

The Magazine for LEGO® Enthusiasts of All Ages!



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Brick Journal

Issue 34 • May 2015
people • building • community

Behind the Scenes of BrickNerd Studios' Batman vs Superman

*Brandon Griffith reveals
ComicBricks*

*Jared Burks builds the
Agents of SHIELD*



**Instructions
AND MORE!**



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Contents

From the Editor 2

People

Behind the Scenes

of *Batman vs Superman*:

Flinging Batarangs One Frame
at a Time 4

Ten-Year-Old LEGO Lover Builds

Brick Loot 10

Building

Minifigure Customization 101:

Creating the Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. 12

Ann Foley's Costumes of S.H.I.E.L.D. 19

Building Lola 21

LEGO Ideas Spotlight:

The S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier 24

Building the Helicarrier

in Microscale 26

Building for Heroes 28

You Can Build It:

Mini Batmobile 34

Galactus Strikes! 39

You Can Build It:

Hulkbuster Armor 40

Blackbird Fly! 48

Building the Endless 52

Basic Hero Building 56

Presenting the Super Friends 59

Community

Stick a Brick:

Denmark's LEGO-Themed

Stamps 62

ComicBricks:

Creating LEGO Comic Covers 64

Bricking Comics:

DC Comics' LEGO Covers 72

Everything is Awesome

at the Academy Awards 74

Community Ads 78

Last Word 79

AFOLs 80





One of the camera set-ups for *BvS*.

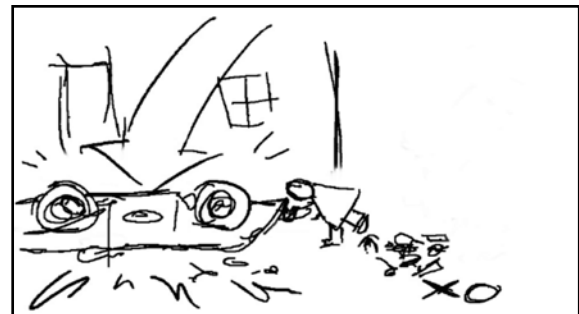
Behind the Scenes of *Batman vs Superman: Flinging Batarangs One Frame at a Time*

Article and Photography by Tommy Williamson

One day back in June 2014 while I was working on *Expendables 3*, the topic turned, as it often does, to geek news. Professionals in the visual effects industry tend to be like me: overgrown kids, and conversations have a tendency to go that way. News about *Batman V Superman* was percolating, and everyone was wondering how Ben Affleck was going to do in the Batman role. But I couldn't stop thinking about what that match-up might be like: just how would that go down? It all seems a bit preposterous of course, debating what might happen if imaginary characters engaged in battle, but I kept thinking about it. And the more I thought, the funnier the concept seemed to be. Then I realized, this would be a funny short, and what better way to tell my little story than with a brickfilm? It's been ages since BrickNerd Studios, the animation division of my company BrickNerd Enterprises, finished the animation for *Beyond the Brick: A LEGO Brickumentary*, and since it's still not out, we haven't been able to share much of it with very many people. So I was keen not only to tell this story, but to also have a bit of a showpiece for BrickNerd Studios. So I blocked out a quick framework, and that night I wrote the script. I showed it to a couple of people and got some good feedback, so I decided I was onto something. It was time to make a little movie.

My years in visual effects and Hollywood filmmaking have given me a really good foundation in the overall production process, and that's how I approach my projects: as miniature versions of full-fledged movies. I start with a script, in industry standard formatting, then I move to storyboards. On this project I decided to do digital storyboards (as opposed to pen on paper) to make production quicker. It also allows for easy reproduction of similar frames, by reusing elements and adding additional detail. Luckily, on this particular project there are very few camera angles, so storyboarding went pretty quickly. Once I finished the boards, I went to work on an animatic. An animatic is essentially a storyboard version of the film, cut to the length of the expected project. My animatics also have dialog, sound effects and music, since I want to get the pacing of the project down, and to find the right feel for the project. Traditionally the dialog for an animated film is recorded first, and this film was no exception. I found a voice artist I really liked on fiverr.com, Chris Lovingood, and he agreed to be Superman. I decided to do Batman myself (a decision that I still question) and while I waited for his dialogue, I recorded my own. I had a pretty vivid picture in my head of the scenery for this project, so while I was working on the animatic, I hired builder Dane Erland to get the scenery started. We did several Google searches for alleys and such, and once I was able to communicate what I was looking for, he got to building. I also designed the set in three pieces, that would allow for all the angles needed by simply rearranging them. If you look at the short closely, you'll see it's just the same three building facades in all the shots, but with careful lighting and composition, it looks like a full environment. Dane worked a full week at the studio, while I wrapped up the animatic and dabbled with the build (like building the fire escape), and when he was done we had two full facades and the beginning of the third. We also had the ground and quite a bit of the details.

I should note that while all the previous activity was happening, there was also quite a bit of other things going on. I took a trip to Hawaii with my family, my son started college, I had guests at the studio for a couple LiveBuilds, produced an episode of BrickNerd for my YouTube channel, and generally... life. This was certainly a side project, despite being a bit ambitious. This was the case for the entirety of the production, just squeezing it in between all the other things I needed to get done. Building proceeded for another few weeks, and by the second week of September, the set was finally done. I started doing the scale lighting with the BrickStuff products I had on hand, including the practical light fixtures on the buildings. I was so excited with how it was turning out, I sent some secret behind-the-scenes pictures to Rob Klingburg at BrickStuff. He was delighted with the progress, and shared a secret with me too: his new round lights. Coincidentally I was struggling with fitting some lights in the practical fixtures on the brick wall. These new lights would work so much better and Rob hooked me up with some to finish the job. Paired with the controller board to dim them, the new lights worked perfectly. In addition to the lighting, set dressing was also needed, so I carefully arranged all the garbage cans, trash and debris for a nice "back alley" look. Then I glued them down (I'll pause here to allow you all to calm down... better?). I should clarify, in my MOC building, I'm a purist, no gluing, no modifying. But as a filmmaker, practicality trumps purity, and stuff that's glued in place (with Elmer's—I'm not a sadist) doesn't move while shooting, ruining an otherwise perfect shot. When it's all done, the Elmer's glue pops off cleanly like it never happened. Now that the set was fully lit, dressed and tweaked, it was time to shoot.



Storyboards for the film.



Set construction.



Minifig Customization 101:

Creating the Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D!

