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BrickJournal

Issue 14 • April 2011

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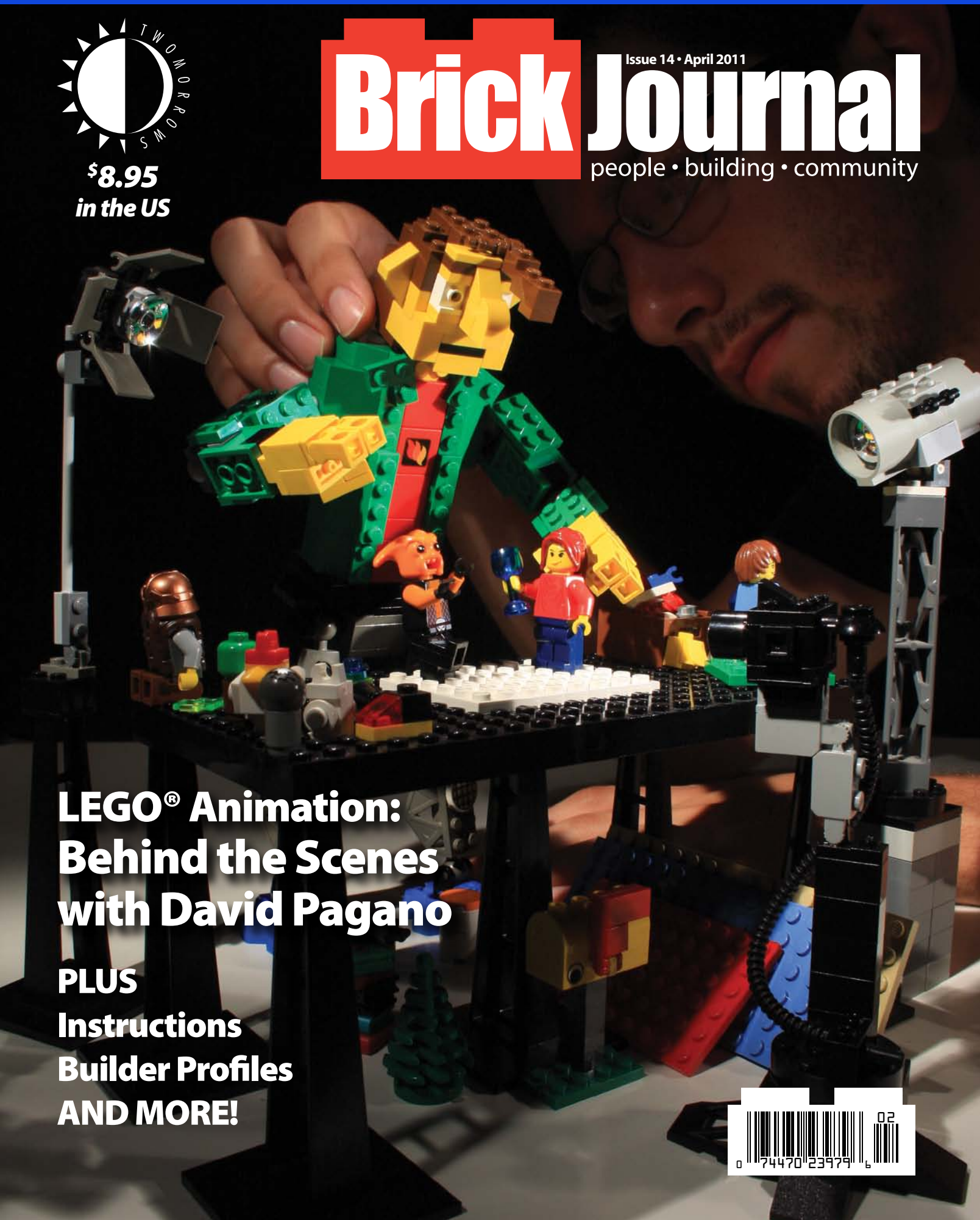

LEGO® Animation: Behind the Scenes with David Pagano

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This Page: A scene from Shatterpoint Entertainment's JERICHO: The Promise Fulfilled.

The cast of the LEGO® Studios Steven Spielberg MovieMaker Set: (top) Director, (bottom, left to right) Res-Q 3, Cameraman, Pilot, Female Assistant, Grip, and Female.

Behind the Scenes of

It's been over a decade since the introduction of LEGO Studios, *the play theme that set many kids on the road to filmmaking.* BrickJournal *caught up with a few of the minds behind the Studios line, and here's what they had to say!*

Article by David Pagano

***BrickJournal*: Hi there! Let's start with introductions: who are you; how long have you been with TLG; what's your job title there; and what was your role on LEGO Studios?**

Hans Henrik Sidenius: I work as a Model Designer in PMD. I have been working at LEGO since 1996. I was a part of the DESIGN TEAM that developed the LEGO STUDIOS sets, and I designed the following sets: #1349 Steven Spielberg Movie Maker Set, #1353 Car Stunt Studio, #1382 Scary Laboratory, and #1381 Vampire's Crypt.

Lars Nyengaard: Senior Director, LEGO Education; working with Machines and Mechanisms, LEGO MINDSTORMS and LEGO Education WeDo, among other things. At the time of LEGO Studios, I was Marketing Director: heading up the LEGO Studios project, liaising with development partners such as Steven Spielberg and Universal Studios.

John Sahlertz: Director. Working as project manager in Markets and Product with novelty launches. Responsible for people, timing, finance, and quality in the projects where I'm project manager. At the time Studios was developed, I had the same role.

Daniel W. Mathiasen: Manager of Creative Software in LEGO Digital: working on products that allow kids to build and share their stories, as well as virtual building toys. On LEGO Studios, I was the technical producer.

Steen Sig Andersen: Model Designer. I have been working for the LEGO Company for more than 25 years. Through the years I have been involved in many different projects, both as model

The crew behind the LEGO® Studios sets: (top, left to right) Daniel W. Mathiasen, Torben Damgaard Rasmussen, Lars Nyengaard, John Sahlertz (bottom, left to right) Steen Sig Andersen, Hans Henrik Sidenius. Photo by Eik Thyrsted Brandsgård.

builder and developer of new elements. In LEGO Studios, my task was to design some of the new elements.

Do any of you have a background in filmmaking or animation?

Daniel: As far as I recall, no one on the LEGO team had a background in filmmaking — there were team members with a background in liberal arts.

Hans Henrik: Right — no one had any background in filmmaking. In 1997, LEGO designer Rick Siegrist made a visit to Disney Studios in the U.S. He later built up the first "movie" concept models and presented the idea. When we later started up the LEGO Studios project, the team did a inspiration trip to London and Manchester. At the Museum of the Moving Image, we had a tour "behind the scenes," explored how to do a movie, and explored the history of movie making.

