LEGO to divest itself of the site, one wants documentation, one wants delivery on all the past promises, one person says that the priority should be to focus on the core audience, one wants Canadian Tax implemented, and one wants a robust customer service department.

### **10) If you could offer LEGO Group one single piece of advice regarding BrickLink's future, what would that be?**

As one might expect there are a number of me-centric responses here, and for certain they conflict with other me-centric responses (focus on mobile/don't focus on mobile, allow custom parts/remove more parts, yes MOCs/no MOCs, let BL sell new parts/don't let BL sell new parts). Also some respondents feel that "one piece of advice" is a paragraph containing twenty pieces of advice. Others feel one piece of advice is a general comment or statement. Okay then. I guess it depends on how you define "piece" or how well you pay attention to the question.

Distilling the responses down into general themes, there are three that stand out. The top suggestion, 36 instances, is that there be focus on the core market platform. This is expressed in three general sentiments: 1) blatantly saying focus on the core platform, 2) if it ain't broke, don't fix it, and 3) fix what is broken and test thoroughly before making it live and make sure the fix doesn't break other things. The ancillary note to this is to not get distracted by shiny things and new ideas, leaves blowing on the wind, and well, anything else.

Second, 30 instances, is to remove the rails, leave the platform alone, don't meddle, hands off, and we trust you get the general sentiment here. The subset to this suggestion at 13 instances is to allow the return of custom items to the platform. This group of suggestions seems to be basically asking for openness and inclusion versus exclusion and less heavy-handedness with what can be offered on the platform.

Third, 19 instances, is the suggestion that LEGO listen to and work with the community. Grow the platform from the bottom up instead from the top down. Generally this group suggests that LEGO pay attention to the top two suggestions and some other suggestions to follow.

After the top three, there is a step down to a second tier of suggestions. Leading the second tier with nine suggestions is to improve the code/UI/UX. Piggybacking on that sentiment are other

similar but more focused requests for mobile support, improving search, facilitating user-side input and output of information, and more robust API and third-party support. Rounding out the family here is a number of requests for a better buyer checkout experience, better seller tools, better shipping tables, additional payment options, and to maintain and retain a complete transactional history. Many of these improvements necessarily have database structure and content implications. Taken together this group of requests tallies about 35 total. It could be reasonably argued that all these things are part of core functionality.

While we're here in the UX neighborhood, there were a few requests for building a social network and a place to keep personal inventories and MOCs and other things. We guess maybe they haven't discovered rebrickable.com or any number of other websites that already provide these features and are well maintained. Or haven't been fortunate enough for somebody on the forum to tell them that they can inventory their things on BrickLink by opening a store and...uh...not opening it.

The next two areas of suggestion each have nine responses. First, and emphatically so, is that LEGO divest itself of BrickLink and return BrickLink to the community, or a private entity, or somebody else. Second is that LEGO get some better people, more people, with appropriate skills, into the areas of development and customer service. This echoes the never-ending chorus of BrickLink having exceptionally poor communication skills.

The last areas of suggestion receiving multiple specific focus is that Studio keep getting some developmental focus and that LEGO pay attention to and support the sellers. Both of these items are addressed in the December Julia-Marvin video. The former we expect to happen, the latter we haven't seen happen so far, although there have been many calls for this for a very long time.

Another area with several loosely related strings is that LEGO more actively promote BrickLink, use BrickLink as an outlet for special promotions, exclusives, a back-door (or front door) source for bulk bricks (at a discount, of course), special bricks, reissuing retired parts, and other fantastic and magical things.

To conclude, there are individual calls for not giving big stores preferential treatment over small stores, becoming less US-centric, maintaining an adult focus (18+ for participation), and creating multi-language support. Quotes follow:

"They really need some customer service staff who are more responsive and have thicker skin. Ignoring user complaints should not be a valid option."

"Bring in a professional customer relations manager and staff. BrickLink is a site originally built by amateurs...but it can no longer make do with amateur customer relations. Response times to support tickets are too long. Users who voice their frustrations openly are silenced and ignored. It is an unprofessional way to treat customers."

"The promises about upgrades to the site, sellers tools and everything else we have been promised for years need to be addressed."

"For EXPERIENCED LEGO MANAGEMENT to engage. The current carry-over management team does not appear to be business savvy and their unchecked, capricious, dictatorial, and retaliatory demeanor—which has existed for years—is going to continue to cause BrickLink to limp along until they force every seller to leave the platform and seek out other venues."

"Get over your distaste for resellers and embrace them. Like it or not, the community is all of us, not just the builders that make your product shine."

"Take seller's concerns much more seriously, and ACTUALLY listen, rather than paying lip service and claiming you're going to listen. Invest in improvements that sellers actually want!"

"Much of what has been said about BL development has proved to be hot air. The trust that LEGO will do the right thing with BL is completely broken."

"Stop, take a breath and realise what you have. Then consider how to make it better."

"BrickLink is absolutely central to the AFOL community—perhaps the second most important thing to AFOLs behind TLG itself. It does not need to exist in a petrified state, but changes should be approached cautiously because the community depends on this site. Several years ago at Brickworld Chicago, when BL was sold to Jay Kim, there was a public acknowledgement that 'All of this'—the convention, the amazing displays, and the amazing community that was built on this hobby—all of this is made possible by BrickLink. This is Dan Jezek's legacy. I would encourage all involved in BL, especially the executive management, to experience the events and the community at Brickworld and Skaerbaek, etc. and to keep this in mind."

"If you're going to backdoor Ideas designs into BrickLink for sale, make sure the designers are taken care of."



"If [LEGO] want to control BrickLink, they need to provide it with the support needed, and integrate it into the LEGO system. If they don't want to do that, they shouldn't own it."

"Make your presence known and engage with users or hire a team to augment the existing site admins."

"Make it more welcoming to be on, last twelve months I've felt it's not enjoyable to be on, that's my feeling and opinion."

"Listen to the users rather than the BrickLink management who are not LEGO people."

## 11) Any other comments

There were some interesting comments, some directed at the magazine for coming up with the survey, others directed at LEGO and BrickLink. Some comments continued to offer advice. Some expressed hope and well wishes for the BrickLink platform. Themes reiterated from the advice question were to fix the existing site, focus on the adult part of AFOL, taxes/sales history retention, various catalog related issues, Studio, the US-centric focus/lack of non-English support, returning custom parts to the marketplace, and better communication. On to some comments:

"BrickLink has so much potential! When Dan passed and the family sold out to Jay, that was the day BrickLink also began to die. While the current managers may have a passion for LEGO they are not businessmen and Jay seemed to have ulterior motives that never materialized for the AFOL community. If Julia's message bears real fruit, we may keep BrickLink alive for many years and honor Dan's dream. Despite my outlook, I hope that this all changes; but until management kills BrickLink and buries it, I will continue to be there every day."

"At the very least make it crash less."

"I am saddened to realize through these questions how depressingly unsupported I feel by BL and LEGO."

"I understand that BL might otherwise have gone away—leaving us with Brick Owl as the marketplace. Frankly, there is a lot of legacy with BL, some good, some bad. (I'm BrickBay member #77. . .). When BL was sold by Dan's family, I think an opportunity to make a consortium purchase was missed, and it got sold for over the odds on what it costs to run. The transfer to Lego means that taxes are a huge problem, because issues which fly under the radar for a \$10 million/year company are a huge issue for TLG. Issues of IP & "custom" also immediately on BL's sale to TLG came to the fore, with the removal of BrickArms

and other custom elements meaning that the community is more divided than united by the actions. I am not a large seller (about 300 sales in 20 years), but I've been there from the start. I find myself using BL less now than I had in the past."

"... the marketplace is getting worse for me as a seller and for my buyers. I'm there since 2012 and opened my shop in 2020 and I'm worried about BrickLink's future."

"I've never quite understood the constant talk about 'community' in relation to BrickLink. It's just a place to buy and sell and look for information."

"The more involved LEGO Group gets with BrickLink, the less it has felt like a market leading site. They should make the site we all came to love work the best it can, then focus on adding new things."

"Usually, I would say: if it ain't broken don't fix it. But it is too late for that. It already has been negatively changed."

"It is a shame that this survey is necessary; had Lego stuck to their original promises I, and I suspect most other users, would have been a lot more positive."

"What LEGO is doing with BL made me trust them even less than before. They have shown themselves as untrustworthy, greedy, un-empathetic and liars."



## After the Q and A

### How dumb is our survey?

Okay. We will confess to the survey being dumb. To a degree at least. For sure.

We decided to focus on the specific statements made by LEGO and BrickLink at the time of acquisition. We will grant you that LEGO's statement reads like, and probably is, boilerplate marketing speak.

So, one by one we took the statements and slapped them into question form. This was a conscious decision because we wanted to specifically weigh those statements against the community's perceptions.

We received some feedback that indicated that there were some other questions that the community would really have preferred to see but we avoided those kinds of questions because we felt they were simply going to lead to the airing of grievances and BrickLink bashing and

were not related to the acquisition and how the relationship of LEGO and BrickLink was meeting the then-stated goals or intents.

This is how dumb we are, sez the crowd:

"Only a dumb survey makes questions like this one required."

"You should have made a petition and not a survey."

"Ask the same question over and over, wording it differently, had to be a millennial doin' the questions."

*DunDunDUNNNNN!* Thanks for playing. Sorry on that count. A sexagenarian and some other somewhat youngergerenarians, but no millennials. At least you now know that we put *maximum effort* into them, right?

### Some people just want to share their feelings, because, well, why not?

There were any number of responses that had nothing to do with the question. We present some of those here to communicate to LEGO what the community thinks of the kind of job BrickLink is doing to further the stated goals of the acquisition.

"BrickLink has rolled out new user interfaces that are suspect. When searching for parts, there appears to be a deep bias. When comparing the classic system results to the new system, many of the sellers are omitted on the new system, which increases the prices. We've asked for some clarification and transparency, but it's like talking to a dog."

The MOC shop cum Studio Gallery got some attention: "My MOC Ferrari poster where I built a fairly accurate logo out of tiles was downgraded from Public (share instructions) to just View (read only). This was due to Intellectual Property concerns. Seems like there are fewer and fewer places to share my own creations. . . I explore typography in LEGO and there's no good outlet for critical expression.

Seriously have you tried to make Futura Bold Italics from plates? Not so easy, my friend."

And this, presumably in response to the BrickLink 20th Anniversary promotion:

"I was THIS close to getting a job as the merchandiser for PNW before the pandemic made all the things close and we had to quarantine and are still in quarantine. I was in communication with local store owners who helped me talk to LEGO as I have a disability that makes it a bit hard. When the pandemic started BrickLink asked for people to write in with their experiences on BrickLink and I shared about a kind soul who

waited for me to pay for several weeks as I groped with the loss of an immediate family member. Later from BrickLink I received a bunch of LEGO gear like bags, etc. which was cool. I'm not sure if it was direct, but it seems like the sort of kindness that a central authority would do, and I liked it."

### Who is who?

Something apparent from reading all the responses is the conflation of the two entities, BrickLink and LEGO Group. Things have changed on the BrickLink platform and some users are pointing fingers at LEGO when they should probably be pointing them at BrickLink. Or pointing them elsewhere. In any event, what is clear is that for some users BrickLink is now LEGO and the users are assuming either correctly or incorrectly that LEGO is the root source of the changes and are laying the credit or blame with LEGO. We at the magazine tend to think that the changes relative to taxes and other legal compliances are issues that any company doing business on the internet has to deal with, and as such are within BrickLink's necessary sphere of governmental compliance, and are not directives and mandates that are coming down from TLG.

For example, the issues surrounding color are wide and deep and could stand some time and energy devoted to the situation from on high to get things into a consistent nomenclature across LEGOs own platforms, to facilitate interconnection with third parties via APIs and whatever other relevant technologies are in play, and to reduce friction and confusion at the consumer level. The color name change from "flesh" to "nougat" was initially suggested by one specific long-time

contributing member on the BrickLink forum because not all persons have the same color flesh. Forum regulars are aware of this. Survey respondents, apparently not frequenting the forum, mention the color change from flesh to nougat a few times in response to various different survey questions and they clearly point a finger at LEGO for directing the change.

While not frequently mentioned in survey responses, the intellectual property rights issues relative to MOCs on BrickLink likely are subject to dictates from LEGO. That said, we do have to question the apparent heavy-handedness BrickLink is using to enforce the policy, which, to some, comes across as "if there is any doubt about anything, disallow everything".

There are other who's who issues relative to the catalog changes that are attributed by respondents to one entity or the other, often emphatically, and outside the gleaming white walls of the Ivory Tower of Irvine does anyone really know who is steering the catalog decisions? We know the decisions are no longer being guided by the volunteer associates as this has been stated on the forum.

There are a few instances in the survey responses where respondents call on LEGO to raise their profile relative to BrickLink, at least two of these are noted at Q10 above, and we have to agree. We feel it would go a long way to quelling the masses and reducing the speculation and disinformation if LEGO would come out and clearly and specifically define to what degree they are and aren't involved with direction and policy making at BrickLink. Given the current state of things, especially after reading survey responses,

we can only conclude that the absence of clarity is muddying the reputations of both LEGO and BrickLink.

### Did LEGO miss the boat?

Given that BrickLink was conceived by an AFOL for similarly minded AFOLs, and that its content was shaped and populated by a hardcore AFOL community over many years, is the introduction of a new audience of less hardcore individuals who are not necessarily aware of or wanting to become part of the AFOL community, a step in the right direction? Yes, additional bodies may increase sales somewhat, but are these new folks going to develop into long-time fans, devoted followers, and contributors? Some sellers are noting an increase of problem buyers and new buyers with a totally different set of expectations and a distinct lack of understanding of what the BrickLink marketplace is and how it operates.

One survey respondent notes:

"BrickLink is a platform for professional AFOL community and now waves of ordinary buyers who think it's some "spare brick" LEGO store come in without any idea about what BL really is.

I mean if there is some promoting going on, maybe the target audience is not the right one."

We would think that if LEGO is going to promote BrickLink to the casual customer, it should coincidentally explain what BrickLink is and how it functions. The AFOL who organically discovers and becomes involved with BrickLink is of considerably different temperament than Jane Weekday being told by a store associate that last year's no-longer-in-stock set can be found on some obscure web site. And when Jane arrives at said web site she can be met with "this store doesn't ship to my state/country", impossible payment options, and a myriad of other interface and procedural shortcomings. If Jane makes it to the forum and asks a question, she is just as likely to be greeted by a member of the legion of frenemies of mankind as not. She certainly will not be greeted by BrickLink staff. Anybody reading this pretty much knows that navigating the idiosyncrasies of BrickLink requires time, patience, desire, and the testicular fortitude of a mother giving birth to quintuplets.

### WTF? Messaging versus Reality

In the video message posted 2 December 2020, <https://youtu.be/YxUldvkHt4Q>, Julia Goldin:

"Our number one priority is the community, and you are this community. . .and what is really beautiful about this platform is it enables you

**“BrickLink is a platform for professional AFOL community and now waves of ordinary buyers who think it's some “spare brick” LEGO store come in without any idea about what BL really is. I mean if there is some promoting going on maybe the target audience is not the right one.”**



Julia Goldin and Marvin Park, from video posted 2 December 2020

to connect seamlessly with everybody around the world and do it in a way that really services your needs.”

“So our number one priority is to invest to strengthen the relationship we have with the community. . .”

Let’s pause here for a moment. The number one priority is the community. The number one priority is to invest to strengthen the relationship we have with the community. Okay. *Number One*. Said it twice. Let’s continue.

“ . . . and that’s why we will expand the BrickLink team that will include a bigger focus on the community relations. This will enable us to have more dialogs with you and to listen to you and to get your input. Because with your input we can develop the tools and the platforms to enable to service you in a much better and more effective and efficient way.”

“Our future vision is for BrickLink to be a modern global platform for all adult builders. A platform that . . . is able to service your needs, whether it is from building or being able to access the marketplace or being able to connect with other builders. . . around the world.”

Is it safe to say what we have seen in December, January, and February is exactly the opposite of that? BrickLink’s handling of the various tax schemes and BrickLink’s requirements for compliance have not achieved that goal, to say the least. We see some stores restricted from shipping. We see some stores with no possible way to comply with both BrickLink’s requirements and legal requirements of their own countries. Certainly some of the blame can be laid at the feet of the various taxing authorities, but not providing adequate or workable payment options through their portal is completely on BrickLink. What we think we see is a solution born more of some skill or systemic limitation on BrickLink’s

part instead of devising a workable solution that fits the needs of the sellers. Instead of a global community we have community members stuck in regional silos with no way to access foreign markets.

Marvin reiterates the point: “The LEGO Group is investing significantly to BrickLink by expanding the organization to better serve the needs of the community. First of all we are ramping up BrickLink team and also setting up a dedicated role of community engagement to better reflect and coordinate different needs from the community. . . With the upgraded capability of the team, we are committed to enhance the performance and security of our marketplace platform.”

Julia: “In the next couple of days, Marvin and I and our community engagers will be really listening and actively engaging with you in a dialog, and I’m really looking forward to hearing from all of you.”

### Eight weeks later

Trying to be thorough in our line of inquiry, we wondered: “did this happen?” Did Marvin and Julia and the “community engagers” really listen and actively engage in a dialog?

We hadn’t heard of anyone being engaged “in the next couple days” and no one anywhere in the survey mentioned anything about being engaged. The survey said emphatically the opposite with 154 responding “no”. We reached out on the LAN to see what, if anything, we could find in regards to the question there. We were directed to Russell Callender at BrickLink. Russell replied graciously and quickly to our inquiry. We have edited together our questions and his answers for clarity.

**HBM:** An important part of our survey is based on the message conveyed by LEGO in [the December 2] video. At 2:49 Marvin mentions: “First of all we are ramping up BrickLink team and

also setting up a dedicated role of community engagement to better reflect and coordinate different needs from the community.”

While we have identified communication from you as Admin, it is not clear to us how this new role of community engagement has been filled. Who is the dedicated community engagement person, when did they step into this role and what specific actions have they taken?

**RC:** When the Admin account is used to post a reply in the Forum, that is the account that speaks for the whole site. For the most recent News post, we actually had a team of people who recorded the responses, came up with answers, and then finally one person posted the answers under the Admin account as they were ready. This is what Julia is referring to by “our community engagers”. This “group method” of answering is something we’ve done several times since the acquisition, and actually many of the responses I give from my personal account are a combination of narrative from multiple sources as well.

I’m pleased to see that you have taken notice of some new efforts in community engagement. The community is a critical part of our plan to move forward as a site, and a new role dedicated to Community Engagement is indeed being developed. But as with many things concerning the transition we are in at the moment, it is taking perhaps longer to get going than we had originally hoped. This is always the risk of mentioning any sort of upcoming plans in public. In this case I would expect the role to be officially established some time over the next few months. But no promises.

. . . I am often the one that physically accesses the account, but there are also others. Currently we have two public facing employees—myself under Admin\_Russell and Rachel under QA\_Rachel. We did once use a “LEGO AMA” account for purposes of answering questions. But even though my account is currently the most visible, I do not fill the Community Engagement role. I am the Head of Administration, and my official role in the Forum is more akin to that of a police officer. I am often asked, however, to share information publicly on behalf of other people (see the many recent posts on tax and VAT issues).

Regarding the official new role, we hope it will be filled soon. We do not typically disclose information about the role of BrickLink employees to the public. However, it would be reasonable to assume that a person filling a role entitled “Community Engagement” would become known to the public.

# “...I’m really looking forward to hearing from all of you.”

**HBM:** At 5:20 Julia mentions “In the next couple of days, Marvin and I and our community engagers will be really listening and actively engaging with you in a dialog, and I’m really looking forward to hearing from all of you.”

We have looked at the BrickLink forums and the only public record of this active engagement appears to be this thread [<https://www.bricklink.com/v2/community/newsview.page?msgid=1236889>], which contains some engagement from the Admin over a period of eleven days from the initial announcement.

Aside from that topic, who was engaged and what tangible effects has that engagement had?

**RC:** We are still in the process of getting things started in a formal sense, but informally there has been a lot of activity surrounding community engagement from even before the acquisition.

The vision that we have is that community engagement is not something that is tacked onto an otherwise independent program—we are really striving to make community engagement part of the essence of our BrickLink company. There is a lot of background work being done at the moment which will build the foundation for a complete and authentic approach toward the community.

**HBM:** In what other ways has the community been publicly engaged and what has resulted from that engagement?

**RC:** There hasn’t been anything public yet.

**HBM:** The conversation linked above also doesn’t reveal anything about a Community Engagement Team. Who are the members of this Community Engagement Team and what are their individual roles and how have they interacted with the community?

**RC:** I wish I could help you more, but the extent that this sort of inside information is revealed will be up to the new Community Engagement role. What I will tell you now is that there will be a formal role and a team in some form will be there to support them.

I look forward to reading about the results of the survey.