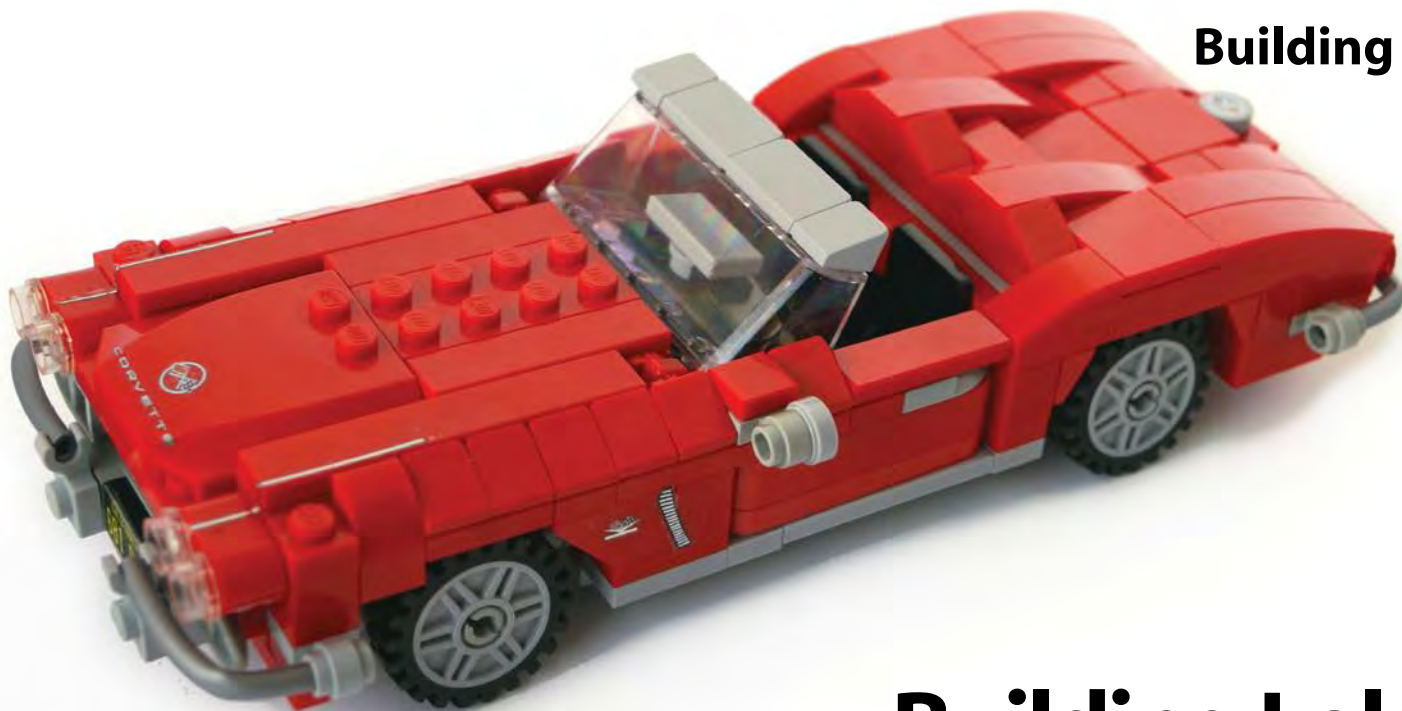
by Jared K. Burks

This is the 40th article in this series. To celebrate this accomplishment, I thought we would take this article back to its foundations in decal design. In order to do this I am going to use *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* as inspiration for the article. *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* is a television series created for ABC by Joss Whedon, Jed Whedon, and Maurissa Tancharoen based on the Marvel Comics organization S.H.I.E.L.D. (Strategic Homeland Intervention Enforcement Logistics Division). This organization is a peacekeeping and spy agency populated with the colorful characters from the Marvel Cinematic Universe, allowing it to share continuity with the Marvel film franchise. The

show is in its second season and centered on the character of Phil Coulson, who was introduced in the original *Iron Man* film from 2008. Coulson is an everyman-style character who is fiercely loyal to his team and organization and is now the Director and the heart of S.H.I.E.L.D.

The show chronicles Coulson's team through many trials and tribulations fighting evil baddies and Hydra. While we have a license from Marvel for various super-heroes and the Avengers, this has not included characters from Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. As a huge fan of S.H.I.E.L.D., I was instantly taken by the show and its unique style for the S.H.I.E.L.D. Agents. (My craze started with the S.H.I.E.L.D. comics and I can report that I have had the pleasure of meeting Jim Steranko on multiple occasions; he was massively influential in creating Nick Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D., but I digress.)

In this article, I am going to display the *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* characters I have created in minifigure form and discuss how and why I have outfitted them accordingly. I will point out how I have made the designs cohesive between the Goodies and the Baddies. While I would love to claim the credit for the show's amazing style, this belongs to Ann Foley, the Costume Designer for the show. I merely interpreted her awesome costumes. Through the creation of these figures, I have had the pleasure of conversing with Ann Foley via Twitter. Ann has been gracious enough to answer some questions about the show's style that she has



The completed model.

Building Lola

Article by Joe Meno

On the ABC television show *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, one of the iconic vehicles that was seen wasn't a tank or motorcycle, but a classic car. This classic car, a 1963 Corvette convertible, was Lola, Phil Coulson's personal vehicle. Restored and radically modified to fly, this car was Coulson's prized possession. I fell in love with car after seeing it at San Diego Comic-Con and posted on Facebook a query to friends: Should I try to build the S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier or Lola? After a few days, it was clear that everyone wanted *both* built, which was a little surprising. I decided to start with building Lola.

Building a model based on a real item has its good aspects and bad aspects. The good is that there is often reference to use, so accuracy can be maintained. The bad thing is that it's easier to see imperfections and building compromises when there are references. This can be a big problem with LEGO models, because minifigure scale is not a truly accurate scale to work with. This can be seen in the minifigure cars that were made a few years ago, as most of them were 4 studs wide—enough for a driver, but not a passenger. Wider cars have been designed since, but for a very long time there were only thin “golf cart” cars.

For Lola, I was going to make her hold two figures and be as accurate as I could get her. To do this, I would need as much reference as I could find, which was easy to do—I went online. I looked for images that were as close to top, side, front and back views as possible. I looked for photos of Lola and her original counterpart, the '63 Corvette. All of these photos were downloaded and looked at to figure out a scale.

I don't scale by using absolute calculations, mainly because human proportions and minifigure proportions are so different. Instead, I look for an item on the reference that can be matched up to a part and then scale to that part. For Lola, there were two choices I could use to scale the LEGO model. One was the headlights and the other was the tires. Since the tires are only certain set sizes, it's a good idea to see how they scale compared to a minifigure. I used the common medium wheels and tires for Lola. The headlights made a good measurement point, as it turned out that the gap between headlights matched to four headlight widths. This made the car have a final width of eight studs (good for two seats). From there the length was calculated to be 22 studs. These two dimensions gave me a footprint to start building.