When Studios was being introduced, web video was still in its infancy, and YouTube was five years off. Where did the concept for "LEGO Studios" come from?

Daniel: This was a time when the toy industry was trying to find its footing in a world of new media and technologies. TLG was of course in the midst of it, with LEGO Mindstorms and the early LEGO Media titles. This, combined with the inspiration from the brick films community, made the conceptual leap very easy. We were, however, faced with the challenge that the concept had many facets where partners were needed. Steven Spielberg, Pinnacle Systems, and Spite Your Face productions were some of the most visible partners who helped make this happen. For TLG, it was fairly new ground working with so many partners.

Lars: We know that children love to role play with LEGO themes and we wanted to make LEGO Studios an enabler for them to capture and share their role play and stories. A very simple idea — and then we thought that introducing simple movie making tips and tricks would be fun and inspiring. So we included a small book on movie making and storytelling. Again, the idea was to use the LEGO themes and LEGO bricks already played with by the kid.

How did the partnership with Steven Spielberg come about?

Lars: We thought about who would be the most inspiring person to work with — and Steven Spielberg topped the list. I basically called his office a few times, and found out that they had thoughts about making moviemaking accessible to kids — just as we wanted to do with LEGO Studios. Fortunately, Steven Spielberg decided to join our project instead of developing his own project.

Did Mr. Spielberg have a lot of input into how the theme was developed?

Lars: Steven Spielberg had lots of input. He gave us a lot of inspiration in regards to a film set and props that kids would like. On the other hand, he acknowledged our competences in making child relevant software, hardware, LEGO sets, etc.

The LEGO Studios MovieMaking Contest: Ten Years Later

Article by David Pagano with Caleb Kester and Eric Stirpe

To coincide with the release of the Studios sets in 2000, North American LEGO fans were challenged to create their own original short films and submit them to the "LEGO Studios MovieMaking Contest." Semi-finalists were chosen in three age categories, and were flown out to New York City for a red carpet premiere at Planet Hollywood. Finalists were to be chosen at this premiere, and would then move onto an international competition.

I was one of the semi-finalists, and despite the fact that I *lived* in New York City at the time, attending the LEGO MovieMaking Awards ceremony was a blast. As a fledgling animator, it was one of the first times I began to see filmmaking as something I could potentially turn into a career.

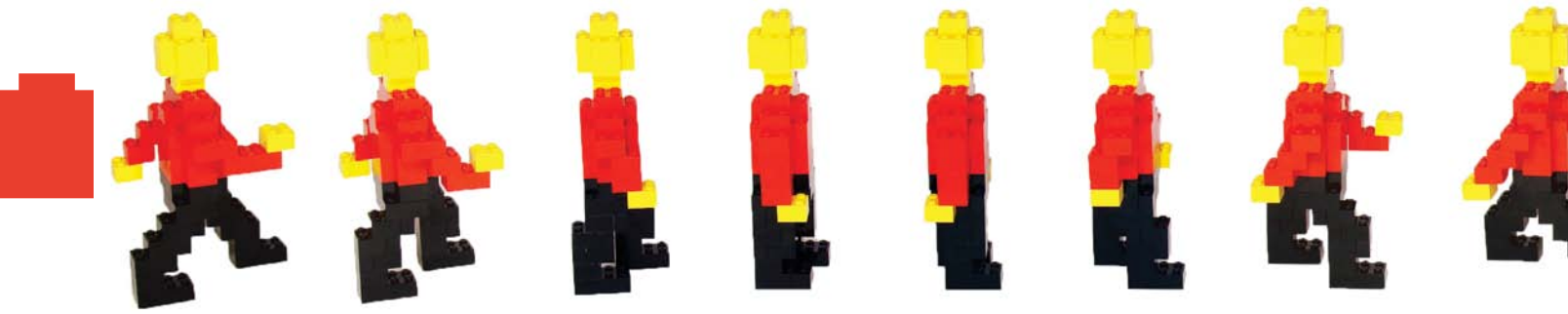
Included with the LEGO prize package was a contact list for all the semi-finalists, so that we could potentially stay in touch after the fact. Ancient e-mail services notwithstanding, I recently tried getting in touch with my fellow semi-finalists again — 10 years after the fact — to see if they had any interesting stories or memories to share. Here are two of them...

Caleb Kester was one of the semi-finalists in the 11-13 age category. He is currently a Senior at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, where he majors in Computer Information Systems, and double-minors in Multimedia and Business.

My film, *Western Trouble*, was produced in one weekend. I found the LEGO MovieMaker Set on sale at the store, and so I bought it. The deadline for the contest was one week away, so the Saturday before the deadline, I turned into a movie producer. I spent all day Saturday filming stop-motion

Above: A ten-years-younger David Pagano steps out of a limo at the LEGO Studios Movie Making Awards ceremony, held at Planet Hollywood, New York City

Opposite page: The Certificate of Achievement recieved by each semi-finalist in the contest. The "Director's Award" given to finalists appears in the top right-hand corner of the certificate.



How to Animate: An Introduction

Article and Photography by David M. Pickett

Welcome! You're about to enter an exciting new world — a world where inanimate objects come to life, where your toys can move and talk, and above all, a world where anything is possible. Welcome to the world of stop-motion animation!

In case you're not familiar, stop-motion animation is an animation technique where physical objects are repeatedly moved and photographed in tiny increments. When these photographs are played back in rapid succession it gives the illusion that the objects move on their own. This technique has a long history in the motion picture industry, with *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) being a prime example. With digital cameras becoming cheaper and more sophisticated every year, the technology required to create these animations is now widely available. You probably have everything you need to make one sitting in your house right now.

Just as there are a wide range of LEGO building techniques, from simple studs-up construction to mind-bending SNOT techniques, the art of stop-motion has simple foundations and complex heights. This article will teach you the basic skills needed to make your first animation and give you a quick glimpse at some advanced techniques. I'll be illustrating the examples with my medium of choice, LEGO bricks, but the techniques here apply to all kinds of stop-motion animation.

Making Your First Animation

The three most important things you need to make a stop-motion animation are a camera, something interesting to animate, and lots of patience. As a LEGO maniac, you probably have the last two covered, so I'll focus on the camera.