## It didn’t happen.

That’s our takeaway from this communication. Two months after stating that the community would be engaged by Marvin and Julia, BrickLink

is still in the process of getting things started, there will be a Community Engagement Role, and inside information is inside information which will or will not be revealed if and when the Community Engagement Role actually becomes a thing.

It is discouraging to us... and one might imagine embarrassing for the Chief Marketing Officer of LEGO... to make public statements and then not deliver. What is the community to think when the CMO states “... I’m really looking forward to hearing from all of you,” and then can’t be bothered to have a simple conversation? At the very least it is not good marketing.

For BrickLink to promise something and not deliver is regarded by many as standard operating procedure for the last seven years, so no real surprise there.

## Twelve weeks later

A visit to the BrickLink forum will reveal that last year’s status quo is this year’s status quo, plus some new quos that have come up during the last year. Site reliability, which had been relatively good for several months, seems to have again taken a downturn with notable incidents in early February and again in late February and early March. The tax situation and the requirement that sites have an onsite payment method enabled still hasn’t been communicated sufficiently to store owners as there are frequent questions posted about “why can’t the customer check out” and “customer says I don’t ship to [someplace] but I do.” Other problems mentioned in the survey all persist at one level or another. And there is still no notice of a “community engager.”

## Turning back the clock

Going back to this thread at BrickLink, <https://www.bricklink.com/messageThread.asp?ID=261535&nID=1171248>, we find a nice chart, courtesy of AFOL StormChaser. He counted up all the people on the forum who expressed a position about the acquisition. We thought it would be interesting to compare that data set with the current data set. Interestingly enough his dataset then contained 162 points and our current one contains 171. So there is a fairly close parity in the numbers.

For comparison purposes we will take

## StormChaser’s Chart:

40 Pro, 38 Con, 37 Wait and See, 37 No Opinion

Positive	Negative	Wait and See	No Opinion
Acorn04	amebica	ashermer	59transamman
Adjour	Barrythelego	bje	Admin_Russell
allistar005317	Biglesdug	Bricks_NW_UK	AndersPaludan
Androv	Black_Arnor	calebfishn	Blue85
APS_HEARS_ABS	charlman70	calsobricks	Brett1666
arinc	christus1313	cycbuld	BrickBuy
ash_274	d3Rr4d0if	DB361	BricksBoy
axaday	d65n	Dolfer413	brikomania
BigBBricks	dawnie82	EnchantedBricks	Brock
BrickCompulsion	dearlydeparted	fantasmadaopera	Captain_Q
Brickity	Dino1	gilles78120	celloguy
coomleray	Djurae	gogogovno	charlesjay88
Costruzionologo	echogamer	Hardstone	Classicsmiley
DallasBricks	elangab	HTownBricks	cwl
DarcTangent	Emilio_Magnelli	Legoboy_II	DeLuca
dcarmine	iancellis	legocastle	electricbaer
Doughboy6480	IronRaven	Lottieslego	firestar246
edeevo	J_Money	Louvrecaire	FoxPrimus
gcarter03	jackdg	Marco0	Give.Me.A.Brick
gaurnt	julencin2000	MonkeyManWhee	leopard37
juliek	JusTic8	montana_girl	manganschlammm
misbi	keith_rowland	Nathan123	medicus
monkeynut12	kennard42	nize	mhortar
msutuba	legokopen	Old2new4u	miskox
picabo	legoman77	QCBricks	negative
PipplyblyDylan	lmeyer	Quill_Toys	nersdsorprez
Rob_and_Shelagh	locksdorf	randy1	nikilyn
stacey_love	lylicfich1	red_wheelbarrow	Peterjritter
StormChaser	Mardosul	Sadler_Bricks	popsicle
Stuart9	mfav	Shintaku	povoq
SuperChris01	Patko	speshy	RedBeardDan
Teup	pilotguy72	StarBrick	Schuler
tomato_1984	Redn_2000	Steineflut	superbonzo
Tommie06	rprebel	SylvainL5	tadmochi
tvettima	rtjpsen	VandyandtheMtn	thirsh42
udenbricks	runner_caller	WoutR	Thunor
victor_lego	ShrikeArghest	yorbrick	xGattoMattox
waltzking	SimplyBricks		
	Smokie31		
	stefan		
	supergoose		
	the.lego.lord		
	thornton_john		
	UltimateBrick		
	uslackeru		
	wookiee1987		
	zoomatomic		

2019-12-21 40 Pro 74 Neutral 38 Con



2021-01-24 9 Pro 91 Neutral 71 Con



StormChaser’s Wait-and-Sees and his No-Opinions, combine those as “neutral” and compare them to our current state perceptions from Q6. We’re aware this isn’t quite apples-to-apples, but as a rough indicator it should serve well enough as a comparison between the stated prediction of then versus the perception of now. It appears that the fairly even balance at that time between pro and con has definitely shifted now towards con. The cons have doubled and the pros have quartered. We would imagine this is not the trend that LEGO would want to see a year after their acquisition.

## Thanks to everyone who participated!

Sincerely, a big thanks to everyone who participated in the survey. We couldn’t have done it without you. Additional thanks to Russell for providing some BrickLink-side information.

If anybody has anything further to offer on this subject, feel free to submit via the contact form on our website. If we get something we deem of community interest, we will share it in an upcoming issue.

# EVERY MENTION OF XP

**W**ell. Almost. This is every mention of “the future of BrickLink” that appeared in our survey, minus maybe three which said that XP was noted in BrickLink’s future plans.

What follows is a compilation of the comments expressing thoughts on the XP platform, edited for brevity, and in no particular order. The unedited version is longer (oy!), but doesn’t change any sentiment expressed. For the record, we would like to note that the survey did not ask any question about XP, and mentioned it only as one of the multiple-choice answers to question 9. The subject of XP is definitely on the minds of a lot of BrickLinkers.

- 1 Move to XP, PROVIDED it has ALL the features of the current one
- 2 Forget XP
- 3 XP and stud.io and mobility don't concern me
- 4 XP seems like a skin overlaying the old site
- 5 I have no problem if BrickLink only becomes XP if that is the vision. If XP had everything buyers and sellers need AND it works I would use it every day.
- 6 XP is \$hit, don't want it
- 7 NO XP for me
- 8 XP is not an adequate solution to the deeply rooted issues
- 9 Before removing BL classic, make sure that all features are ported to XP
- 10 Would like to see XP thrown away
- 11 The XP user interface is utter nonsense
- 12 XP is horrible
- 13 I'm also dismayed that they're continuing to waste resources on XP rather than putting it in the bin where it belongs
- 14 Abandon XP
- 15 Forget XP
- 16 There are some good features in XP, but the massive rework of core systems (e.g. Parts Catalog and classification system) is very disorienting
- 17 BL XP sucks
- 18 DELETE XP
- 19 DELETE XP
- 20 DELETE XP
- 21 The XP Punisher
- 22 BrickLinkxpsucks@gmail.com
- 23 The XP site so hopeless and dysfunctional. I went back to the classic and don't want to be forced to use the XP system
- 24 XP system—nope
- 25 Forget XP

- 26 The new XP buying process is a nightmare
- 27 On XP it's so poor I will be unlikely to buy from BrickLink any longer.
- 28 It's been mostly business as usual with the lingering threat of XP
- 29 The beta release of BrickLink XP, this entire interface was atrocious and horrible in nearly every way imaginable
- 30 With regards to the XP layout, the platform has gotten significantly worse
- 31 XP is awful
- 32 I have seen BL XP and it's simply terrible
- 33 Do not try to oversimplify things by exerting higher pressure on the community and focusing solely on XP
- 34 We would also like to add that even though the LEGO Group is trying to make BrickLink more accessible with things like XP, they somehow ignore the fact that BrickLink is a global platform
- 35 PayPal is not available in our country and this makes XP outright unusable both for the buyers and the sellers
- 36 Stop development of XP
- 37 Whist in the background the XP version carries on. This is a product that no one other than Marvin Park wants
- 38 Except the failed attempt on launching XP—that was unusable junk which tried to cut features and limit usability
- 39 In first months after acquisition, LEGO tried to built a new design for BrickLink. This design wasn't better as the existing
- 40 They are working on a new interface for buyers without addressing any underlying issues with the site database or structure
- 41 Firstly, the mobile app...ugh
- 42 Don't go to two platforms.
- 43 Waste your new design idea!

**“I know in the video Marvin says ‘XP beta site’ but I swear to God it sounds like ‘XP parasite’.”**



# Programming the RI5 hub with Python

by Ahmad Sahar

**Hi!** I'm Shah. I'm a professional trainer specialising in MacOS and iOS software and hardware, and I also conduct classes on iOS App Development and LEGO Mindstorms.

Today we're going to learn how to program LEGO Mindstorms RI5 with Python. You ready? Great! Let's go!

What you need:

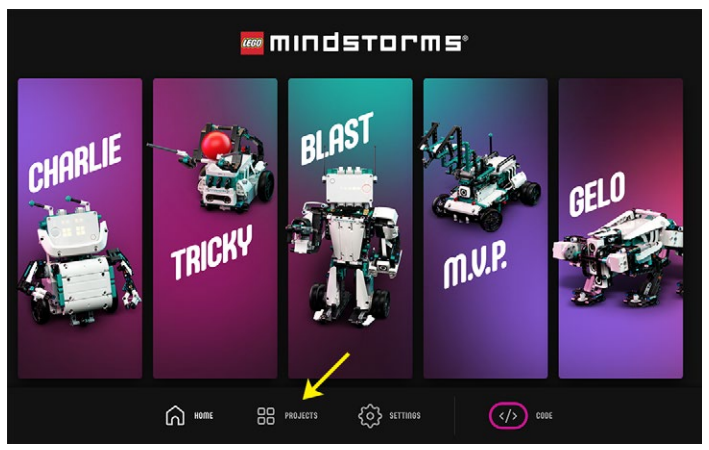
- LEGO Mindstorms Robot Inventor (set no. 51515)
- A computer (Mac/Windows), tablet (iOS/Android) or phone (iOS/Android) with the Mindstorms Robot Inventor app installed

### Before you begin

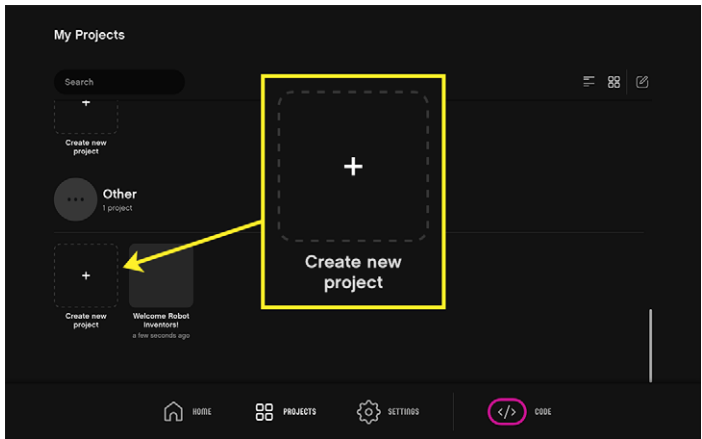
For this lesson you only need the RI5 programmable hub. Make sure the batteries in your programmable brick and device are charged.

### Your first program

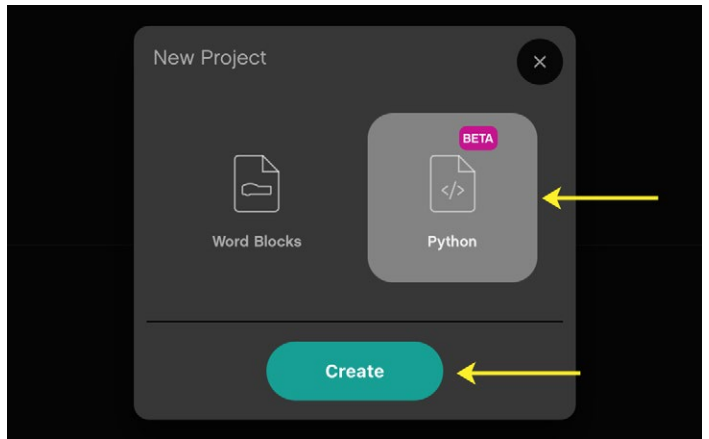
In this lesson, you'll just use the default project template, which makes your hub beep. Follow these steps.



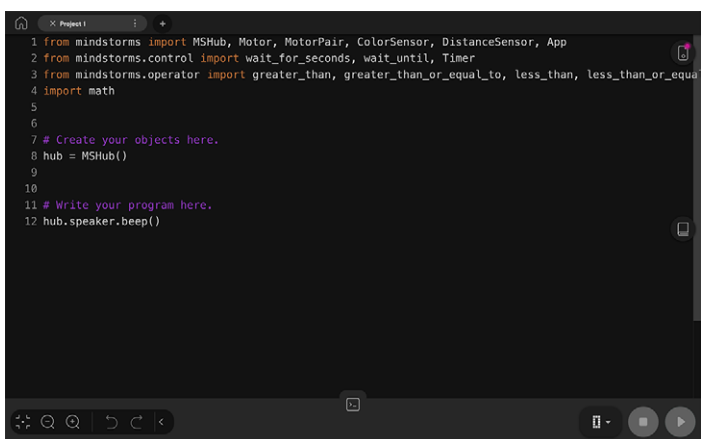
1 Launch the Robot Inventor app and choose Projects:



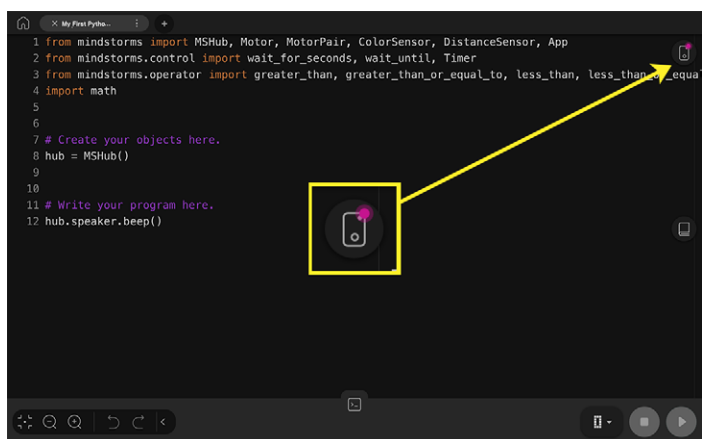
2 Choose Create New Project:



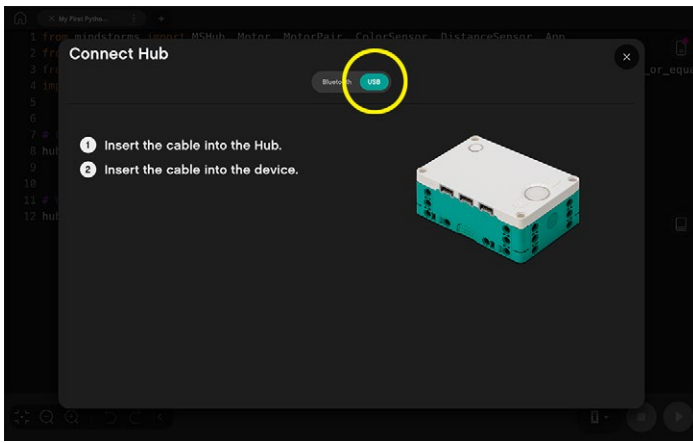
3 You can either create a Scratch project or Python project. Click Python then click Create:



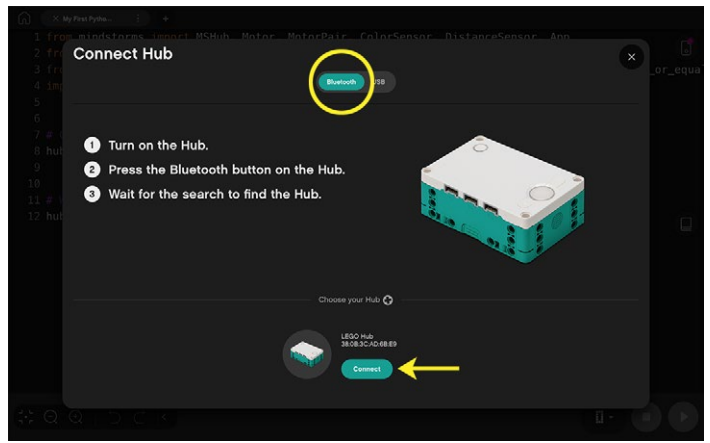
4 Your project will be displayed on-screen. You have successfully created your first project! Great! Next, you'll connect to the hub so that you can run your script.



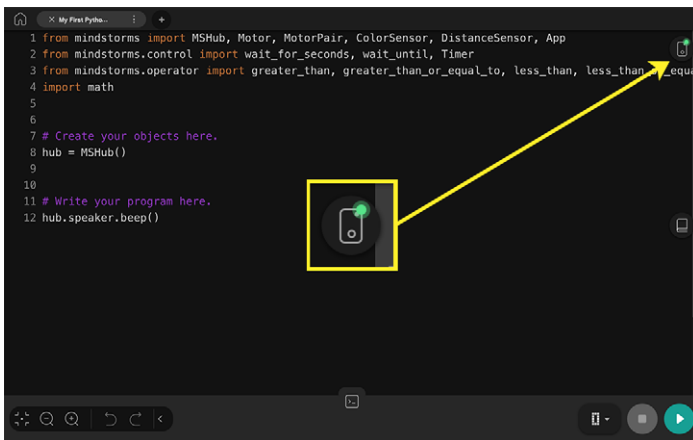
5 Click the hub icon in the upper right hand side of the screen:



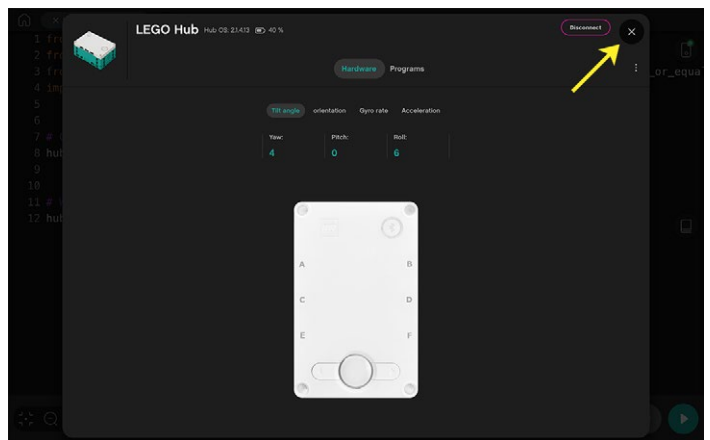
**6** Follow the on-screen instructions to connect using USB or Bluetooth. (USB is not available with mobile devices.) The USB connection screen is shown above. The hub will be automatically detected and beep once connected over USB. Note: If your computer delivers sufficient power over the USB port, it will also charge the hub.



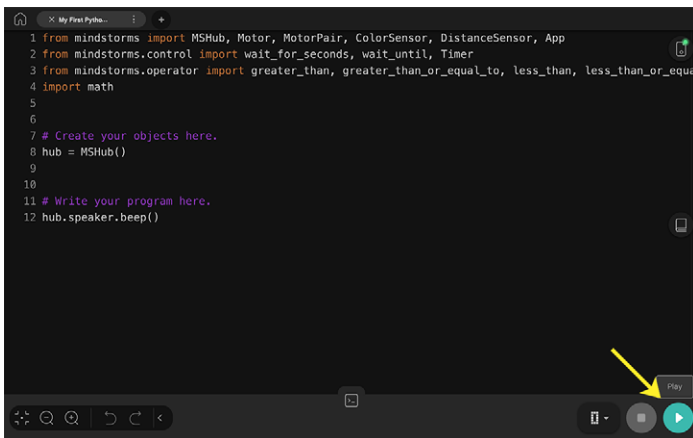
**7** The Bluetooth connection screen is shown above. Follow the instructions on the screen and click Connect when your brick appears in the lower part of the screen. The hub will beep once selected.



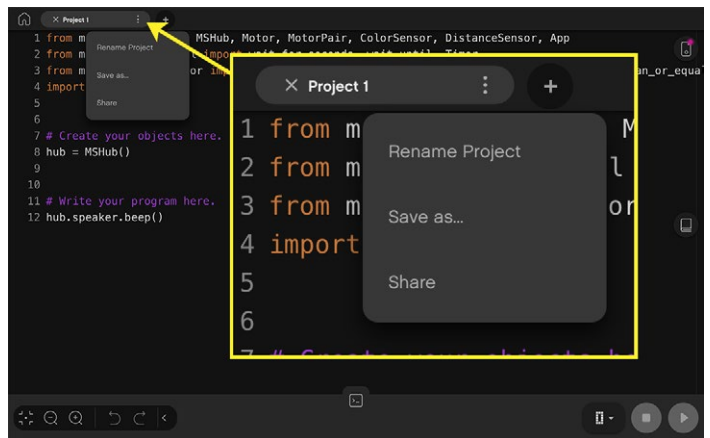
**8** Once your hub is connected, you'll see a notification pop up, and the red dot on the hub icon will turn green:



**9** Clicking the hub icon will show you a detailed view of your hub. Click the x button to dismiss this screen. You have successfully connected your RI5 programmable hub!