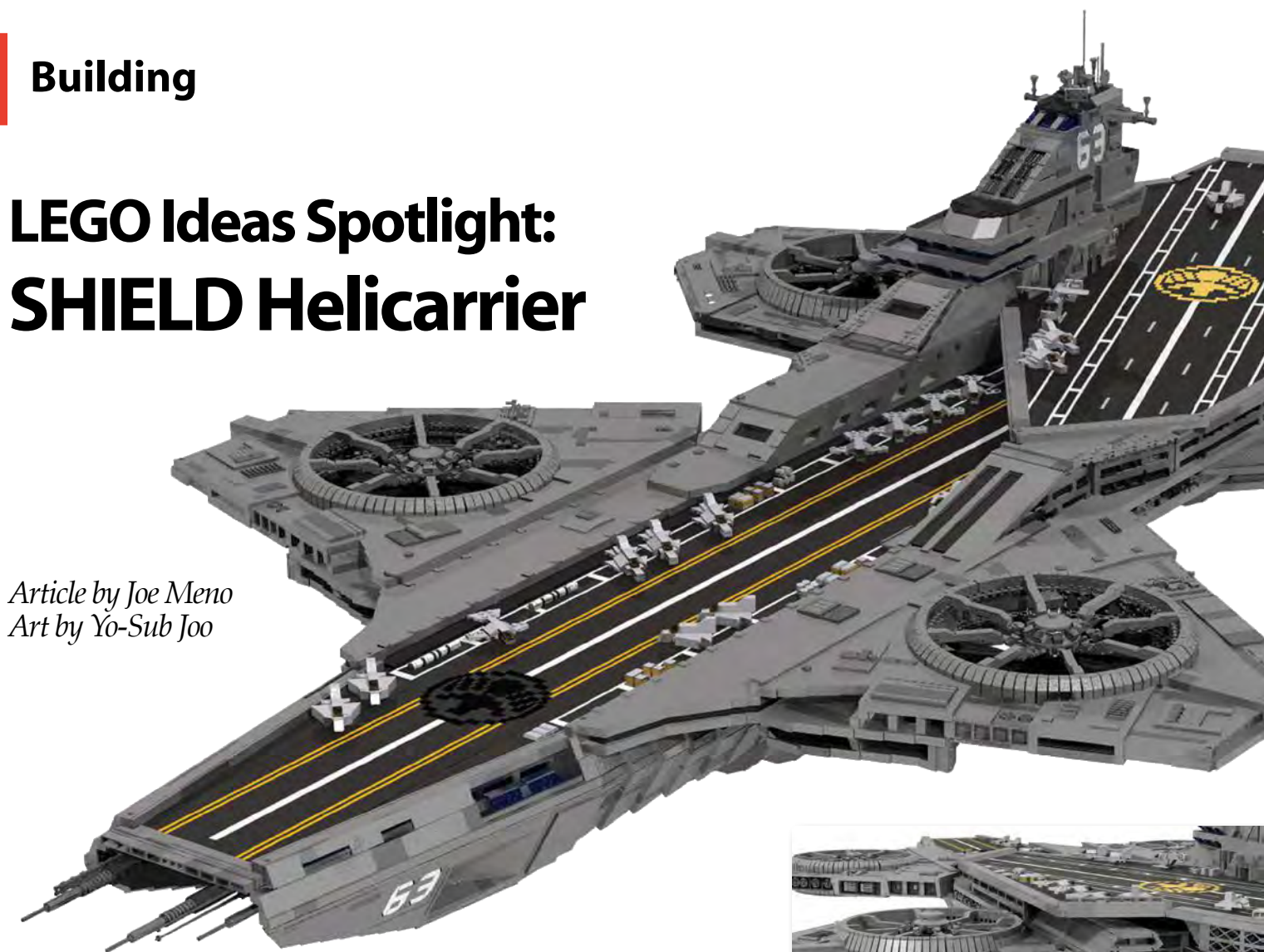
Figuring out the height became another challenge. If I used a minifigure as a scale for height, the car would have been about a brick and a plate or two high, which would not



Some screen captures from online searches. Photos came from ABC.com or Marvel.com.

LEGO Ideas Spotlight: SHIELD Helicarrier

Article by Joe Meno
Art by Yo-Sub Joo



An overall view of Joo's helicarrier.



A look at the rear.

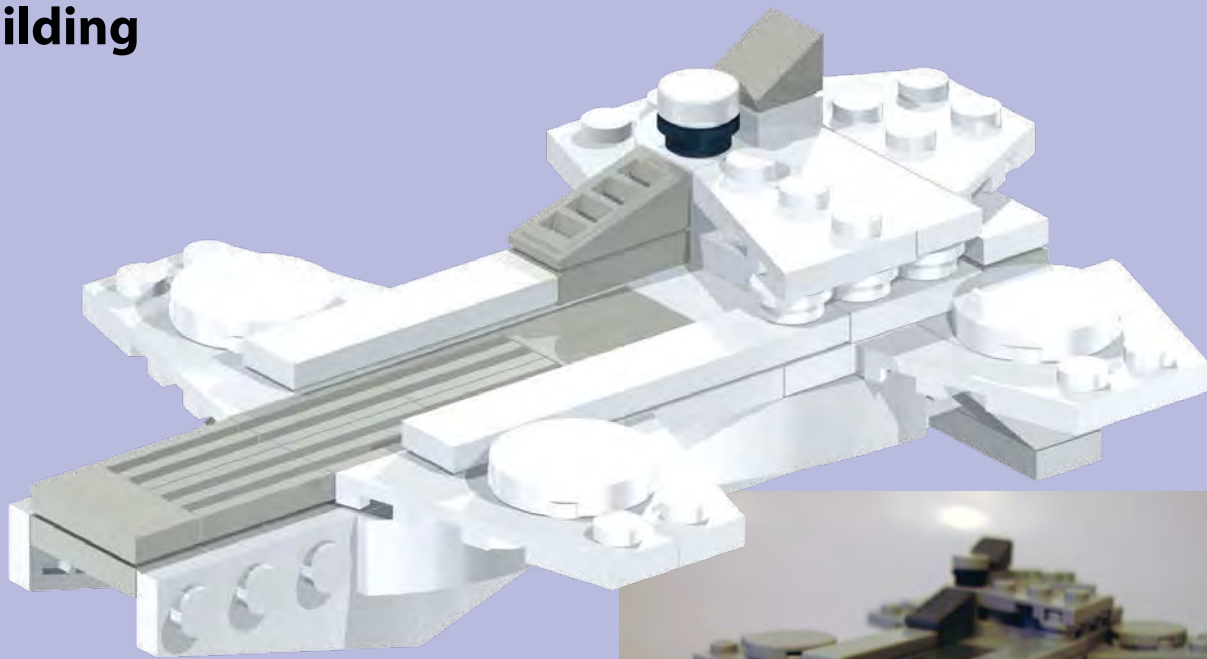
Yo-Sub Joo is a doctor who is also a LEGO builder. For the most part, he builds architectural models, but one build got him recognition: his rendition of the SHIELD Helicarrier. Built using LEGO Digital Designer (LDD), this virtual model took two months to build on the program.