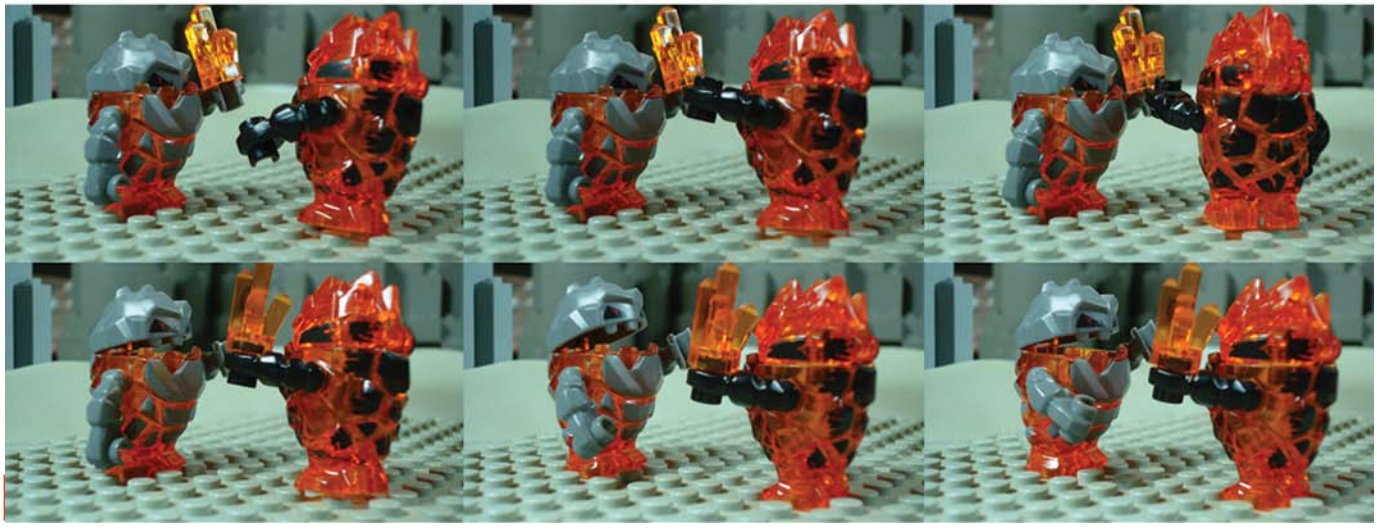
Choosing the right camera is one of the most important choices you'll make while animating. Your camera affects everything from the animating process to the look of the final product. The factors that go into choosing the right camera could fill an article on their own; there are trade-offs between simplicity, flexibility, price, picture quality, and more. For your first animation, just use a camera you are comfortable with. This could be a simple point and shoot camera, a fancy DSLR, a digital camcorder, a webcam, or even a camera phone. If it takes pictures, you can animate with it. Here are a few things to consider when choosing a camera:

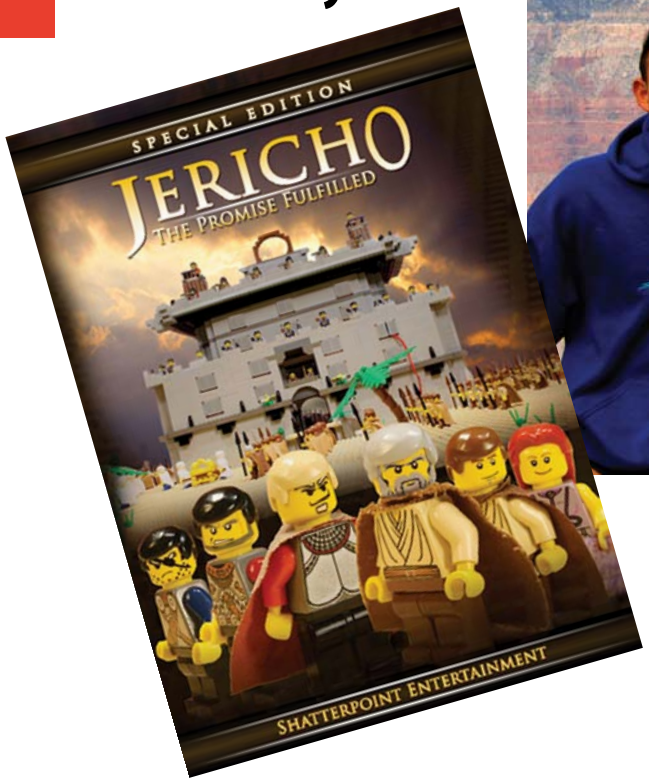
• Manual settings – The more you can control the better your animation will look. The most important manual controls are focus, exposure, and white balance.

• Remote control – Ideally you should take pictures using a remote control or through a computer capture program. This will prevent you from touching the camera and accidentally moving it around during your shot.

• Macro focus – Many cameras have a macro mode that lets you focus on objects that are only a few inches away from the lens. This is vital when your subjects are small objects like LEGO minifigs.

• Power supply – Make sure your camera has good battery life (or even better, an AC adapter), and if possible disable any power saving auto-shut-off functions. One of the most frustrating things that can happen while animating is your camera shutting off in the middle of your big scene.





Above: The DVD art to "JERICHO: The Promise Fulfilled."

Above Right: The Rondina Family (left to right): Anthony, Mark, Wendy and Jessica.

Brick Filming the Bible

"JERICHO: The Promise Fulfilled" is a brick film that has an unusual honor: a listing in the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.org). The film has been shown in film festivals and garnered praise and awards throughout the US.

The movie was the effort of the Rondina family, and BrickJournal *was able to talk to them about their work and the movie. The interview, much like the movie, has a few surprises, so read on!*

Article by Joe Meno
Photos by the Rondina Family

Inspirations

***BrickJournal:* The entire family is the film company, so who does what?**

Mark Rondina: We all are involved in every aspect of the film. Some of us have stronger talents in certain areas than others. We try to let those who have their strength and talents oversee that area of the project.

Jessica's talents range from writing and web design to animation and coaching actors.

Anthony's strengths are in the area of post-production. Some examples include: editing, green screening, graphic design, etc.

Wendy and I are involved with the overall production end of things, like marketing, event planning, and logistics. Oh yeah, Jessica and Anthony graciously allowed us to fund their projects also.

When did the idea of animation with LEGO minifigs and bricks start?

Anthony Rondina: Well it all started as a high school project. At the end of our ancient history class we had to spend 40 hours on something we learned that year. Seeing as how we had no actors or video cameras, we looked to the next best thing: 16 years worth of collecting LEGO bricks. Making a brick-film was something I've always wanted to do and this was the perfect opportunity for it!

How did you decide to use brick animation? Why not drawn animation or live action?

Jessica Rondina: We've always loved exploring creativity through our LEGO bricks and animating them just seemed like the logical next step. As far as hand-drawn animation--we're still at the stick-figure stage. (As you'll see with our storyboards.) And live action is a medium we are just now starting to break into. We see ourselves very much as accidental filmmakers.

This all came from just trying to get an "A" in an honors course humanities class.

Who were the LEGO builders before filming?