**10** Now you'll run your script. Click on the green arrow at the lower right hand side of the screen to transfer your script to your hub and run it. You should hear your hub beep.



**11** If you wish, in the desktop environment, you can rename your project by clicking the line of three vertical dots next to the project name. On mobile devices you will have to close the tap the home icon, then the projects icon, then the edit icon, select the project, then Rename.

# Yay!

You have just created and run your first Python program on the RI5 programmable hub! In the next lesson, you'll explore the Python programming user interface, learn about the program you created and view the programming documentation in the Robot Inventor app. See you then!



# TICOLUG

**L**uis Escalante is the Ambassador of TicoLUG, the first and only 'Recognized LEGO® User Group' (RLUG) in Costa Rica, a small Latin American country located in Central America. Luis has been kind enough to tell us everything we need in order to get to know this LUG a little better.

The inhabitants of Costa Rica are known worldwide as 'Ticos', hence the name of our community. Our idea started more than 10 years

ago, in 2010, when a group of five friends decided to get together to share experiences around this magnificent hobby, which we enjoyed so much when we were kids and which we are even more passionate about now that we are adults.

Currently the group is made up of more than 40 LEGO fans, collectors and builders, from the youngest, who are represented by their parents, to the oldest, who are over 50 years old. Most of us met through a friend's recommendation or by attending an event. However, we know that in our country there are many people who enjoy this hobby, as much or more than us, so we always invite people to follow us on our social networks and become part of this great family.

Funding is essential to be able to carry out our activities and provide a service to our members, and as part of the requirements on joining the community, our members are asked to pay a monthly fee of 3,000 colones (local currency), or

approximately \$5.00, which is used to cover all of our expenses.

In 2013 we organized our first exhibition in a small shop, then in 2015 we were invited to participate in the inauguration of the first LEGO Store in Costa Rica. But it was not until 2017 when we decided to take it to another level, and from that moment we worked hard towards the common goal of becoming the first RLUG in Costa Rica. After more than 20 events and meeting the requirements of the LEGO® Ambassador Network (LAN), we achieved our goal in May 2019.

Every year, to celebrate Children's Day in our country, we organise our biggest and most special event, but in September 2019 it was the biggest in our history. In the year of our official recognition, more than 30 members showed their sets, MOCs and dioramas covering more than 800m2 of exhibition space, and with an influx of more than 6,000 visitors. This was an event we will



definitely never forget. We are also very proud to have Francisco Escobar, a member of the select group of 10K LEGO® Ideas in our community. He is one of the few Latin Americans to achieve this recognition and currently has other active projects on the platform.

As for all LUGs, Covid-19 significantly affected our plans for 2020. The community meetings went from being face-to-face to virtual, and the physical events we had confirmed during the year had to be cancelled. However, we did not let the pandemic beat us and decided to reinvent ourselves using digital tools. Through social networks we managed to hold more than 30 live events with various fun themes for all our fans

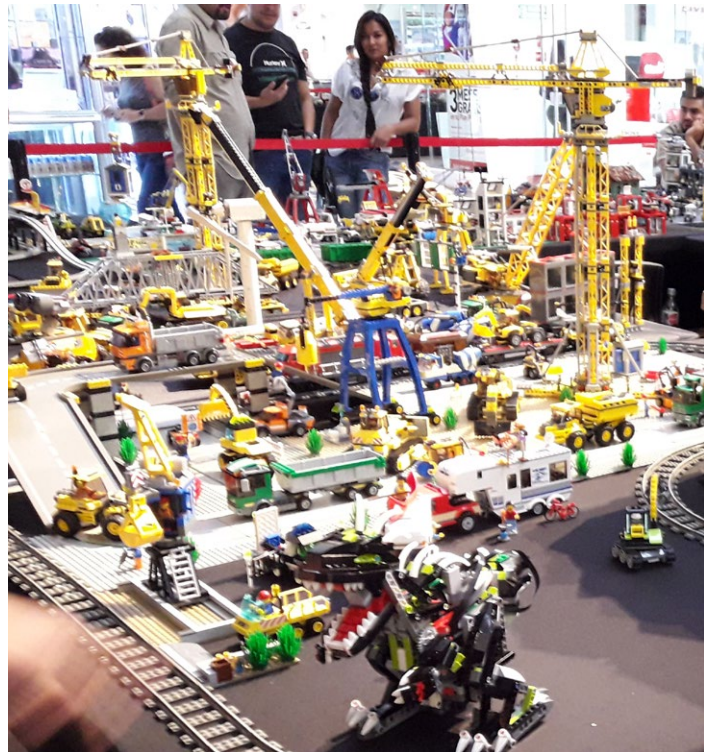
and members of the community.

Since being recognised as a LUG, our relationship with the LEGO company is very important for us. On the one hand, I consider the relationship with the LAN to be very good. Our participation is active both in forums and meetings, and I was recently appointed 'Brickmate' to help new ambassadors take their first steps. Yet on the other hand, in Latin America we don't have any LEGO Office, so the market is controlled by local distributors, the prices are very high, and we only have Certified Stores; so the relationship becomes very complicated or doesn't exist at all.

In Latin America we need more help from LEGO





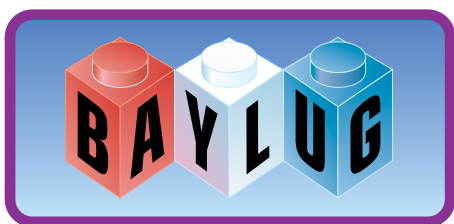


directly or through the LAN, to be heard and to try to establish a relationship with local distributors, who sometimes do not understand our role as an official community or find it difficult to give us space within their businesses. On the other hand, we continue our efforts to eliminate the gaps between official and certified shops, in order to obtain greater benefits as consumers of the brand in this region.

The future of our community is very promising, and in the last decade we have achieved things that before were just a dream. The benefits provided by the LAN always help us to improve and grow, for example with LUGBULK which gives us the opportunity to materialise our projects and really let our imagination fly.

Our plans for the future are to continue growing as a community and of course to maintain our official recognition, and we have always wanted to organise our own big LEGO event, like those which take place each year in various cities across the United States and Europe, where really impressive dioramas are built and fans from all over the world attend.

To finish I would like to share with you a personal anecdote. In May 2019, I had the opportunity to celebrate my 35th birthday, together with my wife Priscilla in the town where it all started, almost 90 years ago: the Home of the Brick, Billund, Denmark. We visited LEGO® House and the first LEGOLAND theme park, and being in front of the little house where this great hobby started was a really amazing and unforgettable experience.



We are BayLUG, the Bay Area LEGO Users Group and Train Club. The name comes from combining “Bay Area” with “LUG” because we are based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our LUG was founded in October 1998 during a meetup of LEGO fans at LEGO’s 25th Anniversary Traveling Truck Show in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. We wanted to start a train specific LUG (or LTC), but there weren’t enough train fans then so we started a general LUG instead. In 2000 we finally had enough interest to start a train-specific subgroup named BayLTC. Both groups have been very popular and are busy throughout the year with both train-specific and general LEGO events.

BayLUG is governed by a five member Executive Committee consisting of five Elected Officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Quartermaster. There are also several Appointed Officers and Committee Chairs that help with club operations and activities. We have

membership dues that are paid upon joining and then again with each annual renewal. We also have an annual holiday show, and we split the proceeds 50/50 with the museum that hosts us.

Our growth is very organic and comes naturally through word-of-mouth from the events we hold. We are planning on participating in the largest train show in the USA in the summer of 2021, assuming the pandemic doesn’t interfere. We also have our 25th anniversary coming up in a few years, so we are looking forward to celebrating that. Right now all of our events and meetings have been cancelled through to at least December, which includes our annual holiday show/fundraiser. We are having unofficial weekly virtual hangouts and official monthly virtual LUG meetings, all done via Zoom. Many of the virtual tools we are now using due to the pandemic will continue to be used in the future because it will make things a lot easier going forward with respect to event planning and committee meetings.

Our relationship with the LEGO company has been great. I’ve been an Ambassador for several years now. The wealth of information I get to share and the opportunities we receive exceed anything I could have expected. I also get to use my experience to help new Ambassadors in the

Brickmate program. Two years ago we celebrated our 20th anniversary. This was a milestone that once seemed unachievable but we have made it there with the support of our membership.

<https://sites.google.com/view/baylug-holiday-show/holiday-show?authuser=0>

**Gingerbread Falcon** by Lia von Damm.  
**Ornaments** by Joel Marbella. **How the Grinch Stole Christmas** collaborative display by BayLUG and compiled by Jenny Wiersema





# Z B U D U J M Y T O



by Maciej Kocot

The name of our LUG is Zbudujmy To. It means “let’s build it” in Polish, so it reflects what we do pretty well. An extra advantage is the address of our website in Tonga domain: [zbudujmy.to](http://zbudujmy.to). Once we considered buying the italian domain, “letsbuild.it”, but finally decided to stick to one.

Zbudujmy To was founded in 2013 by a group of AFOLs from the only, at the time, informal AFOL community in Poland. The idea was to register the new group as an official association, recognized by authorities. Thanks to this, Zbudujmy To can have its own bank account, sign agreements etc. This, in turn, makes it a lot easier to organise exhibitions and events or purchase bricks together. Being a court registered legal entity helped us multiple times when we negotiated with local authorities or protected the intellectual or financial interests of AFOLs against shady wanna-be business partners.

Our community started small at 15 formal members, but now has about 50. Our forum (open for everyone, also outside of the official association) has almost 1400 registered users. We keep building better and better MOCs, as well as organise exhibitions and events across the country.

The members of our community are scattered all around the country. We usually hang out together at events we organise. However, in bigger clusters we casually meet from time to time to have a beer, play board games and talk (not only about LEGO, believe it or not!).

Our main goal is to keep the good spirit among our group—to build amazing MOCs and show them to the world. It is inevitable that people become less active after some time, so we need to keep an influx of new builders. This is probably the greatest challenge nowadays. Many young builders use social media to share their creations rather than a forum. We are now searching for new opportunities to attract new

members by increasing our presence on Facebook and Instagram.

Formal members of Zbudujmy To pay a small annual fee. Sometimes we receive some funds from the venues that host our exhibitions. These funds are primarily meant to reimburse the transport and accomodation for those who take part in the event. We strongly believe that everyone deserves some support for contributing to the success of our LUG.

We hope that Zbudujmy To will remain as thriving as it is now. Moreover, we all become more proficient as builders and gain experience in organising events, so that they are entertaining to the public.

COVID definitely made our lives harder. We had planned some events and exhibitions in Poland, but needed to cancel or postpone them. On the other hand, spending more time at home gave some of us a solid creativity boost. Fortunately, everyone in our crew has stayed healthy so far.

In July four brave members of Zbudujmy To were present at MTP Summer Picnic with their models (keeping safe distance and wearing facemasks, of course). We are planning to hold another exhibition at the same venue soon and hope that it will happen in a safe way.

We have always been enthusiastic about being part of the LAN Program. We are also very grateful to LEGO for their support during the events organised by us. Besides the LEGO Group, we have a friendly relationship with LEGO Poland. The most outstanding example is the project that we completed in cooperation with LEGO Poland,



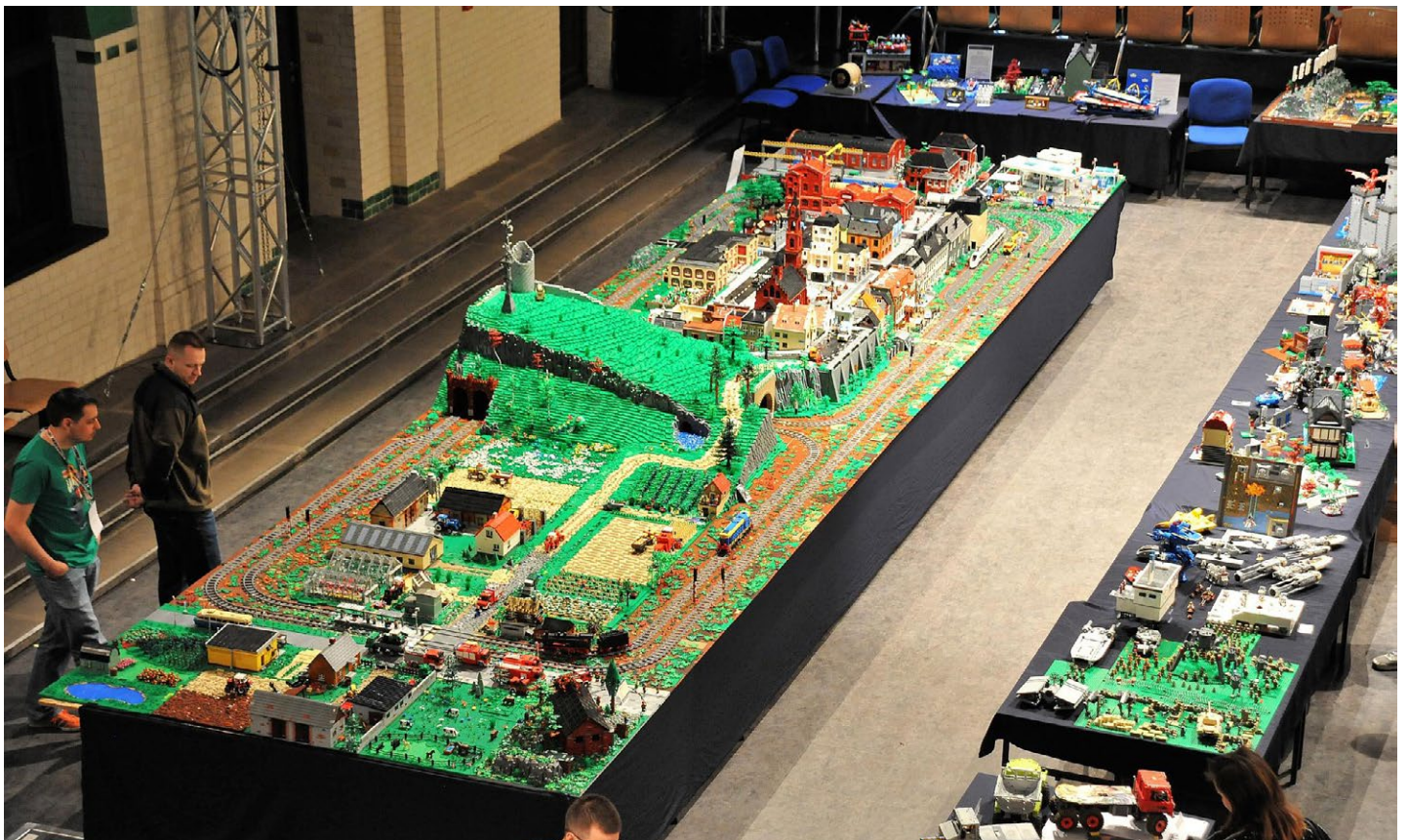


where members of our community built a series of models of famous Polish monuments.

We strongly hope that LEGO continues to actively support our events. We always have plenty of MOCs to show, but visitors also enjoy the possibility to build something or drive remote-controlled cars. We are also looking forward to challenging projects that we could cooperate with LEGO on (building Polish monuments, mentioned above, is a great example).

In 2015 we had an exhibition in Silesian Park in Chorzow. The park has multiple attractions, including a zoo, an amusement park and a planetarium. The venue was kind enough to set up a special show in the planetarium for us. We expected to see the regular stars above our heads, but instead we were shown an illustrated story of Little Prince for kids. Because LEGO implies kids, doesn't it? Since then, we always try to make it clear what A in AFOL stands for...

There is also another anecdote, related to our online forum. We have a section where any thread automatically disappears after three days of inactivity. We use it for ad-hoc discussions about nothing. Naturally, the threads often grow for days, weeks, or even months. And the longer they grow, the more determined we are to keep them alive. The current incarnation of the famous thread has been with us since December and just today it hit 2000 posts. It would be a shame to lose this legacy!





Space Station of Doom  
at Brickworld Chicago 2018

# KLUG

by Dave Sneijder

The Kenosha LEGO User Group had its genesis in the chance meeting of four LEGO builders at Brickworld Chicago 2010. Rich Leonowitz was waiting in line at the Northbrook LEGO Store to get the convention discount when he happened to notice the badges of the two people waiting in line in front of him, Jameson Gagnepain and his wife, Amy.

"You're from Kenosha, too?" Rich asked. "I met two other guys today who live there."

The next day Rich introduced Jameson to Chris Eyerly and John Wolfe. Because there was no club in Kenosha, it was decided at that meeting that the four of them would form the Kenosha LEGO User Group.

From the early days of KLUG, Trolley Town has been a focal point of the group's displays. During regular meetings, the four of them worked out

the standard for road design, sidewalk height and wiring for lights in the buildings. Many of the buildings in Trolley Town represent actual buildings in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Even the street cars which run on the streets of Trolley Town are based on actual trolley cars that ran in Kenosha.

It is also from Trolley Town that the club's motto of "Wretched Excess" developed. The tracks that the trolley cars originally ran on was 9V track. This track was used, not because the electric current was needed to power the train—it ran on batteries and still does—but rather just because they could. Also, there were a bunch of sand green colored bricks used in the landscaping, which was a rare colour in 2011 when Trolley Town made its first appearance. Again, the colour was used not because it served a purpose, but just because the group's members could.

From the appearance of Trolley Town until today, one of the greatest assets of KLUG is the diversity of our members, both in terms of demographics and in what they build. Young and old, men and women, Star Wars, Harry Potter, architecture and vehicles. The people of KLUG are

a diverse group, and we think that makes us all the stronger.

Besides Trolley Town, we also have several other large collaborative displays. There is the Space Station of Doom, which is a whimsical take on the Death Star from Star Wars. We also have a large amusement park display.

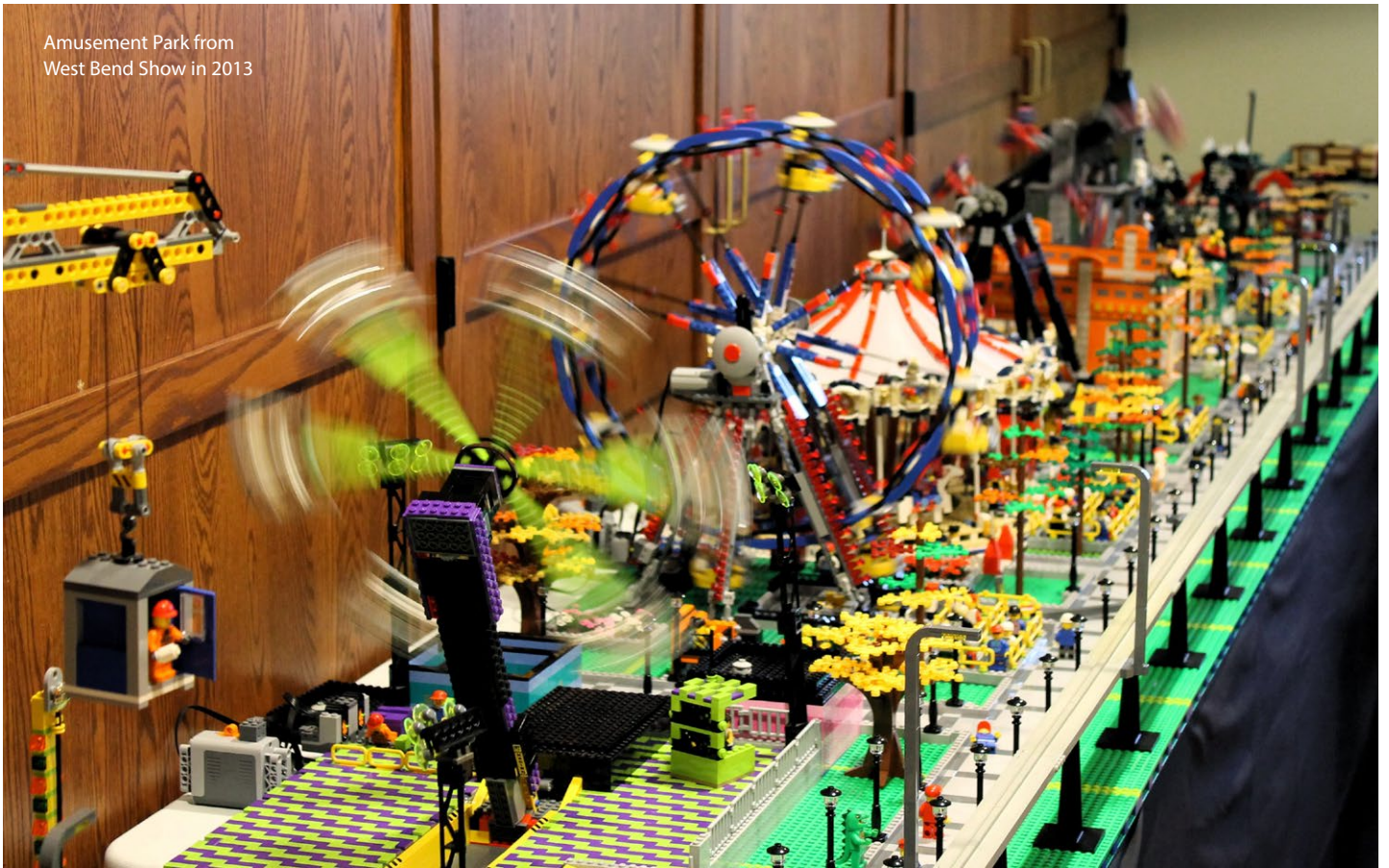
In its current form, KLUG has 50 active members. Most of KLUG's membership lives in southeastern Wisconsin and the northern suburbs of Chicago. However, there are members in Milwaukee and as far north as Green Bay, where KLUG and WisLUG cooperate in supporting FoxLUG.