He used reference photos from the *Avengers* movie to measure the helicarrier and scale it to a LEGO model—with the scale he used, the model is roughly 1 stud = 6 feet and is 272 studs (2.17 meters/85.4 inches) long and 144 studs (1.15 meters/45.3 inches) long. By reviewing movie stills and other references, he did his best to match the ship design. The underside of his LEGO helicarrier is different from the movie version, as the movie version was too complex to build.

The hardest part of building the model was working in the angles. Matching the correct angles was tough, so Joo used SNOT building techniques. In total, 22,694 bricks were used to build the model. From there, he converted the LDD file to a POV-Ray file to render. The final renderings were done in POV-Ray 3.7.

Joo's model actually made it to the LEGO Ideas Review stage by gathering 10,000 supporters on September 8, 2014. Currently, the model is still in review for the third LEGO Ideas Review. Results are due out in Spring 2015.

Building



Building the Helicarrier in Microscale

Article and Photography by Michael Lundqvist

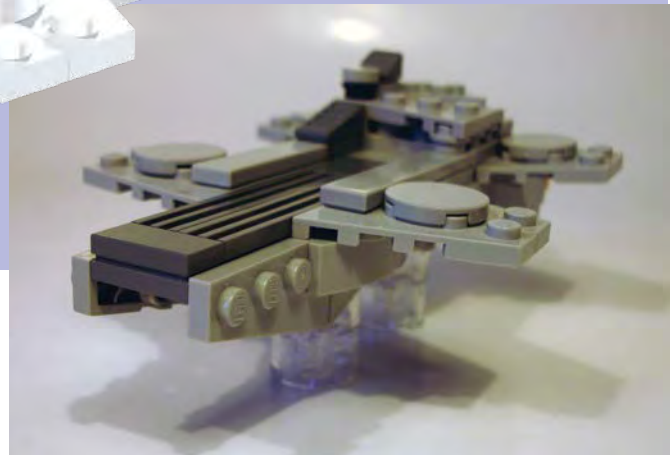
Art by Joe Meno

Hi! My name is Michael Lundqvist. My online name is MBL Designs. Not many know that MBL is actually my initials (Michael Bror Lundqvist) I'm going to school to become a youth worker. The education is over three years and I'm on my first year.

I have been LEGO building for as long as I can remember. The thing about me that I think many can relate to is I see the world in LEGO brick. When I see something cool I immediately think about how to make it in LEGO. I really got into building when I discovered the online LEGO community. I first got on MOCpages.com, and I was there for about a year. I got to know some awesome builders and got a lot of useful feedback about my MOCs. Later I found Flickr, another website, and saw that a lot of the people on MOCpages were on Flickr. As a result, I started a Flickr account and have been there since.

One thing that I love about the LEGO community is that it's for everyone. I'm all the way from Sweden and I have gotten to know people from all around the world with the same interests, which in my opinion is amazing!

When I was growing up I was a big fan of comic books, and I still am. I'm a big fan of remaking famous scenes and vehicles from movies, mostly comic book-based movies and *Star Wars*. My interest of making scenes based on comic books has evolved more and more with every year, as LEGO makes more and more sets based on Marvel and DC comics characters.



Michael's model.

A couple of years ago, I got a short internship at the LEGO sales office in Sweden, with the people who take care of all sale management in the country. The things I got to do included building LEGO models, folding LEGO boxes for upcoming LEGO sets, and displaying them in their showroom. It was the best LEGO-related experience I have had in my life, because my dream job is to become a LEGO designer. I'm happy to say that to this day, I still have a good relationship with them and visit them from time to time.

A bit over a year ago I started my YouTube channel. This is where I talk and show my MOCs and upcoming projects. My YouTube channel is probably my second best LEGO-related experience because of the friends I made and the feedback I have gotten.

The micro Helicarrier is based on the flying aircraft carrier from Marvel comics, or to be exact, the *Avengers* movie. My dream project is to make a minifigure-sized helicARRIER. Sadly I don't have the room or money to make such a thing. So I decided to make a micro version of it. I thought it would be easier to make a micro version, but in fact it's much harder than I thought, because you have to decide what elements from the real model you want to have in the micro version. That can become tricky at times, but I'm glad for all the details I got into the model.

Even though it was tricky to figure out how to make the model look good, it was a fun challenge and I have learned a lot from it.



Batman's Tumbler and armory.