Wendy Rondina: Anthony has always been our LEGO nut. When we started to homeschool, we noticed that he could do his classes better if they involved the LEGO blocks. We used them for math, writing, and storytelling, as well as other subjects. That is why it was so natural to complete his high school ancient history assignment using bricks and minifigs. For the ancient history project, the kids chose to tell the story of the Ten Plagues of Egypt!

Filming

What is your studio setup?

Jessica: A bedroom, a sturdy table, lights, craft supplies, and Anthony's entire collection of LEGO sets. We designed our studio to offset some problems we faced in our previous films, specifically:

Set Shaking: We wanted to make it look like a real world where gravity has its correct pull keeping the land in its rightful place. This is hard to do when you have a crawlspace under you instead of firm concrete. We attached clamps to the LEGO baseboards and minimized any and all walking around the set — this way the tripod wouldn't move or accidentally get kicked.

Flickering: In our first film, we noticed that we had a large amount of flickering, where the lighting seemed inconsistent in each picture. To eliminate that problem, we turned off the overhead fan, covered all the windows with thick flannel bed sheets, closed the door, wore dark colored clothes, and made sure all computer monitors were kept under the table. Was all that overkill? Not really. Blacking out the windows allowed us to animate any scene at anytime of the day (or over the course of multiple days) and dimming the monitor reduced the chance of extraneous light being reflected off my clothes.

What do you use to film?

Jessica: The camera we used was a Canon Digital Rebel XTi. It's a 10.1 megapixel camera that has the capability for interchangeable lenses. The standard 18-55mm lens it came with was used to shoot the wide scenes (like the marching around Jericho) and medium tight scenes (as seen in the King's palace). The 100mm Macro lens was used for all the close ups on both the characters and props they were interacting with.

We did not use any stop-motion software to produce *JERICHO*. The computer in the studio was only used to play CDs and DVDs to help pass the time. During animation, the only "onion skinning" capability we had was advancing each picture in the 2.5" LCD screen that was imbedded into the XTi. You can imagine how much "fun" that was when shooting the Matrix scene.

Explain the filming process and maybe a timeline of how you produce a film: how long it takes to write, then film, then add sound and post production.

Anthony: The first thing we did was start in prayer. We wanted to make absolutely sure this was something God wanted us to do and would bless. Then we got into the research and outlining process. Depending on the length and depth of a film this part can either be a very long or very short process.

Once we had to script nailed down and all the pre-production out of the way, it was time to begin filming; here's where our jobs split. We would shoot and edit the film simultaneously.

Editing and building for the movie.

Once Jess would finish a shot, she'd give me her memory card and I would then import the footage, add facial animation, compositing, green-screening etc.

Once the shot was finished it would get exported to the final sequence in Final Cut Pro. Apple's FCP is what I used to add the sound effects, dialogue, and everything else to make the shot come alive.

What makes brick animation so enjoyable? What really drives you nuts about it?

Jessica: LEGO bricks have always been in our home and were a huge part of our childhood growing up. We were homeschooled and used our bricks in a lot of school projects — which is exactly what led us to where we are today.

What is so neat about this type of animation is its accessibility. We get so excited talking with others about their brick films, seeing their productions and brainstorming together on future projects. It's something pretty much anyone can do; yet it definitely takes a level of commitment and determination.

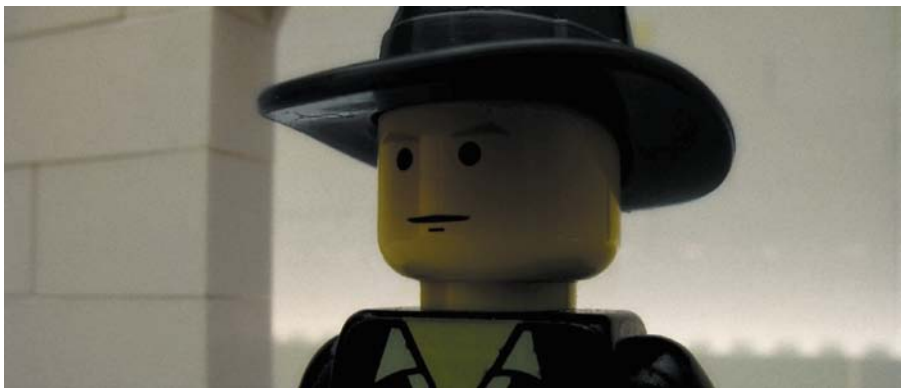
The thing that intrigues us most about stop-motion is its complex simplicity. CGI is fun to watch, but there is no limit to its abilities and thus perfect animation is expected; the wonder of CGI is becoming more and more commonplace.

The fascination about stop-motion lies in the limitations of its subject. Whether it's with clay, bricks, or rocks, our belief is suspended as we watch these inanimate objects come to life. We get excited when a common object does something extraordinary. Then we forward it on to all our friends.

Putting the BRICKS IN MOTION

Article by Philip Heinrich

On January 2nd, 2010, animators from around the world logged on to BricksInMotion.com to begin work for the seventh Twenty-four Hour Animation Contest. More than sixty of them completed entries, rising to the challenge to create a brick film in less than 24 hours. This is just one example of the passion this worldwide, online community has for filmmaking.



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The online community for "brick filming," the art of making stop-motion films with LEGO products, began in 2000, shortly after the release of the LEGO Studios line, which included equipment and software for making stop-motion films.

YouTube would not be around for another five years, and for some time, the brick animation community was the largest online community devoted to stop-motion animation of any kind. Internet video was still in its infancy, and without in-browser viewing technology, the community relied on file hosting services or personal websites to host their video files.

Nevertheless, the community had an active forum, with new films being posted daily. Contests fueled the fire and motivated members to push the limits of what had previously been done in the

Inside MindGame Studios:

An Interview with Zach Macias

Article by Will Jennings
Photography courtesy of Zach Macias

When I was first asked to write an article for BrickJournal *on a popular brick filmmaker, I immediately though of Zach Macias, better known as MindGame Studios. Zach is only 19, and has been creating brick films for over five years. This is how it all started out…*

***BrickJournal:* Hey Zach! So, when did you first start animating and what got you into brick filming business?**

Zach Macias: I first got started animating back in the summer of 2004. I was hanging out with a good friend of mine and we were bored one day, so he suggested that we make a film. He went into his house and retrieved a video camera, some chess pieces, and an old stuffed animal, and introduced me to stop-motion animation.

Months later, I was browsing around the Internet when I stumbled across a video promoting the recently-released *Spider-Man 2*. It was a LEGO® stop-motion film titled *Spider-Man: The Peril of Doc-Ock*, created by Spite Your Face Productions. I was absolutely enthralled by it. I watched it multiple times just to admire the quality of the animation, the sets, digital effects, etc... I then began to think to myself, "Hey, I got a bunch of old LEGO stuff from years ago; maybe I could do something like that...?" And that's pretty much what got me started in brick filming.