During a "normal" year, we would do 8-10 public shows. Many of our events are at venues where we have developed a good relationship with the venue operators, such that they look forward to our return year after year.

Of course, 2020 was anything but a normal year. It put many of our regular activities on hold. During the summer, we were able to hold one in-person meeting for those who felt comfortable meeting in person. However, most of our meetings have taken place virtually.



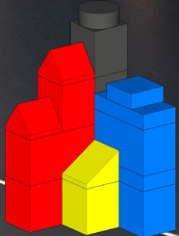
Amusement Park from  
West Bend Show in 2013



KLUG's Founding Members: John Wolfe, Jameson Gagnepain, Chris Eyerly and Rich Leonowitz

Trolley Town at Brickworld Fort Worth 2011





## Houston Brick Club

by Tim Howell

**H**owdy from Houston Brick Club! We are a group of AFOLs located in and around Houston, Texas, USA. Many people think of all Texans as cowboys and cowgirls, and while boots and big hats may occasionally show up at our gatherings, we actually have a wide range of members including teachers, engineers, medical professionals, students, stay-at-home parents, artists, and mechanics. Many of our members are skilled MOC builders, while some just collect sets, and others like nothing more than to sit and sort loose parts. We are open to all who enjoy LEGO products in one way or another.

Houston-area AFOLs have been meeting and putting on displays since at least 2012. We originally gathered as part of the state-wide group called TexLUG. As more members joined in different Texas cities, local LUGs were formed. TexLUG-Houston officially became a separate LUG at the beginning of 2018, and we later changed the group name to Houston Brick Club.

Members of Houston Brick Club (HBC) are currently busy planning Brick Rodeo, a family-friendly LEGO convention and exhibition to be held in the Houston area on July 22-25, 2021. LEGO fans from all over Texas, the United States,

and even other countries will come and display unique models built from LEGO bricks, attend presentations and workshops, participate in games, and socialize with other fans of the highly sophisticated interlocking brick system. This is a non-profit, all-volunteer event. In addition to our members, AFOLs from TexLUG, DFWLUG, TexLUG-SA, and Texas Brick Railroad will also help run the show. While this is currently being planned as an in-person event, the pandemic situation is being monitored diligently, and we will adjust as needed. More information can be found at [www.BrickRodeo.com](http://www.BrickRodeo.com), and by following #BrickRodeo on social media. All LEGO fans are welcome, and we hope to see you there!

HBC has always had strong in-person activities.

We enjoy getting together to talk about LEGO topics, share parts and building techniques, and to socialize. We have a lot of fun putting on displays for the public and talking with visitors. HBC members provide displays about ten times in a normal year at a wide range of events and venues. We have had 20-25 members display MOCs at an annual three-day pop culture convention which typically attracts around 50,000 public visitors, and we have had two members display for a day at a small library. We also display at Maker Faires, high school pop culture events, a children's museum, and a children's hospital.

HBC has taken part in a number of charitable activities over the years. Some of these have been building holiday wreaths from LEGO parts to be





donated to a hospital charity auction; collecting LEGO sets, other toys, and monetary donations for a children's hospital; and providing displays of MOCs at the children's hospital. These hospital displays are some of our most rewarding events. We set up in a wide pedestrian walkway for the day, and patients, families, and staff are excited to see the LEGO builds as they walk by. We are often told by hospital staff that there is a buzz in the air throughout the building when "the LEGO builders are here!"

We are currently working on a model of downtown Houston built from LEGO bricks. Led by a member who is a fan of microscale architecture, this model will cover at least twenty 32x32 baseplates and include roughly 40,000 parts. Individual buildings, parks, and other features are being built by many different Club members on a modular base so that everything can be easily



combined together. Although progress has been slowed by the current inability to meet in-person, we hope to have this completed for Brick Rodeo in July 2021.

Like for most of the world, 2020 required us to adjust to a new way of getting together. We shifted our summer convention to an online event using Zoom. Instead of in-person displays and activities, we had two days of presentations by video. While we missed interacting in-person, we did attract viewers from far more areas than we expected (including Costa Rica and Israel!). We were also thrilled to have four members of The LEGO Group join in from Connecticut and Denmark.

For most of 2020 we held our regular monthly meetings by video conference. For 2021, we look forward to in-person activities happening again at some point. More information can be found at [HoustonBrickClub.com](http://HoustonBrickClub.com) or search for Houston Brick Club on Facebook.

We hope that all of you stay safe, play well, and continue to find new ways to be entertained using LEGO bricks!





# SPACE FAN

by Carlos Méndez, HBM Editor Emeritus

**M**y "love story" with the Space line began in 1979, the year the line debuted in Spain, and lasted until... who are we kidding, it still lasts. I guess that's what happens with first love (I hope my wife doesn't read this...) I was lucky to have a mother who was more than understanding of my hobby. Although she sometimes took a bummer at me because all the space in the room that I occupied with my baseplates, I think deep down she was happy to always know where I was and what I was playing. When I was little I played interchangeably with my Town and Space sets, separately, together, mixed... They were innocent stories, where policemen protected citizens from natural phenomena, firefighters from fortuitous fires and astronauts explored the vast universe in search of resources for space colonization. Sometimes I made "crossovers" between the two lines better than those that are so fashionable now in the superhero series.

I was only seven years old when the Classic Space sets started to fill my Christmas gift list and gradually displaced the Town sets. I guess they gave my wild imagination more freedom. Many times I have wondered why, being so fond of science fiction, only this classic line (and later Star Wars) was able to earn a place in my heart. Maybe because of the age at which we met or maybe because later the lines about space changed their orientation towards more disputed stories, they became more "dark" in my eyes, to say the least. The classic line is undoubtedly more innocent than the later ones. You had your astronauts dressed in red (for me they were pilots), white ones (female astronauts) and yellow ones (scientists), and with them you lived adventures of colonization, accidents, rescues and discoveries. It is true that when the time came you could use some parts as improvised weapons, but at no time did the sets or the images that accompany them induce you towards violence, they emerged from my own stories, I guess influenced by what I saw on television. The

ships followed a classic triangular profile, which looked like the logical evolution of jet aircraft to spacecraft, which made them look very plausible. The vehicles had much more possibilities than the Town vehicles (more linked to their function in real life), while in space the imagination was the only limit. The ships used to bring compartments with bases, containers or vehicles. The vehicles had scanners, clamps, radars, or even rockets. A whole world of possibilities. And if you needed something, you invented it, nobody could tell you that that vehicle did not fly or that it violated any of the laws of physics. I was in space, in my space.

It is difficult to highlight a set from that time, almost all of them were wonderful, and for each person they can have more or less emotional value, but for me the ships of the LL900 series are legend. Especially the 928, a marvel of a set from all angles.

You can always find different opinions about when the Classic line ends, since there were certain changes in the aesthetics of the line. The first scheme was gray/blue/trans yellow and it

is the one that most people follow today. When gray/white/trans blue was introduced they coexisted without problems and can be seen together in most dioramas. Later other schemes appeared (gray/black/trans green, white/blue/trans yellow...) that in small doses did not clash in dioramas either. So when did it end? In my opinion the line disappeared when the minifig's classic astronaut uniform was replaced. That was the breaking point for me.

Until the internet became a phenomenon with global access, you might think you were a little crazy to keep thinking about a long-lost line, but a glance at the networks is enough to discover the number of people that keep the line alive. Not only that, they have made it evolve towards current parts and techniques, maintaining its spirit and colors. In the end, evolving is the way

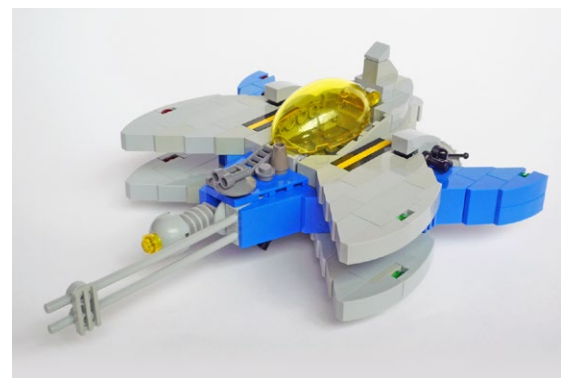
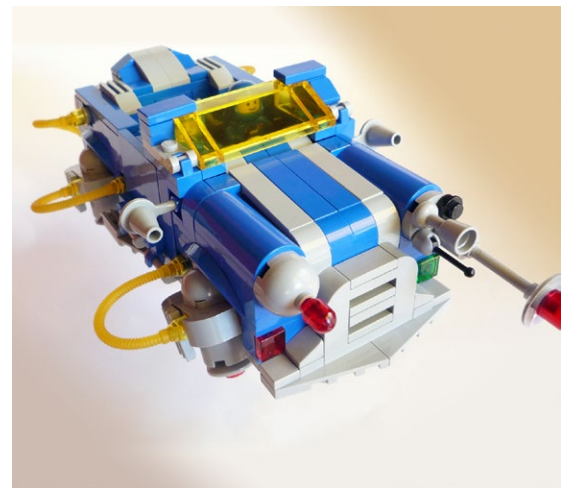
to survive. The LEGO company seems to have figured it out too, and has taken advantage of the umbrella from The LEGO Movie movies to launch some sets about the line. Perhaps the success of the only Classic Space LEGO Ideas set ever released (21109 Exo Suit) gave them a sign that it wasn't dead to fans. Also occasionally casts a nod to the line by putting their logo on minifigs not related to the line.

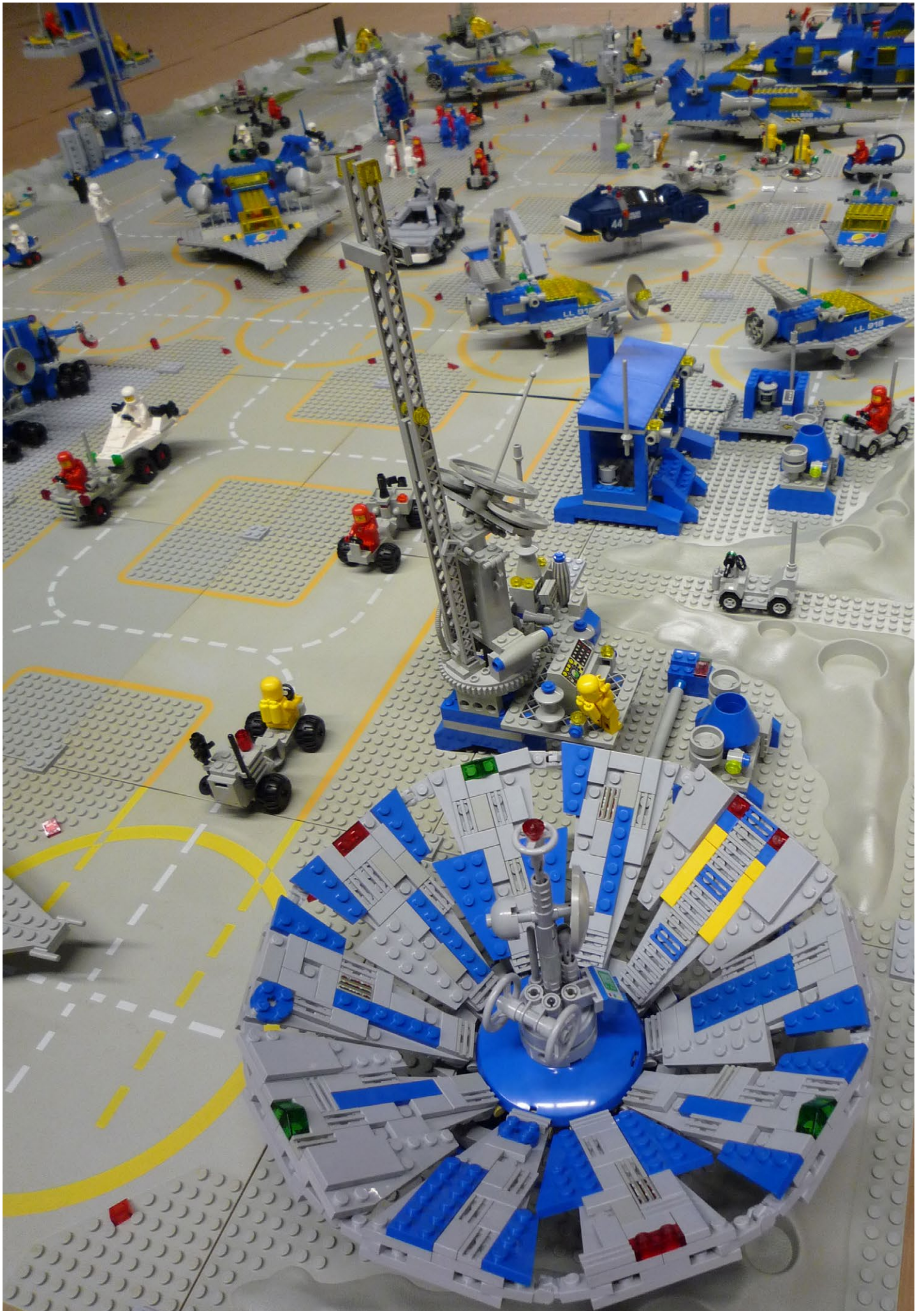
During all these years I have been gradually completing the sets that I could not get in my childhood. Always used, most of the time in good condition, others incomplete but still valuable. And in the events in which I have exhibited I have always participated in the Classic Space diorama. I must also say that the new sets that LEGO has been launching, such as the famous set featuring the pink astronaut (70841 Benny's Space Squad),

belong to my collection. . . and in more than one copy. And I am one of those who dream of new sets of the line.

Now you can find three trends, which can even coexist within the same fan depending on the mood in which he is. There are those that build models exactly following the canons of the line, there are those that adapt other constructions to the livery of the Classic Space, and there are those that have concentrated on modernizing the line and bringing it to modern times thanks to the Neo-Classic Space. And I say they can coexist because I, for example, have participated in all three disciplines.

So far my little story about the Classic Space. After so many years, writing this article, I am able to move back to my childhood, where I lived incredible adventures with my little astronauts. . .







# Q&A with Johan Alexanderson

**HBM: What do you do for a profession?**

JA: I'm originally a computer engineer and have worked as a web programmer in Sweden for a long time. But the last few years I changed career and started working as a freelance illustrator, cartoonist and painter ([instagram.com/artbyjalex](https://www.instagram.com/artbyjalex)). My focus now is mainly painting for upcoming exhibitions.

**HBM: How did you get started with LEGO®?**

JA: I built a lot with LEGO as a kid, but like many other AFOLs I gradually stopped building in my teens when I found other interests, and so I went into my 'Dark Age'. About 15 years later, in 2011, I had a very stressful time in my life where I felt I needed something to relax with. So I pulled out my old LEGO bricks and started building again. I enjoy building MOCs in all kinds of genres, but I specifically like creating larger realistic looking rooms with a 70s or 80s interior design.

**HBM: What is your favourite LEGO® element?**

JA: I don't really have one favourite element, there are so many that can be useful in different models







and building techniques. But I often find “Brick, Modified 1 x 1 with Headlight” to be useful.

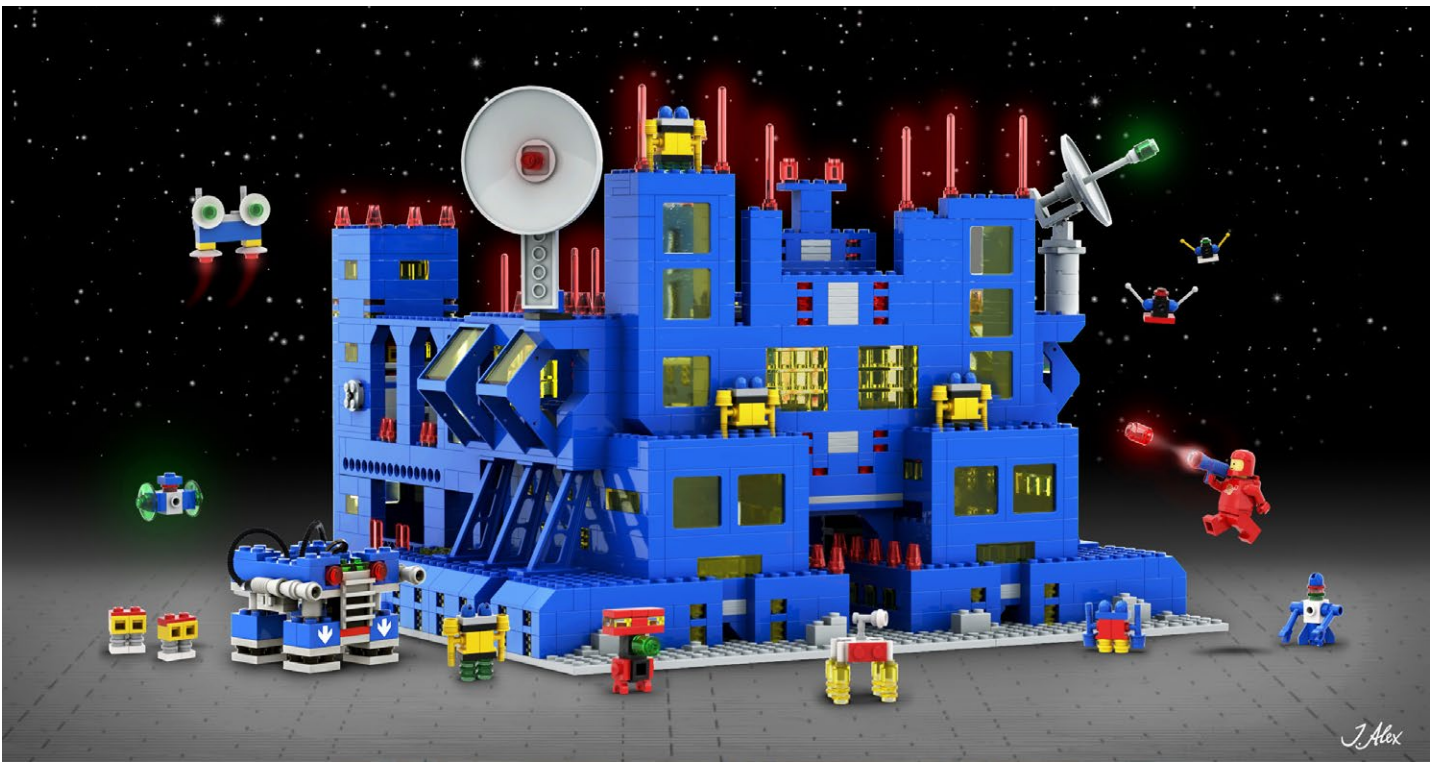
**HBM: What inspires you to create your layouts and MOCs?**

JA: Many of my MOCs have been inspired by some sort of nostalgic feeling. It can for example be when I see an older photo of an interesting environment, like a computer room from the 70s, or a vintage commercial from the 80s (which the “Breakfast” MOC was inspired by). I also enjoy creating abandoned and decayed buildings I see around where I live. I think that those kinds of old buildings are interesting since they sometimes can tell something about the past that you might not know of but still can imagine.

**HBM: You specialize in creating larger realistic looking rooms with a 70s or 80s interior design, why is that?**

JA: The 70s and 80s somehow fascinates me. It can be quite relaxing and nostalgic (I was born in the 80s) to watch photos or videos from that time and I also like the design and colours that were back then. So all together it inspires me to travel back in time and rebuild environments from the 70s and 80s. Building larger rooms in different sizes I think is fun since it can involve many new challenges and building techniques that you don't have when building in minifig size. And it is also a challenge to try and build something as realistic as possible.

**HBM: How much time do you spend building with LEGO®?**



JA: I have taken a break from building with LEGO lately, but during the periods I build it can be one or two hours a day.