Jared Chan: Building for Heroes

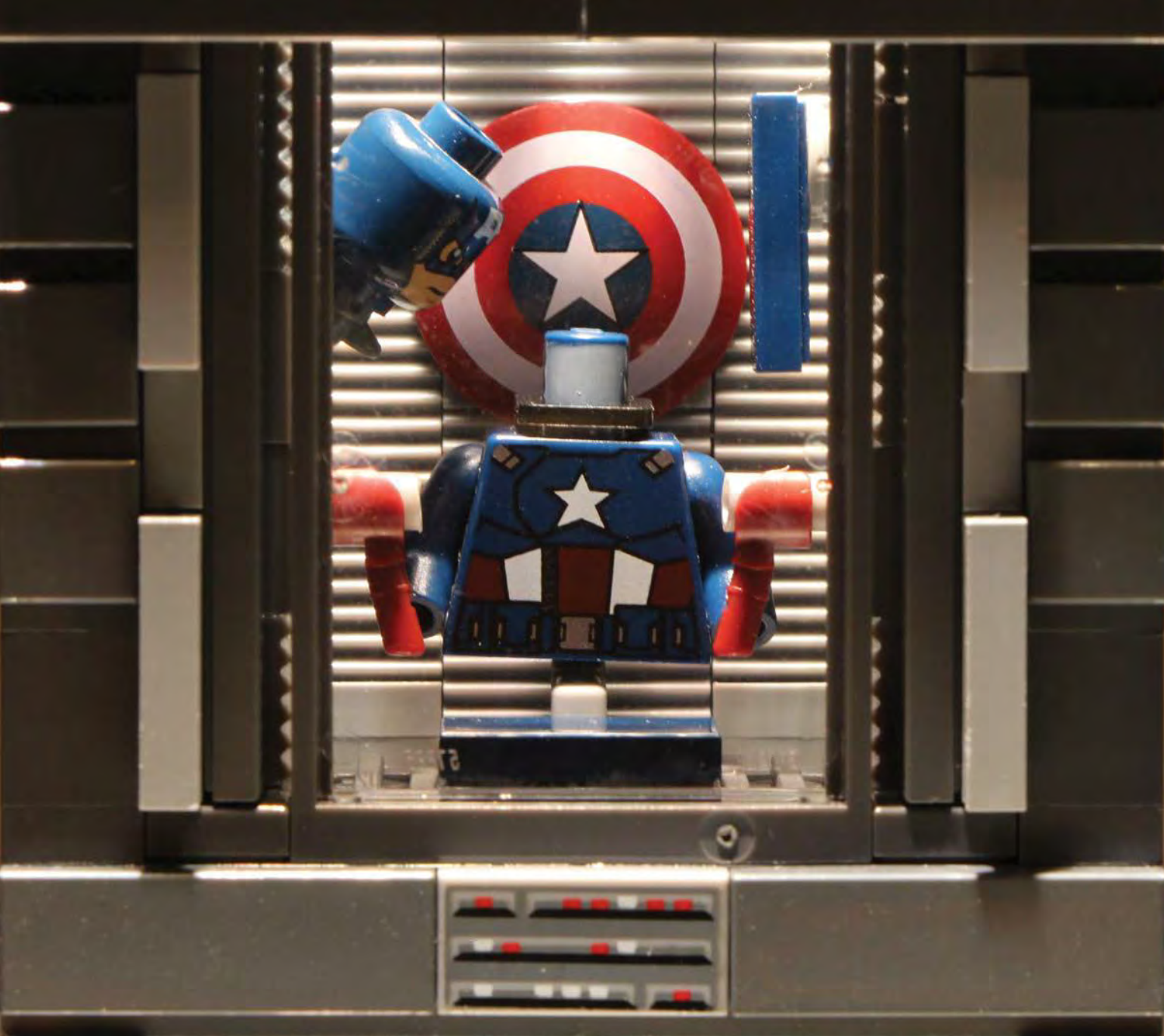
Article by Joe Meno

Photography by Jared Chan

Jared Chan is a 29-year-old certified professional accountant. Currently on a career break and looking for a new direction, he has been building as an AFOL for LEGO Hong Kong Limited in recent years, but as he says, "that's for fun so far." (His work includes buildings of a LEGO Winter Village at Times Square, Hong Kong in 2012, and HK landmark buildings at the LEGO sales area at a Toys'R'us flagship, HK in 2014. These will be showcased in an upcoming issue of BrickJournal).

Jared got his first LEGO set even before he was born and LEGO had always been part of his life (although he did have a semi-dark age). He started doing MOCs 'seriously' in 2007 when the Cafe Corner was released. Jared builds to achieve goals, challenge himself, and fulfill desires not achievable in the real world. LEGO bricks give him a way to release tension and express himself.

Jared talked about his super-hero-related creations with BrickJournal. Here are his comments.



A close-up of Captain America's suit. Captain America
TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

It was my Batpod friend who introduced me to Marvel's Cinematic Universe. Interestingly, I started out watching the movies in reverse order, from *The Avengers* all the way back to *The Incredible Hulk*. A lot of my friends think I am a super comics fan as I have built quite a few super-heroes MOCs, but no... I just started out watching the movies very recently :-)!

Captain America's Suit Room

".. We've made some modifications to the uniform. I had a little design input."

— Phil Coulson

"The uniform? Aren't the stars and stripes a little... old-fashioned?"

— Steve Rogers, *The Avengers* (2012)

I am obsessed with details when I build, so I spend quite a lot of effort to make things look right and complete. For the Captain America MOC, I watched the scene and set photos of Cap's suit room from *The Avengers* over and over again; building the model took approximately three hours, excluding research.

You Can Build It

MINI Model



MINI Batmobile


*Design and Instructions
by Christopher Deck*



You can see Christopher's webpage by going to www.deckdesigns.de or scanning this QR code!

Hello everybody, and welcome back to our mini model building series! I am glad to join again for this heroic issue of *BrickJournal*! Heroic because it's all about famous comic heroes like Superman, Spider-Man, Batman and many more! The Batman theme is particularly interesting for a mini builder because there are many cool vehicles and vessels appearing in that series. For this reason, I would like to build the classic Batmobile from the 1989 movie with you.

The 1989 Batmobile is a very flat and streamlined racer, requiring many curved pieces which exist in high diversity these days fortunately. There is a narrowing in the middle section of the vehicle which can be best realized by using 4x2 sloped wedges. These are among the most peculiar pieces in my eyes, resembling a mixture between brick, slope, and wedge. Their potential for obtaining a certain shape in mini building is incredible because they contribute a unique curve in one piece.

With that, our Batmobile is ready to start engines and race away! If you would like to have the flying Batwing for a companion, have a look at *BrickJournal* #20, which is about super-heroes and features complete Batwing instructions! Happy building and see you soon! 

You Can Build It




Iron Man, Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Hulkbustor Armor

*Design and Instructions
by Eric Druon (BaronSat)*

For this issue of *BrickJournal*, Eric decided to build a Hulkbustor version of Iron Man's armor. He tells us his inspiration:

"Well, it's really a special armor and when talking about Stark Industries, the Hulkbustor is one of the most interesting pieces in its inventory. I found the 4529 Iron Man construction set in a shop when it was out of stock everywhere, which I took as a sign of good luck. Of course, it's a nice action figure, but for a minifigure maniac like me, it was the opportunity to get large decorated parts for the Hulkbustor. And until now LEGO didn't produce that armor."

With the release of the LEGO *Avengers: Age of Ultron* sets, there is now a Hulkbustor available. However, Eric shows us here that there are more ways to build a particular creation. 



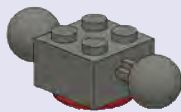
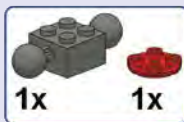
You can see Eric's webpage by going to www.baronsat.net or scanning this QR code!