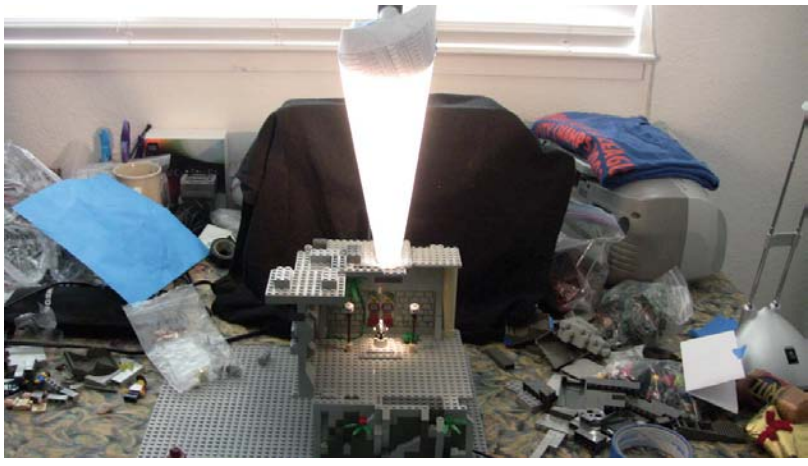
So what was your first brick film?

My first official film was a short called *The Door and Beyond*, released in March of that year. It was a parody of another popular brick film called *About a Door*, created by the user Holgor. In short (and without spoiling the film), *About a Door* is about a group of people who encounter a doorway on the street with a sign next to it saying "Do Not Open This Door," and they deliberate about whether or not to open it (I believe the film can be found on Archive.org, and I do highly recommend it, it's great). It had achieved a cult-like status in the community to the point where many users created their own parody films that revealed what they thought was behind the door. I decided to hop onto that bandwagon and *The Door and Beyond* was born.

(Note: Zach's film, The Door and Beyond, *can be viewed on YouTube, and has over 155,000 views.)*

Left: Animation in progress on Zach's film Stranger than Fishin'.

Bottom Left and below: On the set of Treasure Hunter. *Note the lamp and paper setup used to achieve a unique lighting scheme.*



Event Report:

The Brick Film Booth at LEGO® Fanwelt 2010

Mission: Boosting up Imagination With Brick Filmmaking!

Article by Steffen Troeger
Photography by Steffen Troeger and Piet Wenzel

"We're shooting a movie — it's about an alien invasion on a farm!" the two boys at the table enthusiastically told me. They are busy at work on a little LEGO® film set, with a camera, a lamp, and a laptop.

"Is it easy to make your own film with LEGO bricks?" I ask. "Yes!" the first boy says. "And it's really fun! All you have to do is press 'enter', take a lot of pictures, and all of this will later become the movie!" The second boy adds, "But you need patience, too. If you're too fast, the figures topple over and you'll have to animate the scene over again." He turns back to the set, moving the alien vehicle a tiny bit. "Wait!" the first boy shouts. "First, I have to delete some pictures, because the camera was too close…" *Click!*

A similar scene is happening at a nearby table: two girls appear to be in deep concentration as they move a little car and minifig, and take a picture. They then giggle to each other as they watch a preview of their animation. The girls are sisters, and they're fascinated by how easy it is to bring their scene to life. It is pretty amazing, too, considering that only a few minutes earlier, neither girl had any idea how LEGO animation worked.

But now, everyone can see — and hear — how much fun it is for them. "Sure, we'd like to do this on our own at home!" the older girl says. "I want to make a story about shopping… or, something that happens on a long car trip…" "Or a burglary!" "Yes! Thrilling things!" The girls nod in agreement, and smile. *Click!*

Above and below: Children animating at LEGO Fanwelt.

motion together for what would be my very first completed brick film. I wanted efficient yet impressive sets, with mosaic backdrops if possible, armature animation and minifig action, automatic construction, and replacement animation. Those come to mind as the fundamentals, along with lighting and composition. I've tried to stick with those principles since.

Anyway, somehow those efforts paid off and I was ecstatic to find out I'd won the grand prize! Part of the deal was to complete a follow up short for Nicktoons using SpongeBob, which is a really fun IP (intellectual property). We'd had a couple of false starts though, and I had a very busy touring schedule, but when they finally offered such a catchy holiday song I was pretty thrilled! So a storied year later I delivered the LEGO SpongeBob music video for "Don't Be a Jerk, It's Christmas!" I had no idea though if I would ever hear from LEGO again, since most of my contact had been with Nicktoons.

Things really changed when the team from LEGO Club TV contacted me about working on an incredible *Star Wars* short. Ultimately, things went so well that LEGO has been keeping me fairly busy, and I have transitioned into a career in my new garage studio creating brick animations! Over the last year, I produced visuals for *The Fastest & Funniest LEGO Star Wars Story Ever Told,* the *Let's Go LEGO* music video for the LEGO Club Show (Episode 5.2), a *Space Police* series for the "Catch the Crooks" Building Contest, an *Adventures of Max* tie-in for LEGO Universe, and a new project that is keeping me very busy...

So all I can say is follow your dreams, kids! Persistence and dedication, talent and timing, never give up hope — sounds cliché, but it really applies sometimes! Thanks so much to all my friends and family for all their support over the years!

BrickJournal Exclusive:
Behind the Scenes of "The Fastest and Funniest LEGO Star Wars Story Ever Told!"

After the SpongeBob animation, I was hoping to work with LEGO again, so I was thrilled and honored when they contacted me to produce all the sets and animation for this special *Star Wars* short. They provided the script, kits and bulk bricks I requested. They also completed all post-production and computer-generated effects. Others created all the audio and sound design. Everyone did a great job, and it was truly a collaborative effort! Of course, LEGO and *Star Wars* seem perfect together anyways...

Most of this work, however, was completed all alone in my bedroom on a 3' x 3' table! I felt an incredible pressure to not only live up to the quality they wanted (akin to Spite Your Face Productions' *The Han Solo Affair),* but also to give a faithful visual homage to the inspirational trilogy while representing the beloved LEGO brand. I worked a staggering number of hours trying to get everything done within the three-month deadline. I am also a relatively inexperienced brick filmmaker with some ambitious ideas, so there was much to learn, including an all new HD hardware system (special thanks to Matrox for providing a stellar MXO2le for HD capture and encoding)! My roommates were kind enough to assemble many of the kits for me, and tolerated completed sets, kits, and bags of bricks stacked all around the living and dining rooms waiting for a turn in my bedroom studio.

Those late nights paid off though, and the detailed sets, attention to lighting, and video backdrops were combining for very compelling imagery. I had a rough voice-over to work with, but it was still amazing to see the final work on "May the Fourth" with all effects and audio. Of course, the primary gags were fun, but the incidental animation I created combined with the ad-libbed "voice-under," came together with the sound design and score to create something just fantastic!