**HBM: What MOC are you most proud of and which one has given you the most headaches?**

JA: It is hard to pick one since there are several that I am very satisfied with. "Breakfast" and "Kids' room from the 80s" are two of my larger LEGO rooms that I am proud of. In both of them there are many details and building techniques and a pleasant atmosphere and environment that I think many can relate to. In "Breakfast", as well as in several others of my MOCs, I also use a "forced perspective" on the background which is a trick to make certain built parts look further away than they actually are.

I think the one that has given me most headaches is my 27.5 cm tall model of E.T. It was a challenge to make it look like E.T. as much as I could and still have several technical functions built in, such as making his neck taller, movable arms and head and a light function on his chest. Since his head was quite heavy it was also a bit difficult to make the model stable enough.

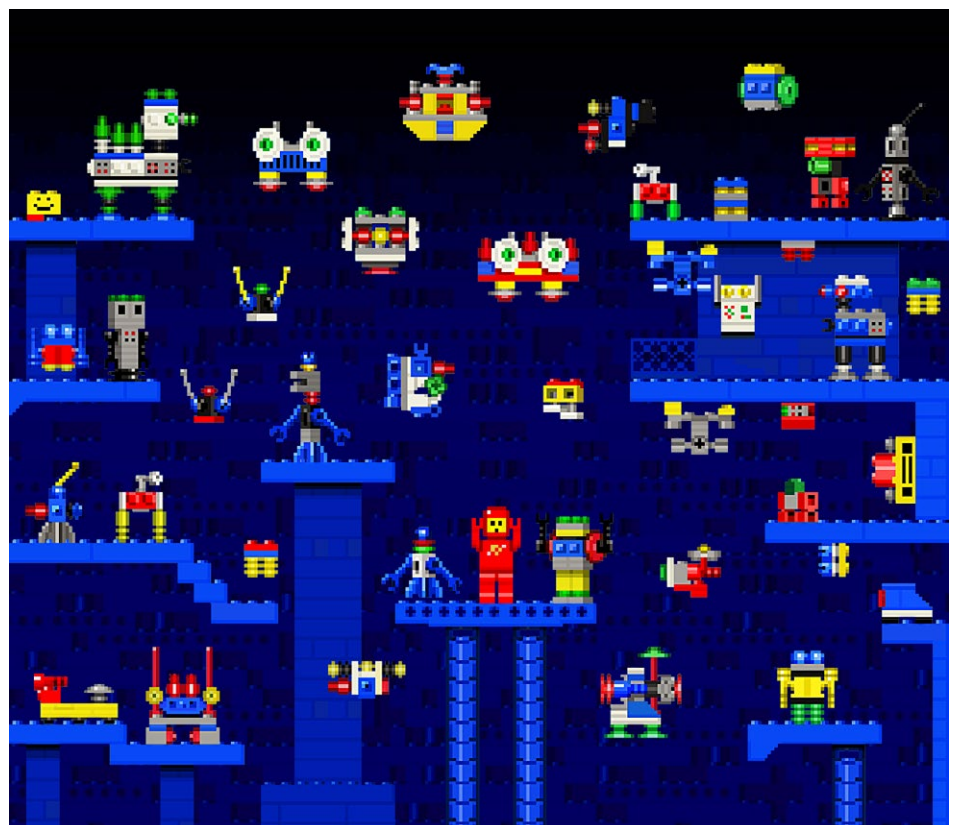
**HBM: Classic Space Adventure...What is it? How did the idea come up?**

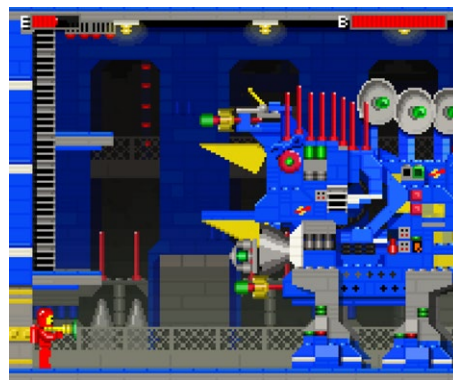
JA: Classic Space Adventure is a free 2D platform game I have created that is based on the LEGO Classic Space theme. I have written the game from scratch in the programming language Javascript, which means it can be run in a web

browser on a desktop computer. During my spare time I worked on the game for about two years, and it resulted in almost 400 pages of Javascript code. Since I love the pixelated graphics of older games from the 80s I decided to make the graphics in that style as well as the music and sound effects. And I also wanted to make it look as if the game was released around the same time as the Classic Space theme.

Ever since I was a kid I have been interested in making computer games, and it has for many

years been a hobby of mine to create retro styled games in Javascript and put them online. I really love the creative process when programming a game since it involves different areas, not just the programming but also making the graphics, music and the story for the game. The idea for this game came when I wondered what a LEGO game based on my favourite LEGO theme would look like if it was released back in the early 80s. At first I was planning on making a more action based game where you just walk from A to B and





shoot down robots, but the more I worked on the game the bigger it became and I started to think of a bit more complex story for the game and a larger world.

**HBM: Whats the game about? How can we play?**

JA: The story is about Red Spaceman who works on a space station on planet Mars, searching for extra terrestrial life and other unknown materials. But unlike the rest of his colleagues he is more of a daydreamer and finds his work a bit boring. One day when working in the caves he falls down into a hole and ends up in a Martian village underground! Red Spaceman becomes friends with the Martians, but the only way back home again is through the Red Door, a door that has been locked ever since their once peaceful city Robocity was taken over by evil robots due to a critical error in the robots. Unfortunately the key to the Red Door is kept by Robocity's leader Groxlox.



So Red Spaceman must enter this dangerous place and find the key if he wants to get back home again. It turns out that Robocity is a huge place and he has a long adventure ahead of him.

You can play it for free at <http://jalex.se/classicspaceadventure> in Chrome or Firefox on a desktop computer. To control the player you either use a keyboard or a gamepad.

**HBM: At several places in the game we find some sets of the original Classic Space LEGO®. How many sets can we find?**

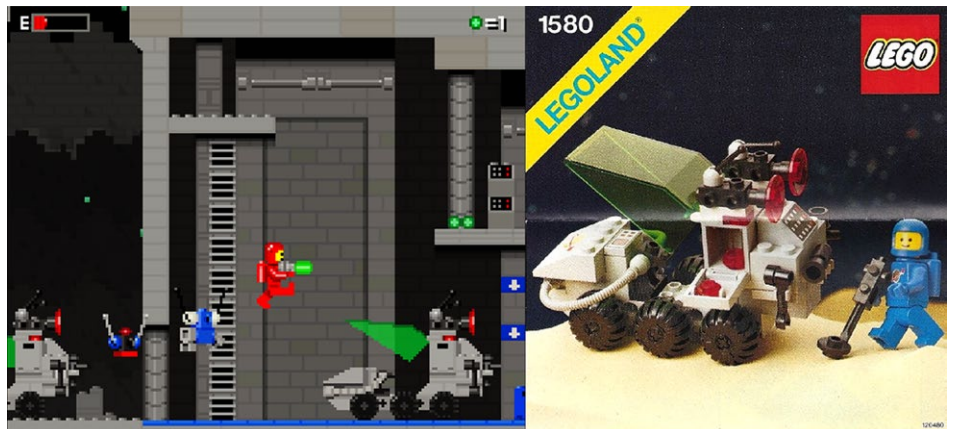
JA: There are about 10 Classic Space sets that can be found in the game.

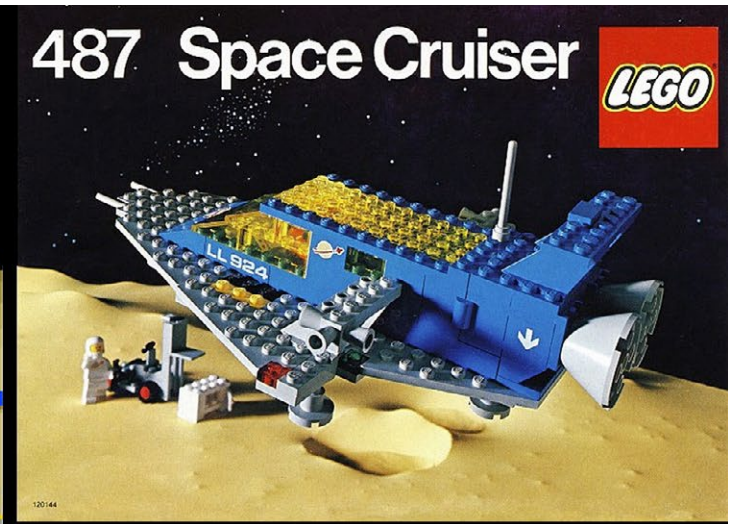
- 487: Space Cruiser from 1978. In the game it is found on Mars surface in chapter 1.
- 6970: Beta I Command Base from 1980. In the game it is found on Mars surface in chapter 1.
- 6892: Modular Space Transport from 1986. In the game it is found somewhere in Robocity in chapter 4.
- 6940: Alien Moon Stalker from 1986. In the game it is for example found on mountain Grax in chapter 6.
- 6872: Xenon X-Craft from 1985. In the game it is found on top of the Blue Space Castle in chapter 6.
- 1580: Lunar Scout from 1986. In the game it is found near Groxlox Castle in chapter 7.
- 1557: Scooter from 1986. In the game you can fly this ship in chapter 12.

**HBM: Do you belong to any group of AFOLs?**

JA: I belong to the Swedish LUG called Swebrick.

[instagram.com/classicspaceadventure](https://www.instagram.com/classicspaceadventure)  
[facebook.com/classicspaceadventure](https://www.facebook.com/classicspaceadventure)





# Kat Sipe

## RLFM on Twitch

The ISS is one of Kat's favorite sets



**M**y experience on the Twitch platform actually started because of my husband. He used to be in the food industry and wanted to do cooking content creation. We initially started on YouTube, but we jumped over to Twitch as the interaction in real-time was much more appealing. After he had been on Twitch for about six months I decided to start my own channel. Initially I was more of a gaming channel, but I started with the LEGO video games. During that time I bought the Hogwarts castle and thought it would be fun to build it on-stream. I had so much fun building it that I basically shifted my channel from a gaming channel with a bit of LEGO to a LEGO channel with a bit of gaming.

After I made that switch I started looking for more LEGO people to follow on Instagram and I came across BrickinNick (another RLFM here on the LAN). He had been doing LEGO building for several years and was able to plug me into the Brickbuilding community on Twitch. I also got to meet him at TwitchCon 2019 (which is Twitch's in-person convention with around 75-100K attendees). After that I became much more solidified in the Brickbuilding community and in the Discord that both streamers and members use to share MOCs, talk about upcoming sets, and discuss techniques. The community is great and very supportive of each other. Twitch has

features where you can "raid" into one another, so when you're finished with your stream you can bring your community to a new channel. This is a feature YouTube doesn't have. We're also starting to see a wonderful blending of the Food & Drink communities and the Brickbuilding communities because of mine and my husband's channels, as we have viewers who frequent both channels (and who then branch out to follow other streamers in these categories).

As far as my journey to become an RLFM, that started when I attended Bricks Cascade 2020. It was my first convention (which I touch on in the

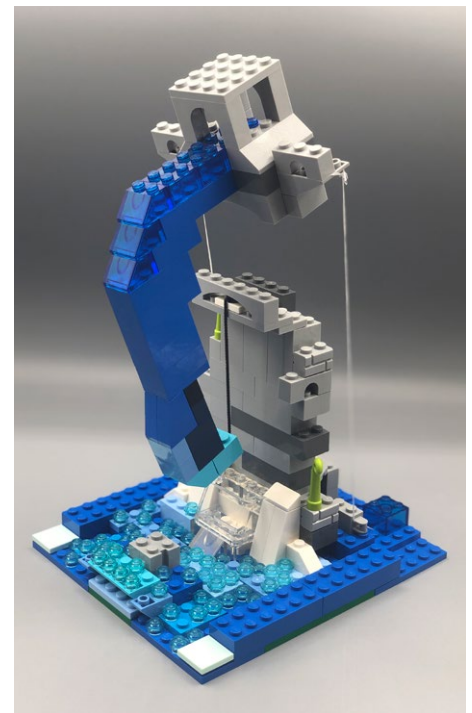
article, and I have an additional blog post I wrote specifically about the convention). I was really inspired by the WBI workshop and realized that we needed more women builders represented on that LAN. From February until I applied in May 2020 I really worked at pushing my channel and networking with other groups, like TrickyBricks (who has created "TrickyLug", an unofficial LEGO group), and the GayFOL communities. I was able to apply for RLFM status in May 2020. I was also contacted by Alyssa for other opportunities to work with LEGO, as she said she really liked what I was doing on Twitch. I had to wait until



Kat's re-creation of the therapy gym at her hospital where she works as a Doctor of Physical Therapy



Kat with Hogwarts, her first build on Twitch



Kat's waterfall tensegrity build, made when the tensegrity challenge occurred last year



A collaboration from Kat and her husband to bake and build a cake (from Milk Bar which is a popular chain in the US)



Kat at Bricks Cascade 2020, her first AFOL Networking event and LEGO convention

October for them to review my application, and in mid-November I got the email that I had been accepted into the LAN. Twitch was a big part of that, but in my onboarding interview Jordan said that every reviewer kept saying how “authentic” I was, and that this didn’t happen very often. As a newer builder it can be intimidating talking about LEGO, but I also feel I have a unique perspective and am coming into the community at a wonderful time as there are so many great sets that have been released recently. While I bring that authenticity when talking about LEGO, I also genuinely love the community that watches me build on Twitch. They are friends and family and we’re there to support each other, which has been

especially critical this past year with COVID. While we all enjoy building LEGO, we’re also able to talk about more serious topics as well. If viewers are having a hard time, my channel is a place that they can lean on each other for support.

My goals as an RLFM are to continue to bringing my authenticity to the LAN, which means I’m not afraid to speak up when I feel the need. Being both a woman and a queer builder (I am bisexual), I also want to help improve equity and inclusivity within the LEGO community as best I can.

My primary channel is <https://twitch.tv/misstapkat>, although I also have a Link tree that condenses a lot of my platforms in one link (<https://linktr.ee/misstapkat>)



A mosaic of Momo, a character from Avatar The Last Airbender

# Making the Shot

## getting enough light into your photos



by Mark Favreau

**W**e've all seen that photo above, heck, maybe we've even taken it, right? Take a piece of LEGO, stick it on a white background. . .because the web site says "shoot against a white background". . .point the camera at the object, push the button. Voila! Photo!

Yeah. Pretty crummy photo. But it gets uploaded, and for reasons unknown the site accepts it, and that's what we have to look at as being representative of that part or that minifig or that whatever.

What's the problem here? Why isn't the white background white? Why is it so dark?

This is a single problem with three contributing components. One: the white background. Two: having the camera set to auto instead of using manual settings. Three, and this is the big one: **NOT ENOUGH LIGHT.**

Cameras are set at the factory to expect a neutral gray balance in any shot, because most actual scenes in life have a natural balance of light and dark. When the image we want to shoot is

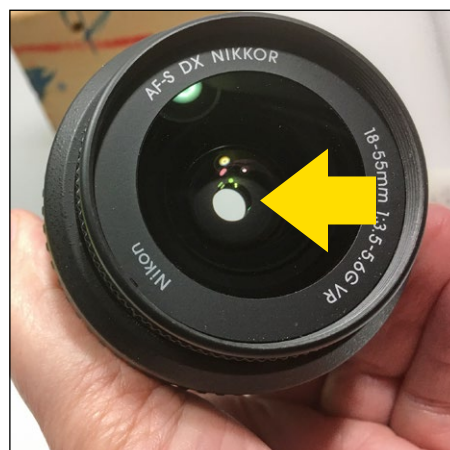
mostly light or mostly dark, the camera's auto setting adjusts the settings to yield the gray balance it expects. Everything ends up gray. In the case of a white background, the auto settings don't let enough light into the camera and the resulting image is dark, underexposed.

The fix is to put the camera into manual mode. This will allow the photographer to control the amount of light the camera's sensor receives. By increasing the amount of time that the camera's

shutter is open, more light is allowed to pass, and the exposure will lighten.

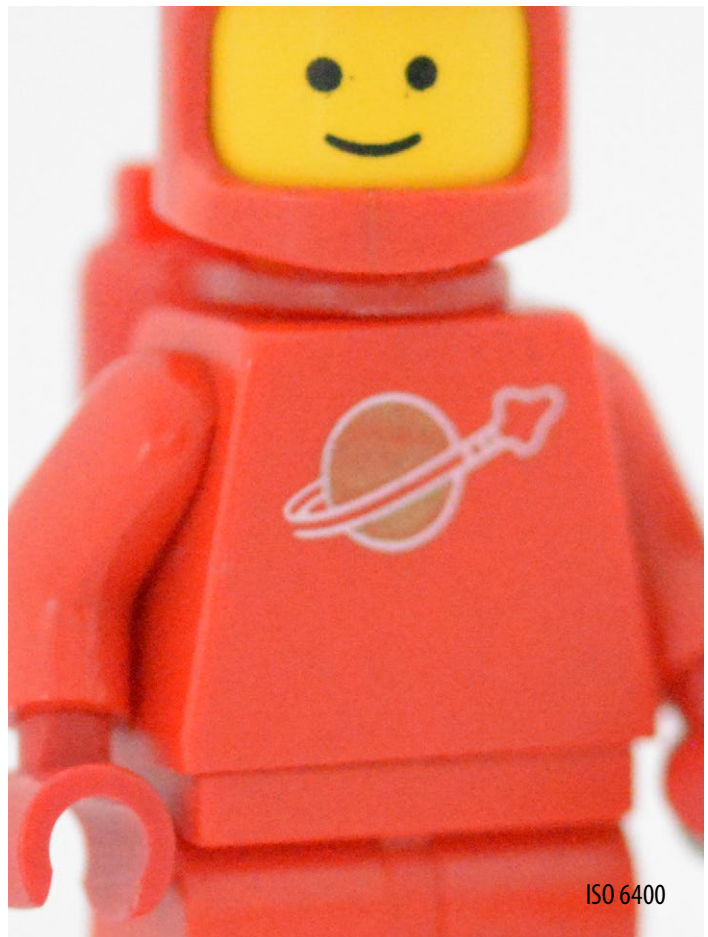
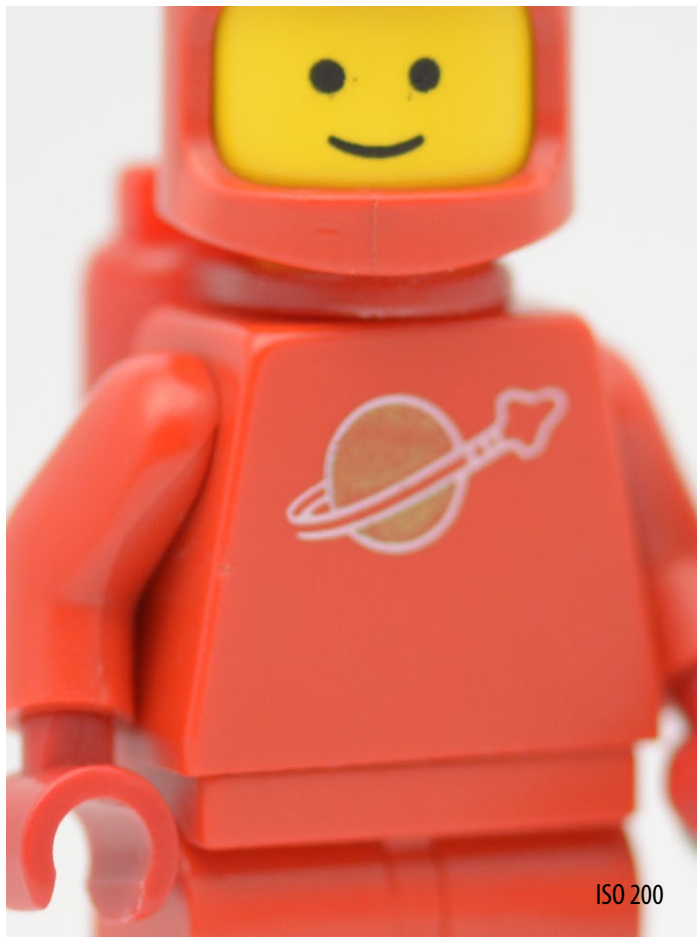
Shutter speed's companion setting is aperture size. . .that's the size of the hole in the lens. The aperture is also known as the lens's f-stop. The smaller this f number is, the larger the aperture opening. By increasing the aperture size. . . lowering the f-stop. . . more light is allowed in, and the exposure will lighten.

Available light is a consideration. On a sunny



Above left: lens aperture f-3.5. right: lens aperture f-32. Pretty obvious more light will pass through at 3.5.