Parts List

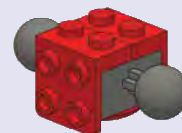
(Parts can be ordered from Bricklink.com by searching by part number and color)

Qty	Color	Part	Description
1	Black	90608	Hero Factory Arm/Leg with Ball Joint on Axle and Ball Socket and Pin Hole
2	Black	90611	Hero Factory Arm/Leg with Ball Joint on Axle and Ball Socket, Short
1	Blue	4032	Plate 2 x 2 Round
2	Dk Bluish Gray	14417	Plate 1 x 2 with Ball Joint-8
1	Dk Bluish Gray	57908	Brick 2 x 2 with Two Ball Joints
2	Dk Bluish Gray	57909	Brick 2 x 2 with Ball Joint and Axlehole
2	Dk Bluish Gray	57910	Brick 2 x 2 with Ball Socket and Axlehole
2	Dk Bluish Gray	99780	Bracket 1 x 2 - 1 x 2 Inverted
1	Dk Red	10907	Minifig Iron Man
2	Lt Bluish Gray	14704	Plate 1 x 2 with Socket Joint-8 with Friction Centre
6	Pearl Gold	2412b	Tile 1 x 2 Grille with Groove
10	Pearl Gold	4073	Plate 1 x 1 Round
1	Pearl Gold	4150	Tile 2 x 2 Round
3	Pearl Gold	47457	Slope Brick Curved 2 x 2 x 2/3 Triple with Two Top Studs
2	Pearl Gold	90639	Hero Factory Armor with Ball Joint Socket - Size 5
1	Red	2654	Dish 2 x 2
2	Red	2877	Brick 1 x 2 with Grille
2	Red	3005	Brick 1 x 1
5	Red	3020	Plate 2 x 4
5	Red	3021	Plate 2 x 3
4	Red	3022	Plate 2 x 2
12	Red	3023	Plate 1 x 2
1	Red	30414	Brick 1 x 4 with Studs on Side
6	Red	3069b	Tile 1 x 2 with Groove
1	Red	32064a	Technic Brick 1 x 2 with Axlehole Type 1
5	Red	3710	Plate 1 x 4
1	Red	3937	Hinge 1 x 2 Base
1	Red	3938	Hinge 1 x 2 Top
12	Red	4073	Plate 1 x 1 Round
2	Red	41855	Slope Rounded 2 x 2 x 2/3
6	Red	44728	Bracket 1 x 2 - 2 x 2
4	Red	47457	Slope Brick Curved 2 x 2 x 2/3 Triple with Two Top Studs
2	Red	47458	Slope Brick Round 1 x 2 x 2/3 with Flap and No Studs
2	Red	48336	Plate 1 x 2 with Handle Type 2
2	Red	4865	Panel 1 x 2 x 1
2	Red	50746	Slope Brick 1 x 1 x 2/3 Roof Tile
2	Red	50950	Slope Brick Curved 3 x 1
2	Red	60470	Plate 1 x 2 with 2 Clips Horizontal
4	Red	6091	Brick 2 x 1 x 1 & 1/3 with Curved Top
2	Red	64225	Wedge 4 x 3 Triple Curved without Studs
2	Red	85984	Slope Brick 31 1 x 2 x 0.667
2	Red	93575	Hero Factory Fist with Axle Hole
1	Red	98603pb003	Hero Factory Chest Armor Small with Iron Man Reactor Pattern
1	Trans Clear	4150	Tile 2 x 2 Round

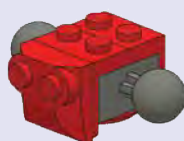
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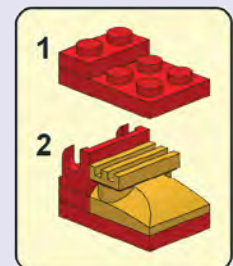
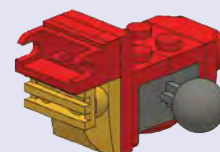
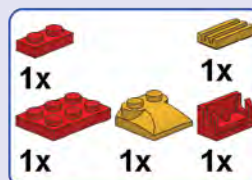
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3



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Building

Blackbird Fly!

Article and Photography by Justin Stebbins

While the Avengers and Batman have their own specialized vehicles to travel around the world in, Marvel's X-Men also have a vehicle: the Blackbird. Also called the X-Jet, this plane has been seen in different ways by different artists through the years, including the designers in the X-Men movies. It was only a matter of time before a version of the Blackbird was built by a LEGO fan.

Justin R. Stebbins, known on the web as "Saber-Scorpion" (his website is www.saber-scorpion.com) has been building with LEGO since he was 5 and posting his creations online for about 16 years (he's 28 now). Mostly known for making custom minifigs and MOCs inspired by video games, he also like to draw and write. Stebbins has self-published one novel and is currently working on a comic book.

"This One's for You, Morph!"

Justin describes his model:

"Kids today are growing up with The Avengers, but I was a '90s kid, so I grew up with the Uncanny X-Men! After watching the newest X-Men film, I felt inspired to build a Blackbird and some minifigs. The 'figs here are all customized with my own custom-designed stickers as usual, plus paint and a few third party accessories from BrickForge and BrickWarriors. Their outfits are mostly inspired by the '90s animated series, which introduced me to the characters in the first place. You may recognize Professor X, Cyclops, Wolverine, Jean Grey, Storm, Beast, Iceman, Rogue, Gambit,

Angel, Nightcrawler, Kitty Pryde, Colossus, Psylocke, and Emma Frost, as well as Phoenix. The Blackbird (or X-Jet) itself is mostly inspired by its appearance in the movies, which I also enjoy (well, most of them anyway). It can seat two pilots and seven passengers, although it's hard to attach the top if anyone has an especially tall hat or hair. The whole thing measures about 20 inches long and nearly as wide. It's even sturdy enough to be swooshable... sort of... if you hold it right!"



The X-Men's Blackbird, with X-Men awaiting boarding.



Front and rear views of the Blackbird.

Building the Bird

"All of the pieces I used are from the sizeable collection I've amassed just by buying LEGO sets over the years. I only ordered four of the parts on Bricklink: four large wing sections. I never plan very far ahead when I build—I just break out my LEGO bins and see what happens. So I always run into plenty of problems I have to work around,

sometimes rebuilding whole sections a few times until they're scaled right and sturdy. It takes a while. I'm not sure how many hours the jet took to build, but it came together over the course of a week or so."