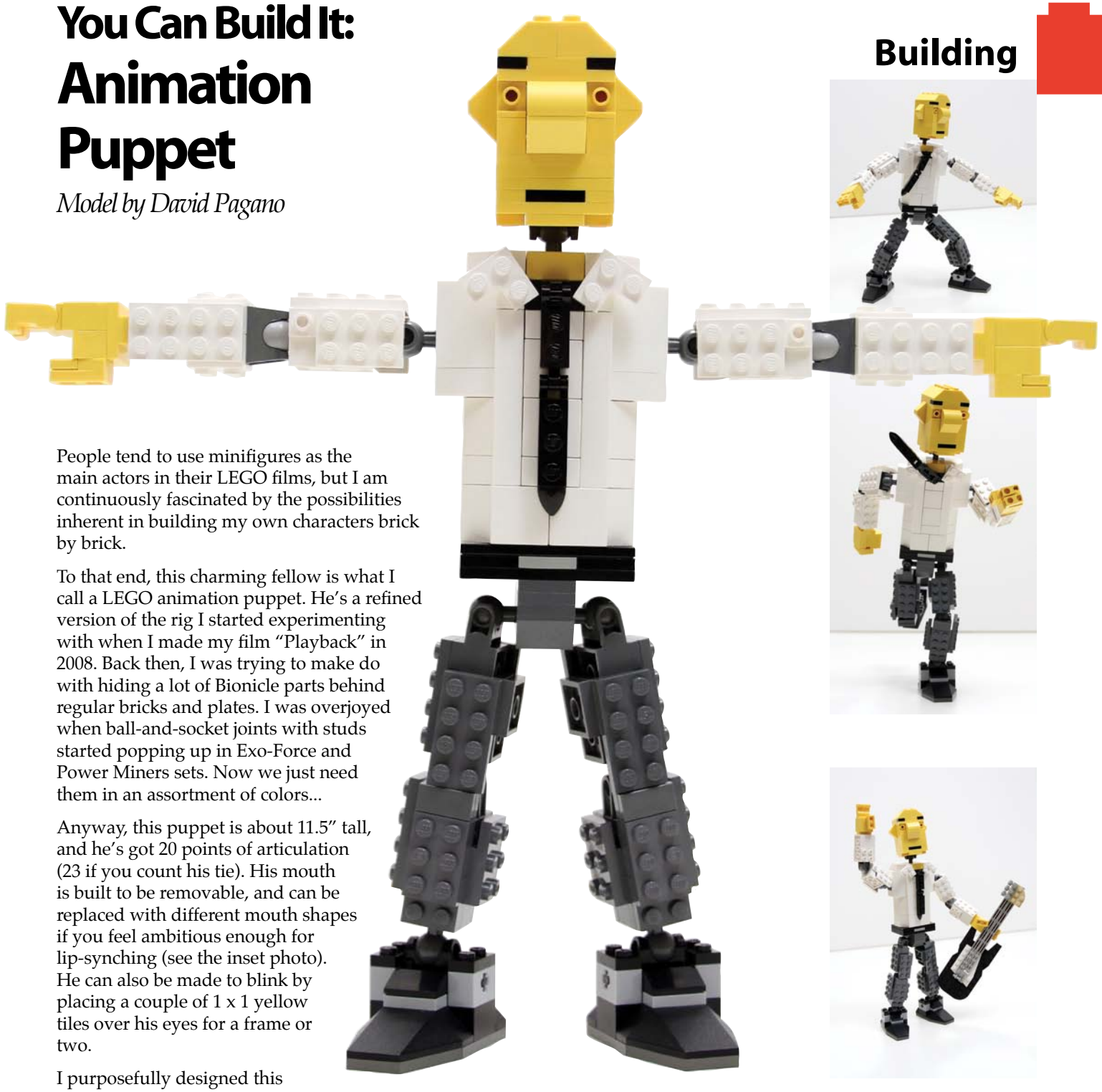
Notable techniques include on-set lighting effects shot in preparation of CG effects added later, such as the lightsaber duel and Emperor's lightning.

Originally, there were plans to use

Below: the Cantina and other Tatooine sets sit waiting to be filmed.

You Can Build It: Animation Puppet

Model by David Pagano

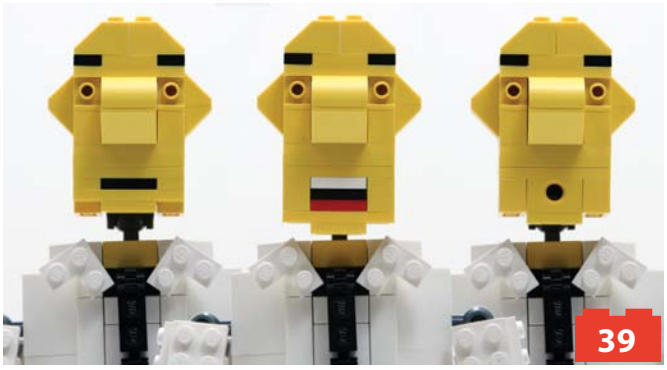


People tend to use minifigures as the main actors in their LEGO films, but I am continuously fascinated by the possibilities inherent in building my own characters brick by brick.