**ISO.** Notice the color and values are a close match in the two photos above, but the image on the left with the low ISO value is relatively smooth while the image on the right with the high ISO value has obvious graininess.

day outdoors, it will be common to have a shutter speed of 1/250, 1/500, or even 1/1000 of a second. Contrast that to the available light indoors. With the same f-stop used outdoors, the indoor shutter speed may be only 1/30 or 1/15 of a second or lower. This is because the sun is the equivalent of a gigamegabazillion candle power and indoors we have a lamp with a candle power of 60 or 100. Relative brightness of the environment is a definite factor. This is just to say that indoors, with ambient lighting, there is a whole lot less available light than outdoors.

To get the light levels indoors up to where one needs them to be to get a good exposure one can do the following things:

**Add lights.** Instead of relying on the overhead or other standard room lighting, use specific lamps for photography. These lamps don't have to be fancy or expensive at all. Consider swing arm lamps or small lamps which are easily repositioned. Make sure to get "daylight" bulbs with a neutral color balance. Bulbs with a 5000 kelvin rating give a good "white" light. Also get the brightest bulb that will fit in the lamp. Two lamps would be the suggested minimum. Using three or four will offer more options and more light.

**Use Manual Settings and put the camera on a tripod.** With physical lights accounted for, next up is the camera. The camera will have two issues to deal with: stability and settings.

For exposures under 1/30 of a second, there is likelihood of blur being introduced into the shot because humans can't hold still enough to keep the camera from moving very slightly. Breathing and pulse are enough to shake the camera just a tiny bit when taking the shot. In situations where the exposure will be below 1/30 of a second, and that will be pretty much every shot unless the photographer is a professional with lights and strobes and reflectors and generally no need for this article, a tripod is strongly suggested. If a tripod is not an option the camera can be set down or a cradle can be fashioned from bricks. Using the camera's timer or a remote to trigger the shot will also be of benefit.

For the camera settings, three things need to be understood: ISO, aperture, and shutter speed.

**ISO.** ISO stands for International Standards Organization and this setting goes back to film days where the ISO (or ANSI) number related to the size of silver particles in film emulsion. A film with an ISO of 25 would have very fine particles

where a film with an ISO of 800 would have large particles. The size of a particle would have relative bearing on the reaction time. As it would be easier for a photon to hit an 800-sized target than for a photon to hit a 25-sized target, the 800 would react faster and need fewer photons (less light) to react. However, the trade-off is that the graininess of the image would be considerably greater with the 800 than the 25. Translating that to LEGO-speak, it's the difference in creating a 400 x 400 mosaic with 8 x 8 plates versus using 1 x 1 plates. Using the 8 x 8 would be much less resource intensive, but also yield a much blockier image.

The digital correlation is that a lower ISO setting should require more light than a higher ISO setting. The higher ISO setting will yield an image with a greater amount of "artifacting" or graininess. . . stray color pixels or graininess in areas which would be expected to be smooth.

An ISO setting of 200 is a good place to start. Image graininess should be expected to increase with the ISO value. Some experimentation with one's own equipment is warranted to find an acceptable setting. Anything over ISO 640 may show obvious differences when compared to an ISO 200 image.



**Equivalent Exposures.** Notice the color and values are a close match in the two photos above, but the image on the left with the small f-stop has only the figure's face and one hand in focus; the image on the right has all of the figure in focus.

**Aperture and Shutter Speed** are the yin-yang of a good exposure. There will be a particular amount of light needed for any good exposure. What is important to understand is that Aperture and Shutter Speed "pairs" yield what are known as equivalent exposures. Similar to travelling at one mile an hour for five minutes ends one at the same distance from start as travelling five miles an hour for one minute, an f4 exposure at 1/60 second may be the same thing as an f22 exposure at 1/2 second. Actual settings will be relative to the lighting situation.

Bearing the above in mind, there can be a marked difference in the resulting image. Photos shot with a small f-stop will have a shallow depth-of-field. That is to say that only a small area of the photo will be in tight focus. A large f-stop will have more of the image in focus. Manual control of the camera, manipulating the aperture and shutter settings, allow the photographer to be in control of the resulting image.

**So what about flash?** That will put more light in my image, won't it? Yes it will. Right where it isn't wanted. Don't do it. Avoid the flash, disable

it, and don't shoot in automatic mode. This point can't be made strongly enough. The native flash on most cameras is positioned pretty much dead center and points pretty much dead center. The light leaves the camera and is reflected straight back into the lens. Flash will flatten the image, lead to areas of blowout, overexposure, glare, and can create very unsightly shadows. It is very very much better to put the camera on a tripod and use a long exposure than to use a flash.

The caveat here is that if you are a pro and have that \$20,000 setup with strobes and all the cool kit, a professional studio, and years of experience, then, sure, flash for you isn't likely to be a problem. For Average AFOL, though, phone-cam flash directly into the minifig's torso isn't going to give you that juicy shot you really want.

**But all I have is a phone cam!** Okay. Let's quickly discuss hardware. A phone cam is the Swiss Army Knife of the modern digital lifestyle. It does a great many things. It does not necessarily do all of them very well, though. The phone camera is not made for professional studio photography. It is made for lifestyle photos,

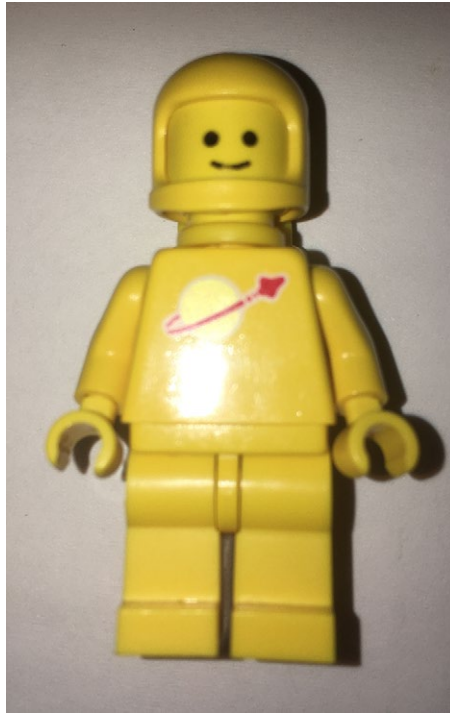
snapshots, and convenience. While there are third party apps that will provide access to the phone's camera settings: f-stop, ISO, and shutter speed, the camera is limited by a fixed lens and a tiny sensor. Comparatively, a phone cam might have a sensor that is somewhere around 3 to 5 millimeters where a good SLR camera will have a sensor that is somewhere around 35 millimeters. This isn't to say that one can't get an acceptable image off a phone camera, but there are without question some quality limitations due to the phone cam's very small form factor. Generally speaking, there will be more inherent "noise" or graininess in a photo made with a phone cam. And if anyone is wondering, a point-and-shoot camera is going to have a sensor more similar to that of the phone camera in terms of quality. There may be some variance depending on age and manufacturer, but still expect lesser than SLR quality with a point-and-shoot.

Colloquially, the difference between a phone cam and a dedicated SLR camera is like the difference between MegaBlocs and LEGO; one can still build some nice things with MegaBlocs, but there's a fundamental quality difference.

# Some things to avoid



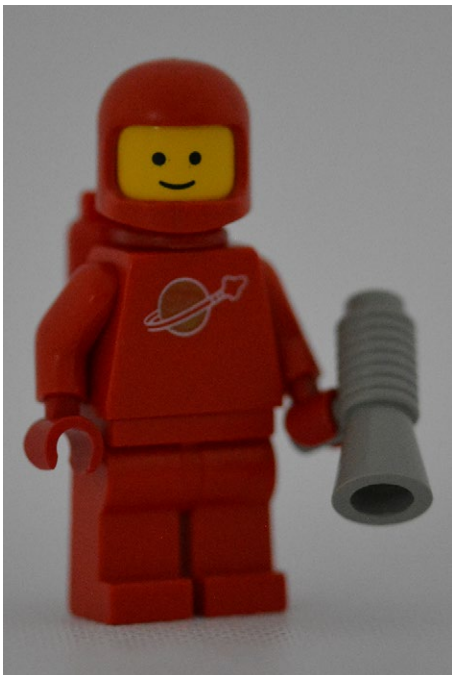
**Phone-cam flash faux pas.** Here is a typical phone-cam flash shot. There is a white stripe of glare down the middle of the figure's face and harsh dark shadows fall directly behind the figure. The flash turns the white background (this is the same white background used in all the Red Spaceman shots in this article) to dark gray. Auto settings are F-2.2, 1/256 second, ISO 25. Quite possibly the *only* f-stop on the cam is f-2.2.



**Phone-cam flash faux pas deux.** Here's another classic hand-held phone cam flash shot. The figure is laid down on a white background, the camera is positioned straight on top of the image and shot. The results? A gray background, glare on the torso and hard shadow. The phone cam sets absolutely kooky settings: F-2.2, 1/1923 second, ISO 25. Stand the figure up and position it as far away from the background as possible to avoid this disaster.



**SLR built-in flash.** This shot is made with the SLR's auto setting and the built-in flash on. Note the highlights centered on the helmet and loudhailer. The white background is not white, the red is oversaturated and flat. Shadows are directly behind the figure, but the camera is farther away from the figure (compared to the phone-cam shots) resulting in a softer shadow. Auto settings for this shot are f-3.5, 1/60 second, ISO 320.



**SLR auto no flash.** This is a shot made with the SLR's auto setting and no flash. The camera cranked the ISO up to 3200, the f-stop is opened all the way to 3.5 and shutter speed set at 1/100. The shutter and aperture would be acceptable for a hand-held bias, but that 3200 ISO is nuts. If you are attempting to shoot hand-held with these settings, good luck getting anything in focus.



**Backlighting.** A lighting situation to absolutely avoid is backlighting. While this does to a degree provide the oft-desired pure white background it does so at a steep cost. Details are lost, edges are blown out, color is desaturated, and the form is flattened. So, yeah. Don't place the figure in front of the window "because that's where the light is" and expect much of a picture.



**Rake lighting.** Another setup to avoid is rake lighting, another classic "window" setup. This is where there is one light source directly to one side of the object. Rake light may emphasize contours, but it also may lead to hot spots and glare as seen on the face and chest. Place the lights overhead at a 45° angle to the object and between the camera and the object to get even, balanced lighting.

# No flash, no problem

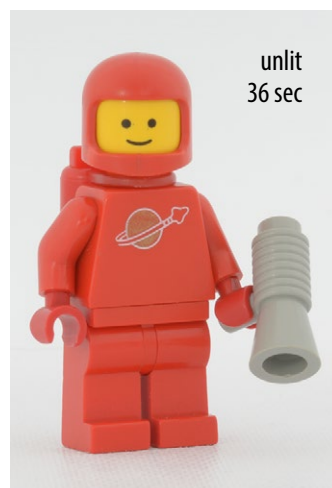
The exercise demonstrated on this page is to show that even with low lighting conditions an acceptable image can be obtained if the exposure is of sufficient duration.

The first ten images on this page were shot with ISO 200, f-29 and the shutter speed shown on the shot. There was no direct lighting whatsoever. There was only ambient light from a midday window on an overcast day. The camera was set on a tripod and triggered remotely. The actual lighting level in the room is fairly represented by the picture at 13 seconds.

Acceptable exposure comes in at around the 36 second mark. At 30 the image is still slightly dark and at 44 the red is starting to become decidedly light. An exposure somewhere between 36 and 44 might result in a marginally better image. The 36-second image with only slight levels adjustment in an image program will yield the last image on the page.



The absence of any directional light does result in a flattened image. The two images at right compare equivalent exposures; the left is shot with studio lighting and the right is the non-lit shot from above. Note additional dimensionality in the lit shot: highlights on the crown and chinstrap of the helmet, air tanks, right shoulder and left forearm. There is shadow emphasis under the helmet, wrist, and legs. Ribbing on the loudhailer is emphasized.





# COVER SHOT

by Chris Rose, Stuck in Plastic

**T**he strong connection I had with toys in my childhood led me into toy photography, and LEGO photography in particular. As a child, I was lucky enough to receive the Galaxy Explorer set one Christmas, setting the stage for my obsession with the Classic Space line; I used to beg my parents for sets at every opportunity. As an adult, I've managed to pick up some of the sets I owned as a child, with the 894 Mobile Tracking Station being one of my favourites.

I particularly love shooting these sets outdoors where I can use local parks and woodland to create worlds for the astronauts to explore. This particular shoot took me to a local woodland where Christmas trees are grown. It is a great spot to shoot in as the young trees can pass for

as enormous ancient oaks in comparison to the tiny minifigures.

When I find a location like this, I like to have a walk around to take in the scenery and work out the best spot to shoot. It's important to make the background interesting, but not distract from the subject. It was quite a sunny day so I picked a suitable spot under the trees to avoid the harsh light. An overly bright scene can make a shot look washed out and lose the definition of the colours.

The next step was to get down to ground level to take the shot. This enables you to get into the mini figure's world and to feel like you are part of the scene. I placed the camera on the lid of a plastic box that I carry my figures in to keep the camera steady and protect it from the elements.

To avoid a heavy contrast of light and shade, I used a simple bounce card—a small piece of white

cardboard—to bounce and diffuse the natural light back on the figure's face.

If you don't have card a simple piece of white paper will do... and if folded correctly it will stand on its own.

With lots of interesting textures on the ground, such as moss, it was also important to make sure I focused on the astronaut's face to draw the viewer's eye away from distracting elements. You can achieve this result by using the aperture settings on your camera or phone to create a narrow depth of field by setting a low F number.

This particular shot was taken with a 35mm lens with an aperture setting of F2. When I set the camera to focus on the figure's face most of the background ended up slightly out of focus which in turn made it less distracting.

# One small step



by Jetro de Château

It is 1979 and I have arrived on the moon. In the flat area between two craters, I drive my 886 Space Buggy towards the Mobile Rocket 897 Launcher that I will use to put a small satellite into orbit. It was the golden age of Space Classic and I spent endless hours exploring this marvellous world from a corner of our living room.

Fast forward 40 years and we arrive in 2019. LEGO includes a new Space theme in City. This time the astronauts aim at Mars, and LEGO is working together with NASA to bring authenticity to their sets. A lot has happened in 40 years. LEGO has grown—I have grown—and comparing sets from such vastly different eras can hardly be fair. Or can it? I had a good look at the catalogue of Classic Space sets, trying to identify which set or sets would come close to the experience of the second largest set in this “new” Space theme. Nostalgia may have played an important part, but I wanted to offset my experience with Classic Space that of my kids reacting to modern City Space sets. How did that go? First, let me introduce the contending sets.

As is the case for many LEGO fans, there was a time—from late adolescence to my early thirties—that I almost forgot about LEGO. I say almost, because occasionally I would still think fondly of my old LEGO sets when I saw some new set in a shop window. But there was never anything to rekindle the flame. Until... Oddly enough (or maybe it is not odd at all) it was MINDSTORMS that brought me out of that lethargic state, and for some time I was entirely focused on robotics

as well as technic sets. “Traditional” LEGO didn’t really appeal to me until I rediscovered Castle. That theme went extinct, again, and there was never anything that rekindled my love for Space to the point of wanting to do something with it. That is until I saw the new wave of Space related sets. And it wasn’t even City Space that rekindled that interest. It was LEGO Ideas. The NASA Apollo 21309 Saturn V (<https://www.hispabrickmagazine.com/blog-en/blog-en.php?id=2305>), in 2017, really got me dreaming of Space again. That set wasn’t just fun to build, it was also a great educational tool, and since I worked in a primary school at the time I made good use of the resource. When the 10266 Lunar Lander (<https://www.hispabrickmagazine.com/blog-en/blog-en.php?id=7466>) came out in 2019, I added that to my curriculum, too. However, neither set is really a play set and it is one thing to use it as a teaching tool and quite another to build a story around them.

That same year the (renewed) Space team was introduced in City, and with my newly rekindled love for Space sets, I knew I just had to get these sets. Back in the early 80s, I mostly had small sets that I combined to create one large story. This time I also started with the smaller sets, and it wasn’t until a couple of weeks ago that I finally got my hands on the second largest set in this series, the Deep Space Rocket and Launch Control (#60228). As I mentioned at the start of this article, comparing a modern Space set to a Classic Space set is not really fair. For one thing, the sentimental value of a Classic Space set will

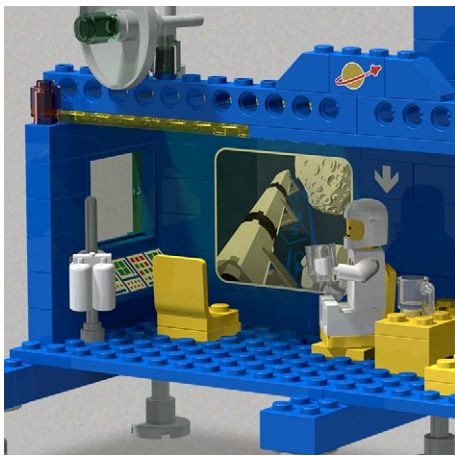
always far outweigh that of a modern City Space set. At the same time, modern sets are generally so much bigger and there are many new elements and techniques that were not used back in the day.

And what set to compare it to? Looking at the elements in the 60228 Deep Space Rocket and Launch Control, there is a control centre, a rocket or space ship, a support vehicle and a railway to bring the astronauts from launch control to their spacecraft. None of the Classic Space sets have this exact same scheme, but I felt 6970 Beta I Command Base came closest. The set has a mission control, a manned spaceship, a small vehicle and a kind of monorail that goes from the command centre to the launch site.

Let’s start out by comparing some numbers.

Set number	6970	60228
Year	1980	2019
Parts	264	837
Minifigs	4	6
HxWxD cm	20 x 25.5 x 51	42 x 36 x 47

It doesn’t take a genius to see that the 1980 set is considerably smaller, but let’s forget about size for now and focus on the elements, starting with mission control. What makes the Beta I Command Base mission control stand out in my opinion is the array of communication services on the roof, including one large and two smaller satellite dishes. However, the actual control area is quite sparse and much of the interior is taken up by a lounge. I always wondered how the astronauts were supposed to sip their drinks in an open



6970 command centre



60228 launch control



60228 with phone used for control screen

command centre, although given the fact that there are poles to hang up their oxygen bottles I suppose we were meant to think this area is actually closed off. The large screen displaying the take-off of a rocket (where is that rocket, because the set doesn't include it?) is a printed 1 x 6 x 5 brick.

Compare that to the Launch Control in 60228 and there are a number of important differences. The main one is probably the fact that this Launch Control is not meant to be on the Moon or on Mars, but rather on Earth. This is a significant departure from the original Space theme, which took place entirely on or around the moon. The use of large transparent panels also enhances the experience for this set, without compromising accessibility. There are two ways you can access the interior of the new Launch Control: you can remove the large glass panel on the front or you can open up the whole construction as it is built with hinges. Stickers also play a significant role in the large screen and this time transparency plays a starring role. On each of the two displays, parts

of the stickers are transparent. On the right side, this adds motion. Another small sticker is placed on a wheel behind the main screen. You can turn it from behind the display and make it look as if a satellite is revolving around the earth. On the other side, the numbers 0 to 3 are transparent. A nifty mechanism allows you to create a short countdown for launch. By sliding a white panel behind the transparent numbers these light up in sequence.

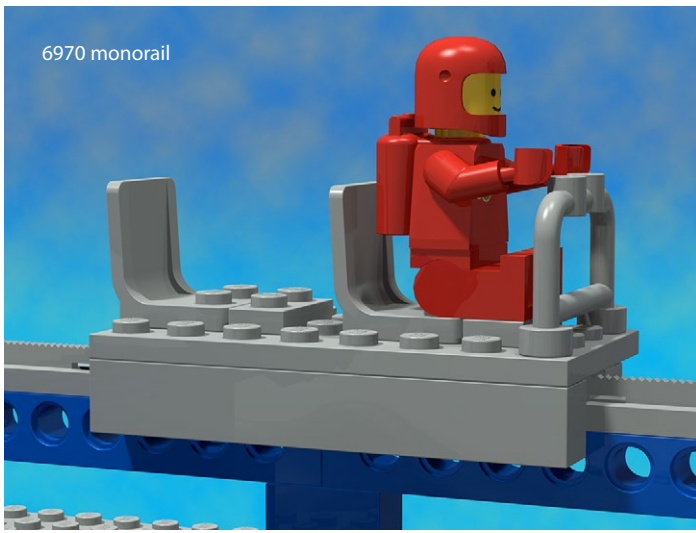
Alternatively, you can use the LEGO City Explorers app on your phone to provide an alternative control screen. Unfortunately, this app does not take into account the screen size of your device. In my case that means that a significant portion of the control screen doesn't fit inside the room.

The second element both sets have is the transportation system. Although it is the last thing you build in the modern City set, it makes sense to discuss it next. The 1980 set uses three straight 16L rails to create a kind of straight monorail. The system

works well without using any special elements. The 2019 set uses the roller coaster track that was first introduced in 2017. This, of course, relies on using the specific roller coaster car, this time in blue. The train is a lot of fun. There is a simple push mechanism at the top to set it in motion and there are two stops on the track. The first is an orange safety barrier at a stop marked "testing facility". The second is at the end of the line, marked "launch pad".