Justin's X-Men: Front row, left to right: Rogue, Wolverine, Cyclops, Jean Grey, Professor X. Second row: Psylocke, Beast, Storm, Gambit, Emma Frost. Third row: Kitty Pryde, Colossus, Ice-Man, Nightcrawler. Rear: Angel. Characters TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



Building the Endless

Article and Photography by Tyler Halliwell

I was introduced to Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series in early 2014 and was instantly hooked. After reading the original 10 trade paperbacks as well as some of the spin-offs, I decided that, given my history of portraying other comic book characters (notably Hellboy) in LEGO, I would take it upon myself to make a bust of the title character, Dream, the Sandman. For such a renowned and well-known comic series, *Sandman* is surprisingly under-represented in the LEGO hobby world. Since the making of Dream, I have been slowly but surely trying to remedy that fact. It is my hope that this collection of mine will inspire other fans to build in the theme, or for those who do not know the subject material to give it a read.

Most builders who know me well understand that, for the most part, my best work is done when I am under time constraints. This is mainly due to the presence of my collection at home, and not at school, thus forcing a frantic rush of building whenever I am home with my bricks. Even when I do not have the time constraint of a weekend or break hanging over my head, this seems to have translated into a habit of speed-building. It was one such case when

I built Dream before Brickworld Chicago last year. I built Dream for a few reasons. First, I wanted to build something from *Sandman*, and the main character was the obvious choice. Second, it seemed to me that my Brickworld MOC spread was looking a little thin, and one more bust would round the display out nicely. And finally, as my sister had introduced me to the series, I figured that Dream would be a fun bust with which to surprise her, as she was out of town at the time but would be attending the convention. So, with source material in hand and plenty of motivation, I got to work.

Dream is not the simplest of characters to portray. As the comic series is drawn by many different artists, and the appearance of Dream is meant to be ever-shifting depending upon the viewer, I had to choose an interpretation that I liked and from which I wanted to work. Whenever I build a bust, I choose a feature of the head that I think will be the most difficult and, when I figure out how to go about that section, use that piece to determine the scale of the figure. For Dream, this part was the lower face, consisting of the mouth and cheekbones that give the character much of his aloofness and lack of emotion. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to make the figure's eyes light up, as Dream's dark and penetrating eyes are another important physical feature. This was at first achieved with the LEGO light bricks that came in sets, but have since been replaced with LifeLites (www.lifelites.com), which are far more reliable and allow for convenient battery replacement. This lighting factor made it necessary for the head to be hollow and hinged to allow access to these lights. This forced awareness when placing the hair, as I had to allow for sections to be removed in order to access the inside of the head.

Building



The Justice LEGO of America: (left to right) Robin, Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, and Aquaman. All characters TM & © DC Comics.

Basic Hero Building

Article and Photography by Peter Crone

I'm an AFOL from the Boston area, working full-time at a medical device and pharmaceuticals manufacturer and part-time in a LEGO Store. I came out of my Dark Age in 1999 with the introduction of the *Star Wars* theme... my first set was the 1999 LEGO X-Wing 7140, which was the only *Episode IV* related souvenir I could find at the Tesco (Britain's Wal-Mart equivalent) next door to Elstree Studios in London, where parts of the original *Star Wars* trilogy had been filmed. Soon after this theoretically one-off nostalgic purchase I was back in the fold, collecting LEGO sets, building MOCs and customizing minifigures to display on my shelves proudly.

I've been a fan of super-heroes since I was a kid. Batman and Robin started, as far as I was aware, in a crazy, live action TV show, and somehow made their way to Saturday morning cartoons when they joined *The Super Friends*. It was not much later that I discovered comic books and dozens upon dozens of other brightly colored costumed crime fighters and villains. After a time, like most kids, I could tell you all about the important characters in both the DC and Marvel Comics super-hero pantheons, which characters were the best in each, and why.

Years later, after returning to the LEGO hobby, I wanted to create comic book-inspired models, mostly using customized minifigures and models with playable features for them to fight crime in. That was fun, but I knew there had to be a way to get a wider variety of characters onto my shelf.

The idea was simple enough: build super-hero figures from (mostly) basic brick. I wanted something that could be challenging in the grander design sense, but with each figure being a fairly simple build. Some models would be more detailed than others, but nothing about the basic style would be out of reach for a child. Working in the LEGO Store, I spent a lot of time



The original 31 Super Friends made by Jon. All characters TM & © their respective owners.

When *LEGO Friends* was introduced in 2012, it was to mixed reactions. Some people viewed the news with joy that LEGO was introducing a girls' line, others felt they were pandering by introducing minidolls rather than minifigures, and many loved the introduction of new and interesting colors to the LEGO color palette to build with.

As the line was released, it may have sold far better than The LEGO Group expected, but it also met with resistance by those who felt it reinforced female gender stereotypes too deeply. While STEM and veterinarians were represented in the early sets, they were overshadowed by hair salons and shopping. For those who didn't purchase the sets, they were unaware of the variety of sets and joined in the criticism.

I first looked at the *Friends* minidolls at BrickFair 2012. Having been more familiar with the controversy than the products, I was able to look at them and see what a canvas they could make for some imaginative creations. Unfortunately, with time, The LEGO Group continued the same linear path with the line and I felt I needed to create my own variations on them.

It was during public hours at BrickFair that I decided to explore some new variations on the minidolls and see how they could be made more interesting to those who saw Stephanie, Emma, and their compatriots as stereotypical dolls that don't have the creativity of play that most LEGO sets entail. With Sharpie markers, a collectible minifigure mohawk, and some Brick Arms parts, I created an army and a punk rock Friend, which no one was mistaking for a doll that would say "let's go to the mall." The larger figures gave more space to work in and give a less blocky canvas to create some original minifigures in.

As the line progressed, the sets continued to sell, but were still seen as in the same light, as they released malls and playhouses alongside the more practical and motivating sets. The more I talked to people, the more I wanted to play

Presenting the Super Friends!

Article and Photography by Jon Lazar

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COMIC! BRICKS!

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Creating LEGO Comic Covers!

Article by Daphne Lamb

Photography by Brandon Griffith
and Tommy Williamson

Hopefully Marvel and DC got the memo—LEGO is here to put a better spin on what we all know and love, and builders are leading the parade in awesome ways, most notably with ComicBricks, which had its successful premiere in the fall of 2014 at DesignerCon.

What is ComicBricks, you ask? Simply put, it's recreating beloved comic book covers—any comic book cover—and recreating it out of LEGO, in any style the artist chooses, all while being faithful to the original artwork, and put on exhibit to the general public. With the influx of well-known properties getting the LEGO treatment, ComicBricks is the next step in making exciting LEGO art. So where did the idea come from? Perhaps it's best to ask its founder and noted builder himself, Brandon Griffith. I sat down with him at his studio, which is bursting with loving homages to his favorite properties from *Star Trek* to Marvel to Kurasawa films, to get some insight.