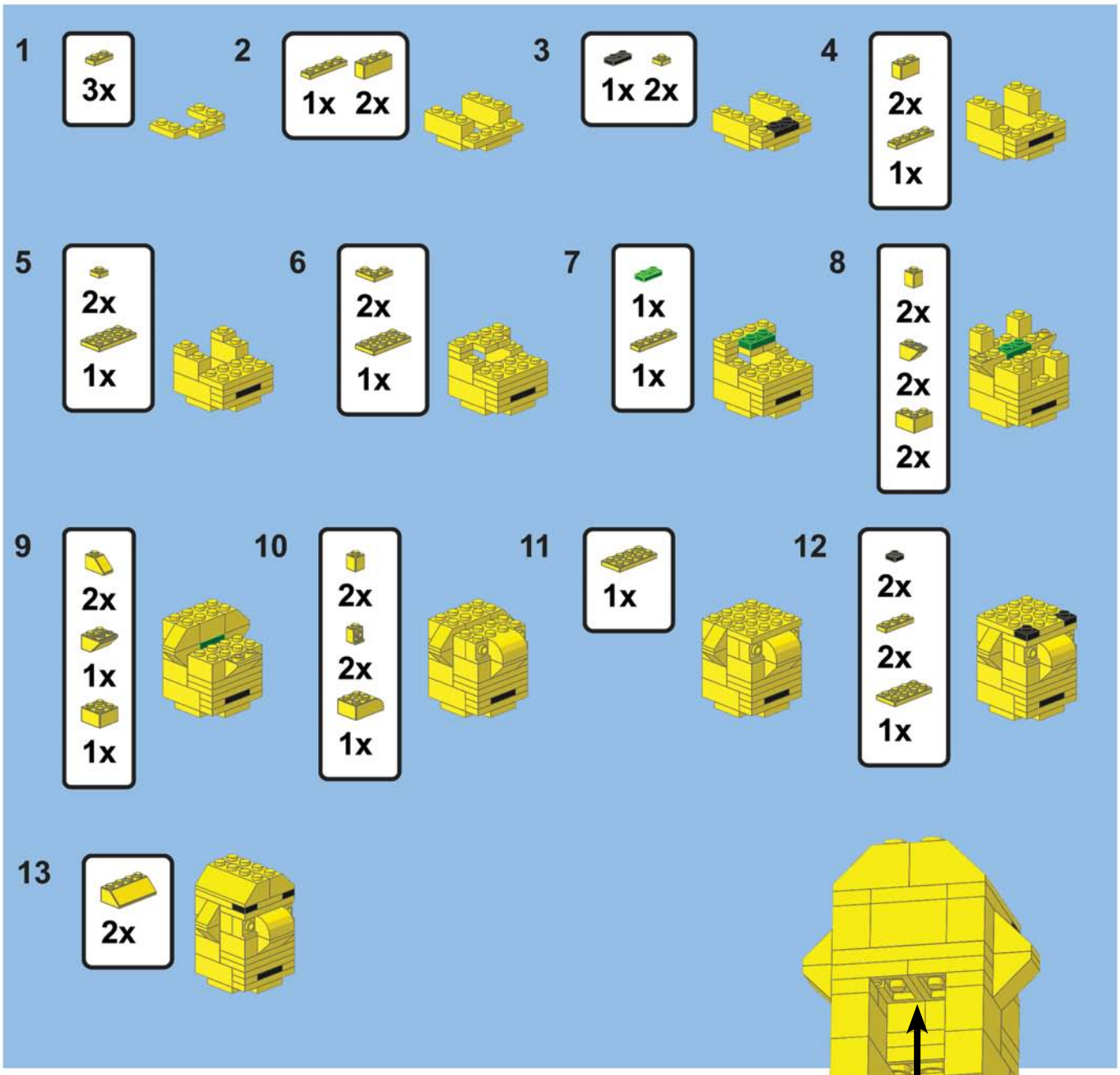
To that end, this charming fellow is what I call a LEGO animation puppet. He's a refined version of the rig I started experimenting with when I made my film "Playback" in 2008. Back then, I was trying to make do with hiding a lot of Bionicle parts behind regular bricks and plates. I was overjoyed when ball-and-socket joints with studs started popping up in Exo-Force and Power Miners sets. Now we just need them in an assortment of colors...

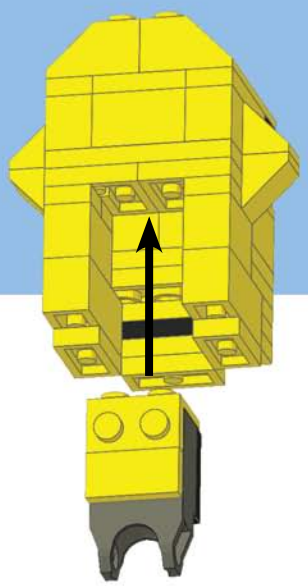
Anyway, this puppet is about 11.5" tall, and he's got 20 points of articulation (23 if you count his tie). His mouth is built to be removable, and can be replaced with different mouth shapes if you feel ambitious enough for lip-synching (see the inset photo). He can also be made to blink by placing a couple of 1 x 1 yellow tiles over his eyes for a frame or two.

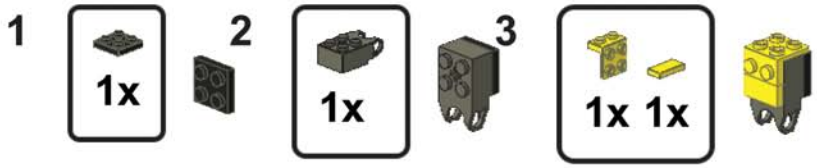
I purposefully designed this particular character with a bald head and plain clothes; that way, you can customize him to your heart's content. Does he need glasses? A giant sword? A pompadour? I'll leave that up to you. Have fun!



Head and Neck







Building *Blade Runner's* Spinner

Article and Photography by Jordan Schwartz

Los Angeles, 2019. Four rogue replicants are loose. Through the miserable, neon-lit streets and alleys goes Rick Deckard to hunt them down. This is, of course, is the premise of what is arguably one of the greatest sci-fi films of all time — *Blade Runner*. What makes *Blade Runner* a cult classic? The concept? The acting? The music? Or perhaps the design? I think most critics would agree all of these components molded together are responsible. I know for a fact, though, that the reason the film is one of my personal favorites is because of the work of conceptual designer and visual futurist Syd Mead. Mead's design career spans an impressive 50 years, and his concepts can be seen in such films as *Aliens*, *Short Circuit* and *TRON*. But perhaps his most recognizable creation is the Spinner, from *Blade Runner*.

You Can Build It

MINI Model

Lost World Filming Setup

Design and Instructions
by Christopher Deck

Hello everybody! I am glad to join this fantastic issue of *BrickJournal*. What does one associate with the term "movie"? I guess that's different for everyone of us, and that's what made the choice for a proper mini modelling build so tricky this time. Quite often it's just the opening scene of a particular movie, but these are difficult to miniaturize.

The setup presented to you here is the rebuild of a hopefully memorable in-movie-scene from *Lost World* (or *Jurassic Park II*) directed by Steven Spielberg (novel by Michael Crichton). It's the Tyrannosaurus attack on the research trailer of the rescue team around Dr. Ian Malcolm. The scene is quite scary, and thus has a potential to be reminded, and features a suitable object to be miniaturized.

The three-wide trailer combination features all necessary details like spotlights, bumper bar, skirting protection, reinforced windows, and working tow coupling. The cockpit also reveals compact SNOT techniques to enable the use of 1 x 1 slopes as windscreen without any gap to the frame. The baby tyrannosaurus is suitable to play the attackers.

I hope you'll be having as much fun with this little scene as I had while building it. With that I am done for this time. I wish you happy building, and see you next time!

Yours, Christopher.