One of the strengths of the Classic Space era were the baseplates. 6970 includes two raised baseplates with craters. I still have a pair of these although the corners are quite a bit the worse for wear. These baseplates, and the road plates with yellow markings from the same time, were the basis for most of my space adventures back then. Times have changed and baseplates are no longer an integral part of sets (except for a very limited number





6970 monorail



60228 train



6970 launch platform



60228 launch platform



of sets). 60228 has freestanding elements, but sometimes you need a base to anchor things to. In 6970 that was the base for the spaceship. A simple platform made with bricks and a plate, as well as a hinge element to put the spaceship at an angle. In 60228 not only is the spaceship (in this case a rocket) a lot bigger, the launch site is also a lot more complex, and playable!

Curiously, the launch tower is referenced in 6970 in that large printed brick. The sight of the launch tower retreating from a rocket is an integral part of the expectation of a realistic launch, and the launch pad in 60228 provides just that experience. The rocket sits on a solid base that provides the ignition flames and two towers to keep the rocket in place. As soon as it takes off, the rocket no longer holds the towers in place and they pivot sideways. It is a great launch experience!

The rocket is quite a bit more complex than the spaceship in the 1980 set. That spaceship was little more than a pair of rockets strapped to some wings, all of which was controlled by a simple steering wheel. The rocket in 60228 also has a pair

of boosters, two rockets to the sides, connected with pins, ready to fall off once the rocket gains enough altitude. The main body of the rocket consists of two large container elements. While both can open, the bottom element—which presumably contains rocket fuel—is unused. The top element serves to house a satellite, the payload of this mission. There are a number of satellites in the City Space theme, and this one is unique in that at its core there is a magnifying glass, making the satellite look like some sort of telescope. The capsule at the top of the rocket is big enough to hold two astronauts and, rather than a steering wheel, contains two control panels, one on either side.

Although 60228 is set on Earth and not on the Moon or Mars there is still a little test scene. It consists of a 6 x 6 area that contains two geodes (or one, in two parts). There is also a 2 x 2 tile, which takes a sticker to simulate a kind of geode pattern in a flat surface. Since there are lines in different colours I first thought the transparent red book cover with display pattern that doubles as a futuristic smart device would serve to highlight





certain lines and allow you to discover a secret message or code. Believe me I tried, but I haven't found anything. It is a bit of a missed opportunity as that would have made a great extra to the set at no additional cost.

Around this test site (?), there are two other additions. One is a small helper robot on four swivel wheels that is clearly from the same family as the other helper bots that appear in the theme: all of them share the same face and arms. The second element is a larger vehicle also on swivel wheels. It comes with a gripper on an articulated arm that can pick up the geodes, as well as a driver seat with modern controls. I would expect to see this vehicle on a Moon or Mars base, but I suppose it needs to be tested on Earth first. It is too large to fit in the cargo hold of the rocket, so we'll have to find some other way of taking it with us when we embark on our mission to Mars. By comparison, the buggy that came with 6970 was much simpler. It made me think of the Moon Rover though and felt like the perfect

complement in the environment of the base.

The 60228 Deep Space Launch Control set comes with six minifigures and there is total parity: three are female and three are male. Only two of the minifigs are astronauts and all the others are ground personnel. There are two launch control techs, a female scientist and a male operator. In contrast, 6970 came with four minifigs all of undetermined gender. Two yellow and two red space suits, for you to decide who was who and what were their responsibilities. I do enjoy the much more realistic and detailed printing and characterisation of the modern minifigs, but sometimes I miss the simple times when a minifig was just a placeholder for your imagination.

My only gripe with 60228 is that the cones of the two booster rockets are very loose. Anything less than very careful play and those cones will come off. I haven't found a solution to that problem either—short of using some chewing gum that is. Overall, I found both the building

process and the playability of the set to be thoroughly enjoyable. My kids also enjoyed the set—that is the primary target for these sets anyway—and together we had a bunch of space adventures. The integration with the app didn't really work for us as I explained above, although the additional footage in the app is a great way to learn a little more about modern Space travel. Modern Space will never have the same nostalgic association for me as Classic Space has but maybe it will be nostalgic for my kids when they get older. As it stands, this set and the rest of the sets in the City Space theme will likely make a reappearance in our LEGO sessions, and we may even consider adding a spaceport to our LEGO City layout.

We wish to thank LEGO for providing this set for review. The opinions in this review are not supported or endorsed by LEGO.

For reviews of other City Space sets from 2019, visit our blog <https://www.hispabrickmagazine.com/blog-en/>

# TOP MOC

## SPACE

Justin Winn, U.K.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/134591560@N03/>

My first sets as a child were Classic Space. My interest in LEGO was reignited by the first Star Wars franchise sets.

◆ 10251 Brick Bank Classic Space / M-Tron Redux, November 2018

Peter Reid (AKA Legoloverman), U.K.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/legoloverman>

I've been a lifelong fan of the brick. Especially Space.

◆ LL497 in the Hangar, 2012





**Ryan Harkin** (AKA brickmasterryan), U.K.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/brickmasterryan/>  
 I started out buying LEGO for my nephews, then the next thing you know, I was on Bricklink buying parts for 10179. I joined Brickish.org and was embraced by the Classic Spacers who encouraged me to MOC.

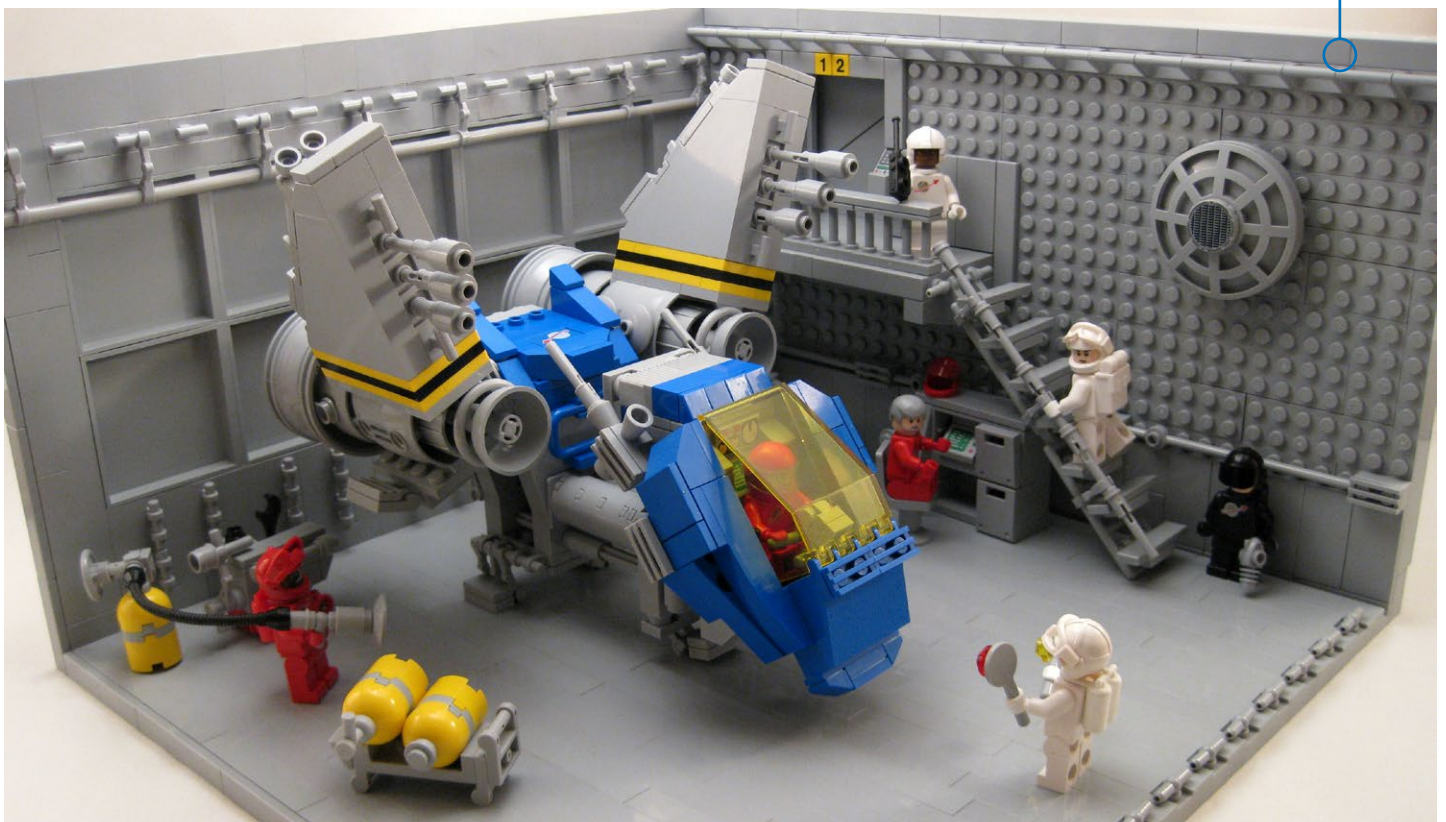
▶ LL 372, March 2020

**Drew Hamilton** (AKA Wami Delthorn), U.K.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/46803234@N00/>

My story with LEGO is a familiar one I think. As a child in the 80's and 90's I loved LEGO but sold my collection (including lots of lovely Classic Space and Futuron) in order to buy a Sega Megadrive. In the mid-late 2000's I was inspired to buy some of the LEGO Star Wars sets and that rekindled my love for the brick and well, here we are!

▶ Hangar 12, 2010





**Andrea Lattanzio** (AKA Norton74), Italy

👉 <https://www.instagram.com/nortonsevenfour/>

At the beginning of the 2000s while I was surfing on the net I came across the amazing creations of early AFOLs and I was shocked by the AFOL community and the incredible MOCs out there. Soon I started building my first own creation and I haven't stopped since then.

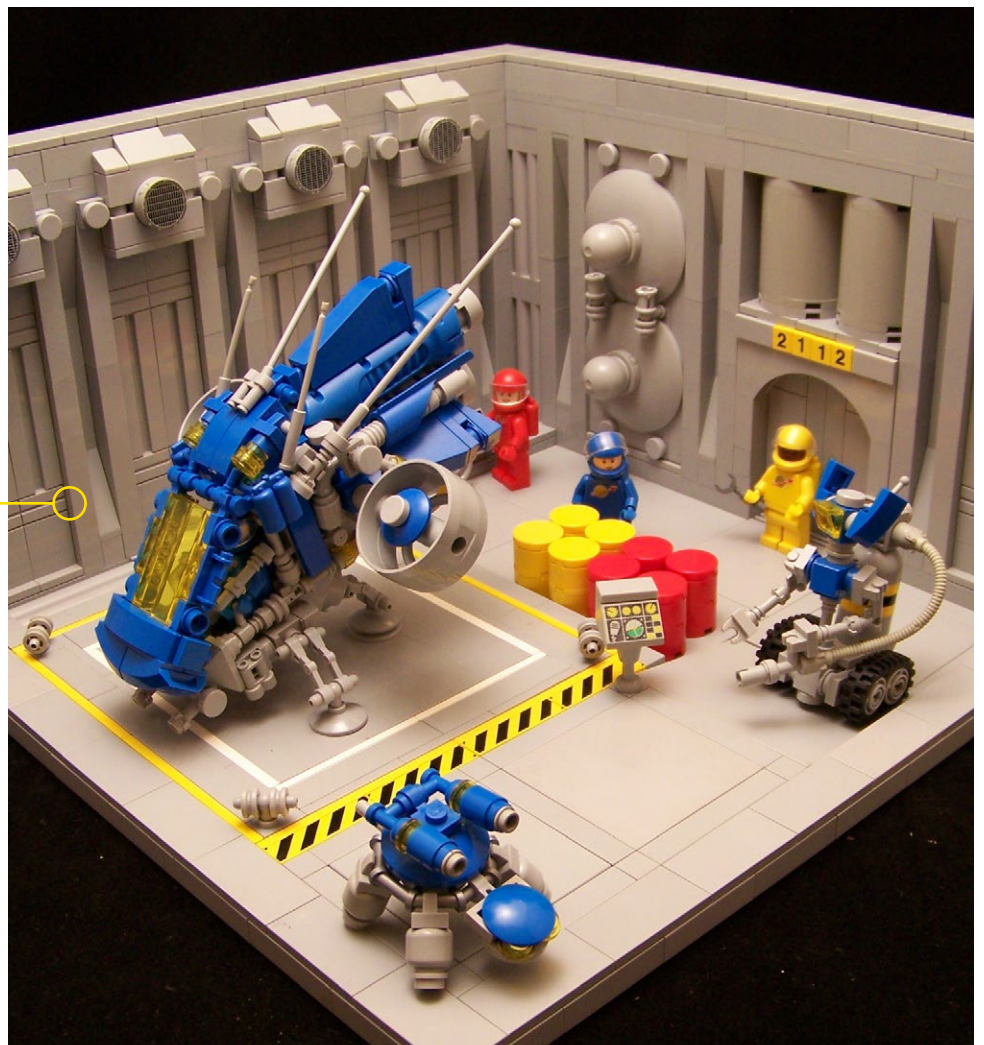
📌 *"Blue Bull" Space Tank at the maintenance hangar, March 2016*

**Hans Dendauw** (AKA Tigmon74), U.S.A.

👉 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tigmon74/>

Like most people I had LEGO as a kid, but it was the release of Star Wars sets in 1998 that got me collecting as an adult. In the mid 2000s I discovered MOC pages, saw what other people were doing with bricks and instantly wanted to be a part of it. Studying and interacting with great builders was a huge motivator to learn techniques and advance my level with each new build. It's a fantastic community within the hobby and I long for the day when we can attend conventions again!

📌 *Seeking the Temples of Syrinx, August 2014*





**Blake Foster, U.S.A.**

<https://www.instagram.com/blakefosterafol/>

I got started with LEGO when I was three years old after getting a handful of bricks from a McDonald's Happy Meal. I was hooked instantly, and never really stopped. My favorite theme was pretty consistently space. By the time I got to high school, when many enter their dark age, Mindstorms was released and held my interest all the way through college. I found the AFOL community shortly after graduating, and after seeing some of the amazing space MOCs that they were creating, my interest was immediately pulled back to space. I've been building spaceships ever since then.

◆ *Cargo Critter, March 2020*

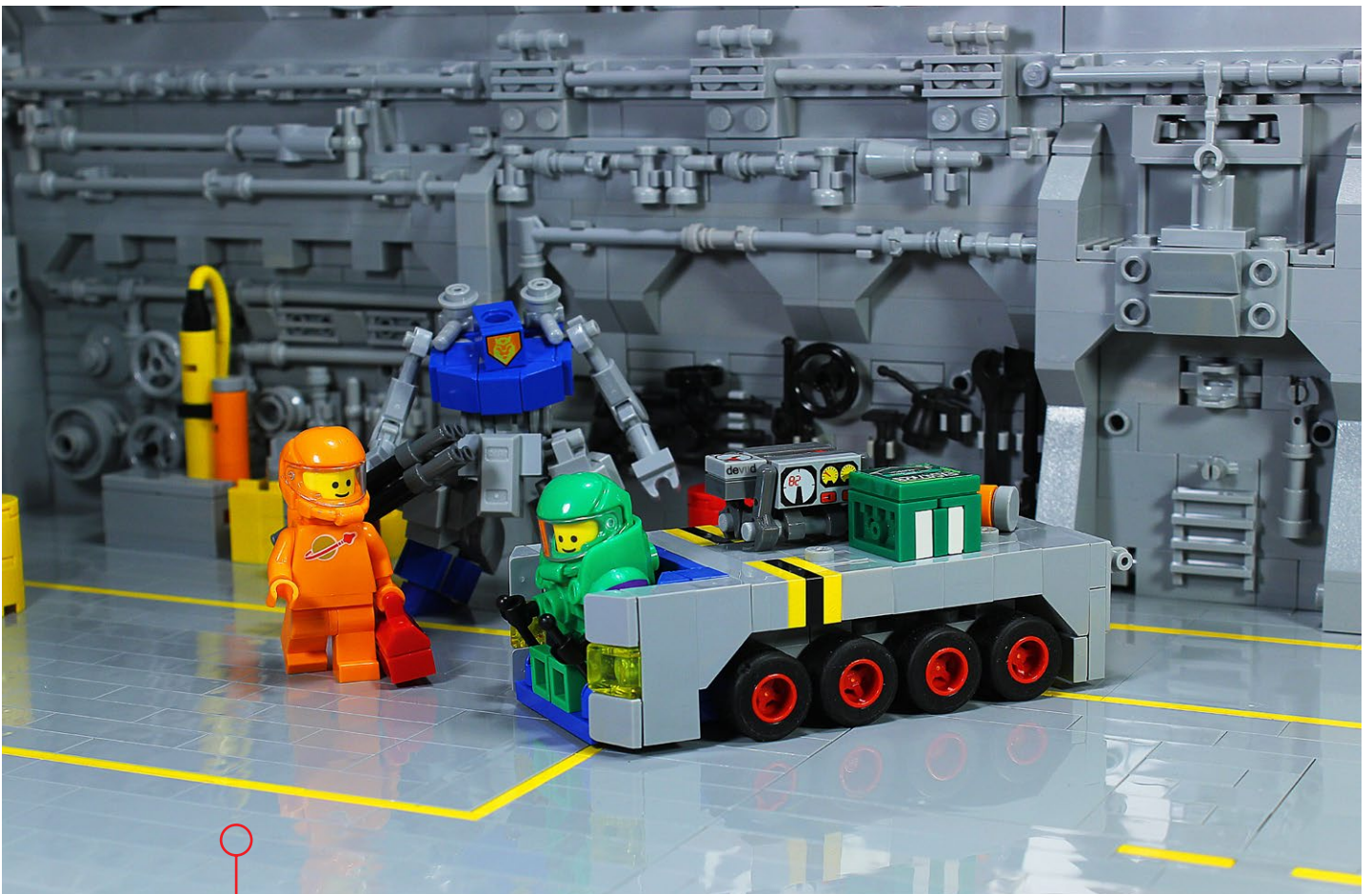


**Walter Whiteside, U.S.A.**

<https://www.instagram.com/walterwhiteside/>

I started collecting LEGO space when I was a kid. It was a good time to be a fan of LEGO. I started during the last couple of years that LEGO produced Classic Space and I continued with all the space factions—Blacktron, Futuron and M:Tron. I never had a true dark age in my hobby. Of course in my teens and college years, I had other priorities but LEGO was always an interest.

◆ *Research outpost, 2017*



**Devid Leone** (AKA Devid VII), Italy [https://www.instagram.com/devid\\_vii/](https://www.instagram.com/devid_vii/)

I'm 37 years old, born in 1984. I honestly don't know when I started playing with LEGO, I have always played with it since I was a child and I never stopped. I remember when I started to post photos online on Eurobricks, Flickr and MOC pages, in 2010 (probably). I have a LUG in Italy that I have created with some friends BrianzaLUG.