"My girlfriend had older issues of *Wonder Woman* comics framed, hanging in her apartment," he said. "The more I saw these, the more I thought about how cool it could be to see these represented in LEGO. So, for Christmas, I built her the cover of *Wonder Woman* #266."

Best Christmas present ever for any fan of LEGO or Wonder Woman, but that was just the beginning to



Star Wars #1, as built by Tommy Williamson. TM & © Lucasfilm Ltd.

something that would be an even bigger gift to a wider audience. But what was the next step?

"As my own dormant interest in comic books had begun to resurface, I was making more and more trips to the local comic book store," he said, "and began going through back issues looking for covers purely to build. I found an issue of *Adventure Comics* #445 (Aquaman) and began to build it. I soon realized that I had something unique. An idea that could evolve and, provided with the right framework, other builders could take it and run."

Given the immensely talented community of builders that Brandon is not only part of, but helps to highlight their talent with STUDS collector cards, he sent out the call to as many builders around the Los Angeles area that were able to participate. Word got out among various builder circles and soon he had artists eagerly pitching in, building models for the show, building the foundation to what was one of the most talked-about highlights of DesignerCon. Participating builders included Tommy Williamson, Ryan Wood, Dan Rubin, Matt "MonsterBrick" Armstrong, Zach Clapsadle, Peter Abrahamson, Remi and Alyse Gagne, Paul Lee, Ayleen Gaspar, Andrew Lee, Jeff Cross, Peter Aoun, and Eric Tetangco. While it garnered the amount of creative excitement one would expect, Brandon felt it best to lay down some ground rules.



Wonder Woman #266, by Brandon Griffith. TM & © DC Comics.



Bricking Comics: DC Comics' LEGO Covers

Article by Joshua Kranenburg
Art provided by DC Comics

All characters TM & © DC Comics.

The cover to Justice League of America #36.

Action Comics #36.



Last November, Traveler's Tales released *Lego Batman 3: Beyond Gotham* on all major consoles, which I reviewed in the previous issue of *BrickJournal*. To promote the game release, DC Comics designed 22 limited edition LEGO variant covers to their comics. For these covers DC Comics digitally rendered DC characters based on the character models in *LB3*. The covers were rendered by in-house artists, instead of the regular cover artists. The covers are priced the same as regular issues ranging from \$2.99 to \$3.99 but these variant covers are impossible to find in comic book shops since they were released in November of 2014. Now the only place to purchase these variant issues is on eBay or other online stores, usually priced at double what the issue would have cost in a local comic book shop. The whole set of 22 now goes for about \$70 on eBay.

The twenty-two books that received the LEGO treatment include very popular books such as *Batman*, *Superman*, *Wonder Woman* and less popular books such as *Justice League Dark*, *Teen Titans*, *Grayson* and sixteen other books. Each cover features the main hero or heroes from that book, with each hero in a dynamic/dramatic pose that, when it comes to LEGO minifigures, would be impossible. Not only do all these variant covers feature LEGO DC super-heroes, but the backgrounds are based off each book's #0 issue. The Zero issues had the same style where the heroes seemed to be crashing through the cover. However two out of the twenty-two covers do not feature the hero, but instead feature the villain of that book. For instance, instead of having Batman on the variant cover, *Batman* #36 has the Joker smiling a huge creepy smile holding his "calling card", a Joker playing card. As a huge Batman fan, this cover is by far my personal favorite, and is even my iPhone lock screen. The other cover that features a villain is *Superman* #36, having Brainiac on the cover posing with his hand to his head, as if he is about to use his mind control powers. Honestly, I like this cover a lot less since Brainiac isn't actually in this issue. For those Batman and Superman fans, don't worry—*Detective Comics* and *Action Comics* #36 feature their respective heroes on the cover. Some of the best looking ones include *Justice League* #36, *Aquaman* #36, *Wonder Woman* #36, *The Flash* #36, *Supergirl* #36 and *Harley Quinn* #12. Even though I personally have a favorite cover, each

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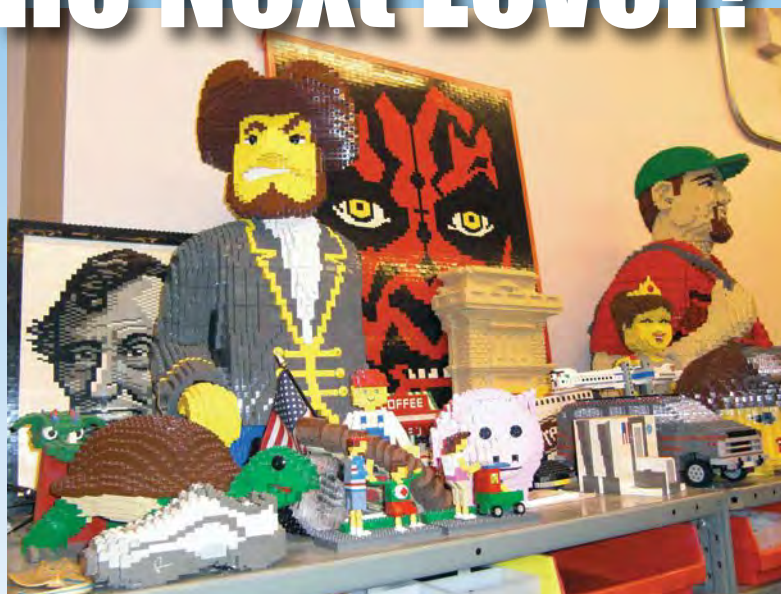
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News

"Everything is Awesome" at the Academy Awards!

Article by Joe Meno

LEGO instruments with their builders (left to right): Stephen Gerling, Paul Chrzan, and Michael Provenzano. Photo by Peter Donner.

2015 was the year that *The LEGO Movie* got an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song for Tegan and Sara's *Everything is Awesome*. To showcase the song, the producers of the Academy Awards ceremony contacted the LEGO Group. The reason? To get some LEGO models for the song performance!

Mike McNally, Senior Director of LEGO, Connecticut (the American branch of the LEGO Group), was the one who contacted the LEGO Group.

"We were contacted by the producers of the Academy Awards ceremony to see about making some props for the performance as playful as possible, so some of the props had to be short on length of lead time, and on models for New York Times. We had to build anything large-scale for the performance. The instruments: a saxophone, a trumpet, and a keyboard.

At the Model Shop, Paul Chrzan, who constructed by Stephen Gerling, were then sent to California to build a piece that composer Mark Isham had written for the LEGO-built hat that was a hat for Devo. The hat, Batman logo on the stand, also LEGO-built, were

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