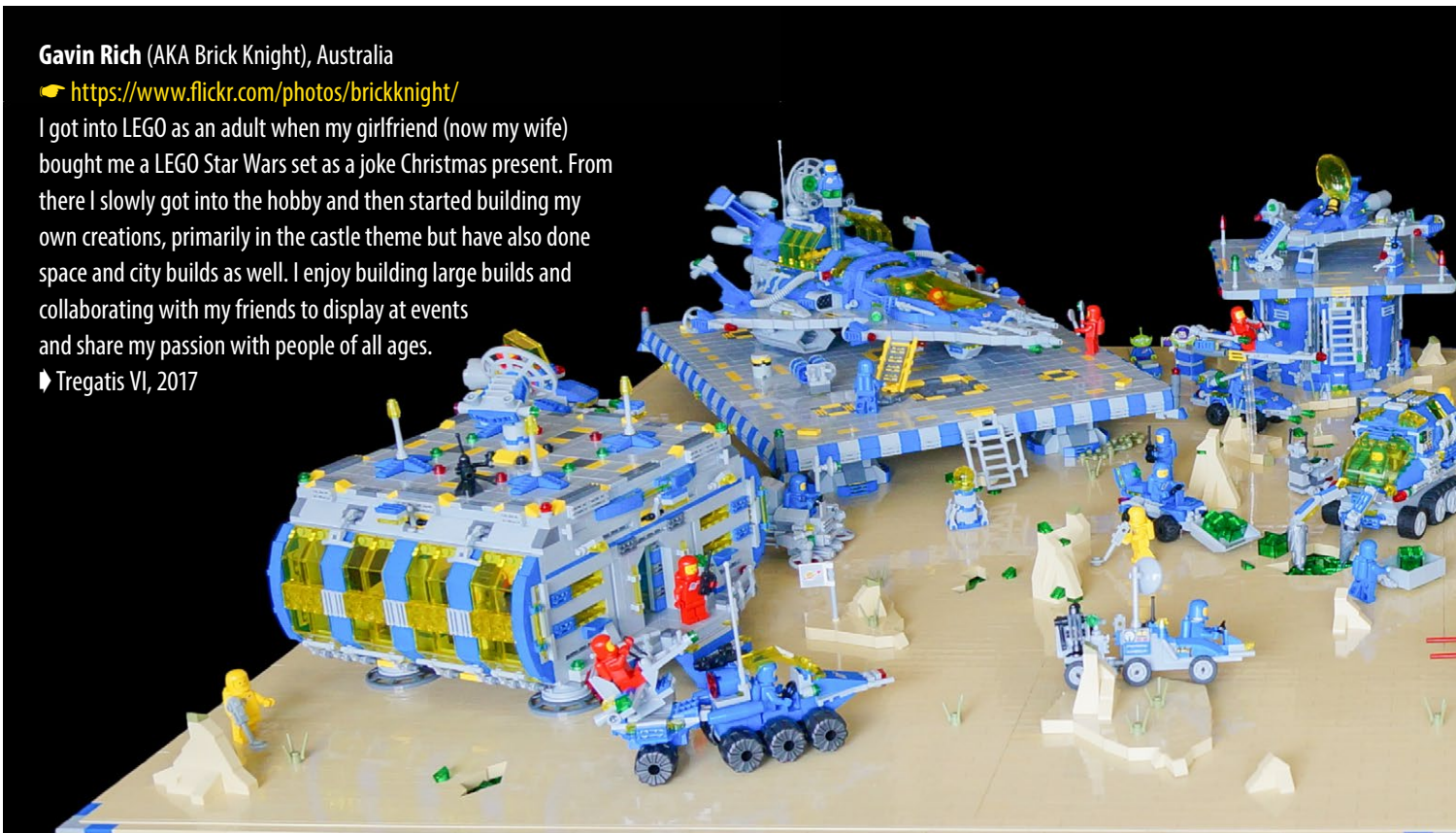
▶ *Ted with 8 wheels transporter - 8WT*

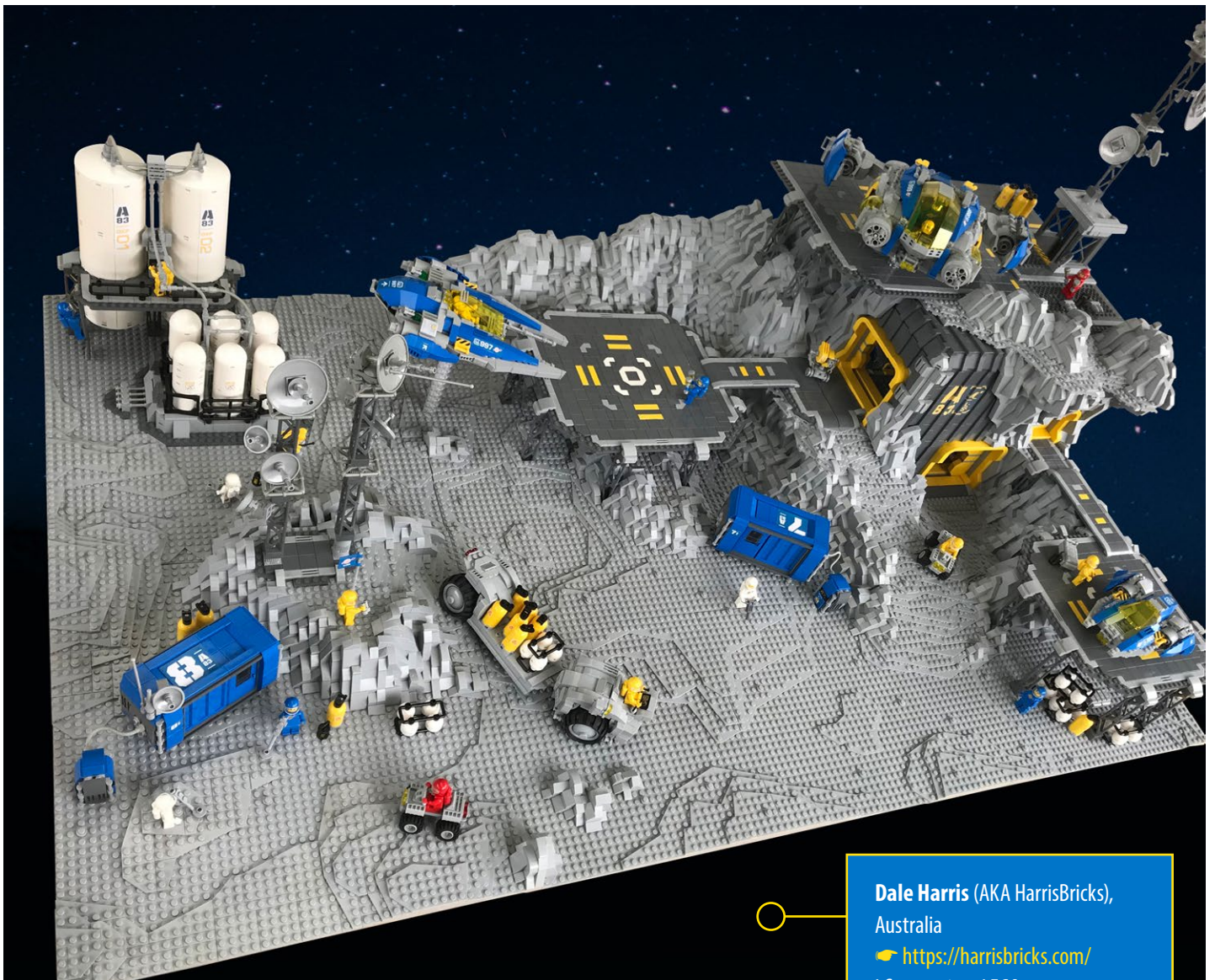
**Gavin Rich** (AKA Brick Knight), Australia

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/brickknight/>

I got into LEGO as an adult when my girlfriend (now my wife) bought me a LEGO Star Wars set as a joke Christmas present. From there I slowly got into the hobby and then started building my own creations, primarily in the castle theme but have also done space and city builds as well. I enjoy building large builds and collaborating with my friends to display at events and share my passion with people of all ages.

▶ *Tregatis VI, 2017*





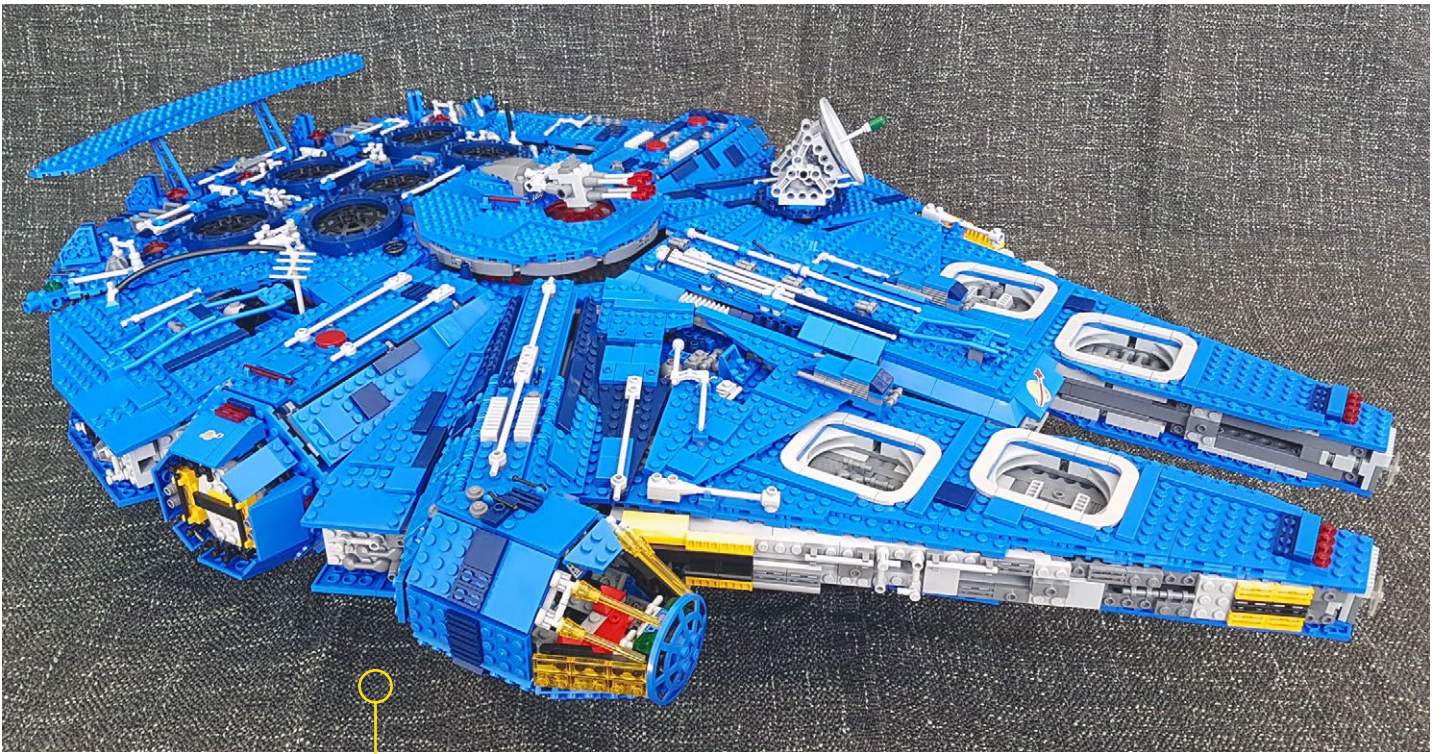
**Dale Harris** (AKA HarrisBricks),  
Australia

👉 <https://harrisbricks.com/>

I first got into LEGO at a young age in the early 80s and my first LEGO sets were mostly Town and Castle, with a couple of small Space sets thrown in for good measure. I went through my dark ages from around 1996-2016 when my wife Kara reintroduced LEGO to me and we joined our local LUG, Bendigo LEGO User Group.

👉 *A-83 Exploration Base, 2018*





**BeO Johansson, Sweden**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alfabeo/albums>

LEGO was my favourite toy as a kid in the late 70s early 80s. Space and Technic sets were on my wishlists for birthdays and Christmas. The Classic Space set 918 is still one of my all time favourites. But my LEGO was put in the attic when I grew older. In 2012 my then-girlfriend gave me the VW Camper Van set 10220 as a birthday present, and just like that I was hooked again. The old sets were retrieved from my parents' attic, and I started collecting sets both new and old. Today I have close to 1000 sets, ranging from the early 70's to new sets bought this year. I'm more of a collector and restorer than a MOCer, although I do get some rather silly ideas from time to time that I try to realise.

▶ LL10179, September 2018.

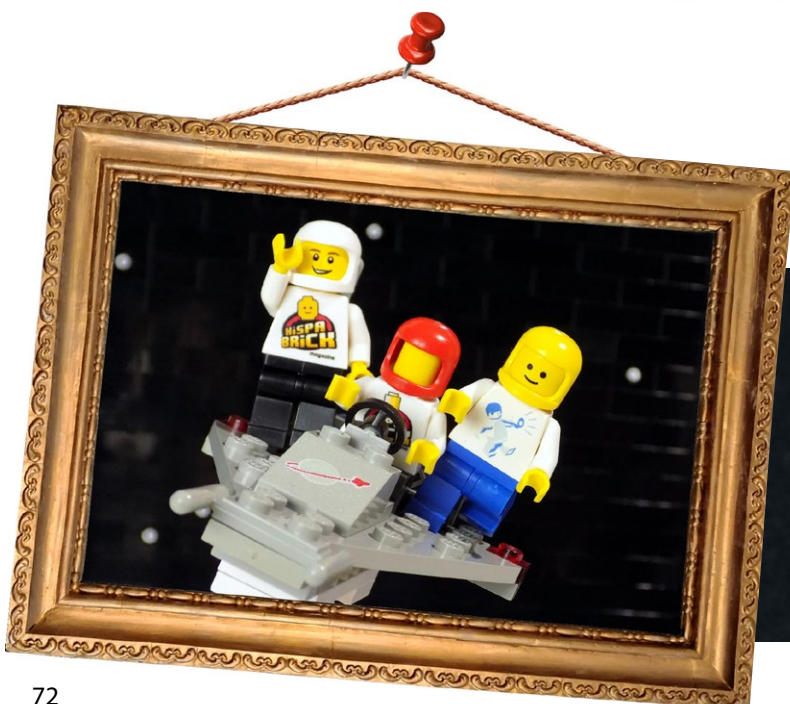


**Dallen Powell, U.S.A.**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dallenpowell/>

My LEGO story began before I can remember but some of my fondest childhood memories were playing with duplo construction sets on our living room rug. It wasn't long after that that I graduated to System sets and fell down the rabbit hole. I'm of the growing minority of builders who never experienced a "dark ages" and it's been a wild descent into LEGO madness the past few years. More than anything I enjoy building vehicles but I try not to pass up opportunities to branch out and try new things.

▶ SpaceCar!, February 2019

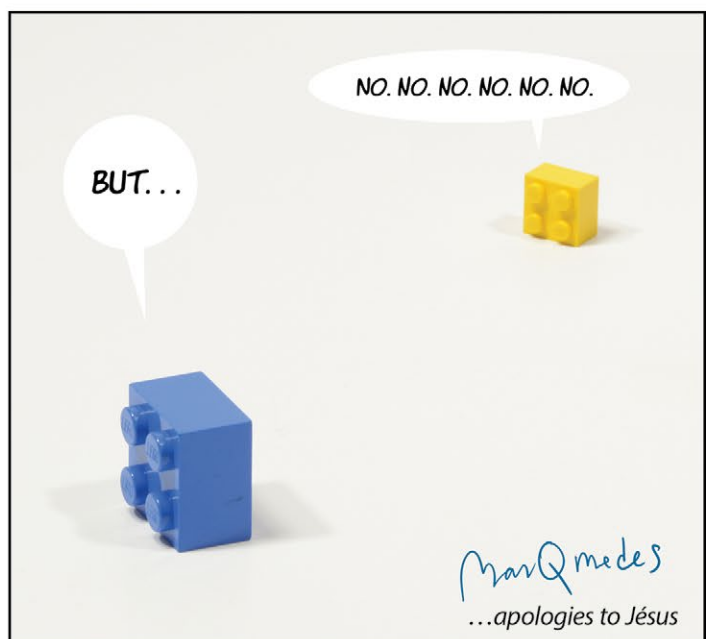
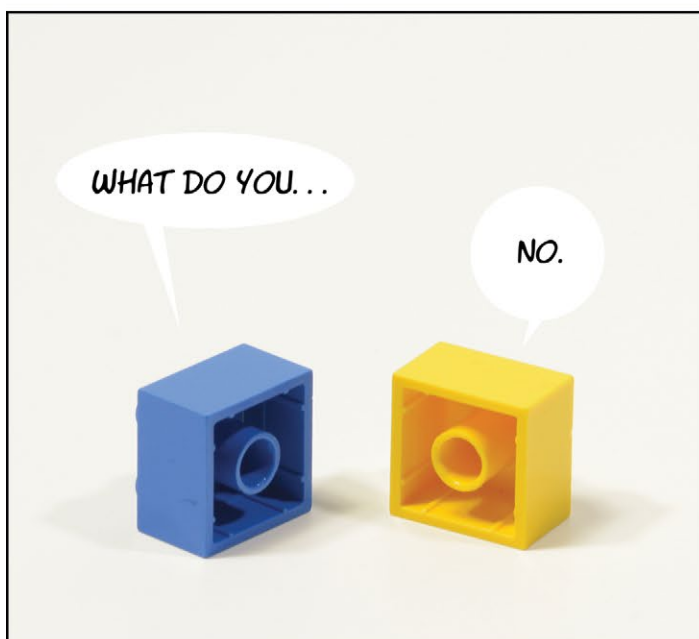
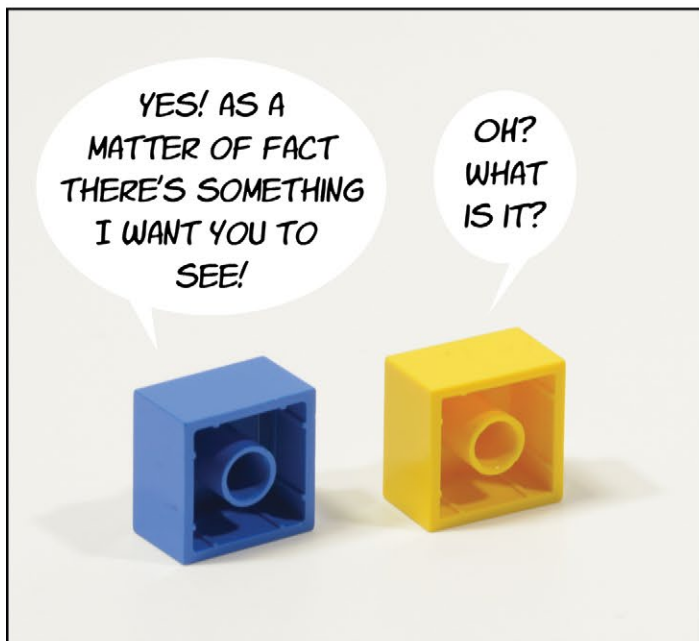
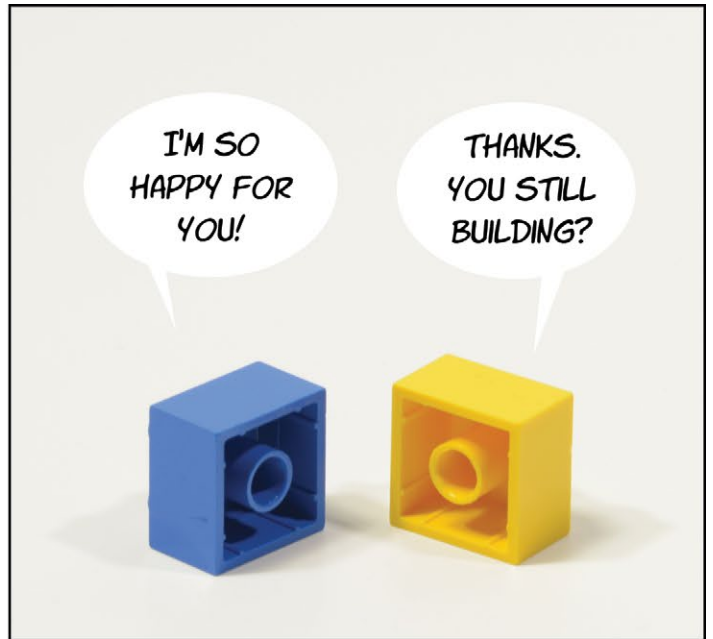
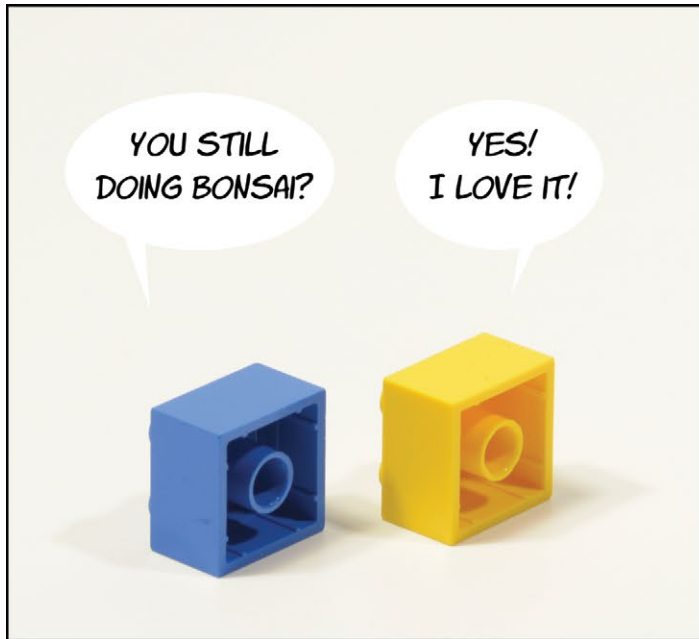


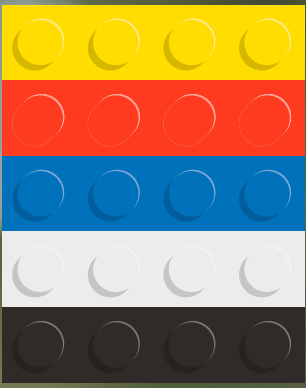
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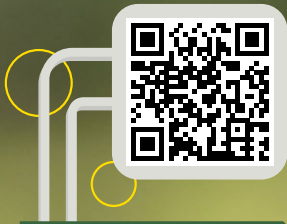


# BEYOND DESMONTADOS





**036**  
ENGLISH



not for sale