Parts List

#	Part	Description	Color
10	6141.dat	Plate 1 x 1 Round	Black
1	2430.dat	Hinge Plate 1 x 4 Top	Black
2	4733.dat	Brick 1 x 1 with Studs on Four Sides	Black
2	4592.dat	Hinge Control Stick Base	Black
3	4593.dat	Hinge Control Stick	Black
1	30031.dat	Minifig Handlebars	Black
1	4349.dat	Minifig Loudhailer	Black
1	3005.dat	Brick 1 x 1	Black
4	30374.dat	Bar 4L Light Sabre Blade	Black
1	2429.dat	Hinge Plate 1 x 4 Base	Black
1	4070.dat	Brick 1 x 1 with Headlight	Black
2	30359a.dat	Bar 1 x 8 with Brick 1 x 2 Curved Top End	Black
1	3069bp0a.dat	Tile 1 x 2 with Partial White Stripes Pattern	Black
1	4263.dat	Technic Plate 1 x 4 with Holes	Black
1	30148.dat	Minifig Camera Movie	Black
1	41334.dat	Minifig Hat Knit Cap	Black
10	2555.dat	Tile 1 x 1 with Clip	Black
1	6019.dat	Plate 1 x 1 with Clip Horizontal	Black

#	Part	Description	Color
9	2540.dat	Plate 1 x 2 with Handle	Black
2	3960.dat	Dish 4 x 4 Inverted	Black
8	2412b.dat	Tile 1 x 2 Grille with Groove	Black
1	3815c01.dat	Minifig Hips and Legs (Complete)	Blue
1	973p73.dat	Minifig Torso with Vest with Patch Pockets Pattern	Green
2	30464.dat	Animal Dinosaur Tyrannosaurus Rex Baby	Green
1	4485.dat	Minifig Cap	Red
1	973p13.dat	Minifig Torso with Straight Zipper Jacket Pattern	Red
1	973p7h.dat	Minifig Torso with Jacket, Pink Shirt, Ring on Necklace Pattern	Light Blue
29	4727.dat	Plant Flower 2 x 2 Leaves	Bright Green
1	4592.dat	Hinge Control Stick Base	Yellow
3	3626bp05.dat	Minifig Head with Standard Grin and Eyebrows Pattern	Yellow
2	6141.dat	Plate 1 x 1 Round	White
1	3068bp87.dat	Tile 2 x 2 with Black "7" Pattern	White
2	4079.dat	Minifig Seat 2 x 2	White
1	3070bpc2.dat	Tile 1 x 1 with Computer Display Pattern	White

Minifig Customization 101: Purist Customization

Article by Jared K. Burks

Purist customization can be simple and elegant as well as complex and innovative. To begin any discussion of purist customizing, we have to start by asking ourselves just *what* is customizing. In previous design articles, we have examined minifigures supplied by the LEGO Group, which is important as it is what starts our definition of a figure and where customizing starts. So you need to determine just what it means to customize a minifigure. Where does customization begin? Can you merely switch out the accessory, change the hair or hat, or alter the figure's leg color? This is a question that only the customizer can really decide. How much impact does it really make? Changing a leg color, for example, could be very impactful if the right color was used, like flesh or yellow. The way I define customization requires a vision, much like a sentence requires a complete thought. When you have a vision of a custom figure and proceed through a process of executing that vision to find or create the combination of parts needed to create that custom figure, you have customized and created something new. Merely switching parts around isn't really customizing in my mind. As one last justification, when you sit to build something out of bricks, do you merely start randomly sticking bricks together or do you have an idea, no matter how vague, of what you want to build before you start trying to build it. A custom figure should be no different. *You need to know what you are building before you attempt to build it.*

Now that we have come to an understanding of what customizing is, let us define purist customization. Simply put, this is assembling figures using entire LEGO derived elements: nothing purchased from an aftermarket producer, scratch-built, sculpted, decaled, painted, or sanded, only those entirely made from the palette of parts, designs, and elements that LEGO has produced and given us. This sounds pretty easy, and it is honestly where many of the customizers started, but it can be quite challenging and creative. For this article, I am going to break purist customization into three categories; traditional, non-traditional, and brick.

Traditional

Traditional customization is the most limited as it limits builders to using Minifigure parts. If it wasn't designed by LEGO to use with a minifigure, you can't use it. These parts are readily found in the Bricklink catalog categories with Minifig in the title (body part, body wear, head, head modified, headgear, headgear accessories, legs assembly, shield, torso, torso assembly, utensil, and weapon). This will limit what you can create; however, there are thousands, if not millions, of different figures you can create using the palette that LEGO has supplied. Just remember you cannot alter any of the parts.

Historical Figure Contest

The best reference source for this technique is the Historical Minifigure Contest I hosted a few years ago (http://www.flickr.com/photos/kaminoan/sets/72157602244759515/). This contest produced brilliant figures by all age range of participants. This technique doesn't always require the creative stretch that some customizers use; simple and elegant approaches can create brilliant figures. If purist

Traditional Purist Figure - Norm Abram. Photo and figure by John Arnst.

Above and following pages: Series 4 Collectible Minifigures

Talking about Minifigures

Article by Jason Burnett (Jas Brick)
Art Provided by the LEGO Group
In an exclusive interview, BrickJournal *talks to the person behind the LEGO Collectible Minifigures!*

BrickJournal: **Thank you for sparing the time to be interviewed, could you tell us a bit about yourself, who you are? Where you are from? And how long you have worked for TLG?**

No problem. I'm Matthew Ashton, Senior Creative Director of LEGO® Playthemes and IPs (Intellectual Properties). I am originally from a teeny place called the Wirral, in the UK (near Chester and Liverpool) but have been based in Denmark for the past ten years working for the LEGO Group. I studied Fashion/Textile Design with Business Studies at the University of Brighton, and was originally hired in to work on LEGO Clikits, as stylist, colorist and illustrator of the Clikits Girl Characters.

You are currently the Lead Designer for the Collectible Minifig Series (CMS), but what other projects have you been involved with previously and how does designing CMS differ from these?

As Creative Director, I oversee the design development of many different lines, all of which contain LEGO Minifigures in one form or another. I have looked after a number of our own grown lines from LEGO Aqua Raiders, Castle, Agents, Space Police, Power Miners, Kingdoms, and Pirates, as well as all the LEGO system products we do based on TV shows and movies (Intellectual Properties - IPs) (i.e., LEGO *Star Wars, SpongeBob, Toy Story, Prince of Persia, Indiana Jones* and more recently the last launch of *Harry Potter* and the up-and-coming *Pirates of the Caribbean* range).

LEGO Minifigure Collectibles project is like a breath of fresh air, and probably my favorite line to be involved in. We get to have so much fun with this line and do all the silly little things that we would never have the opportunity to do in any other range. Having said that, it is also extremely hard work for something that must look relatively simple from the outside. This project, at times has been extremely complicated due to logistics, sourcing routes, forecasting, and all the technical details that go into a line like this. Just the fact that we were selling products in foil bags, on clip strips and display stands required entirely new ways of thinking and working, as the LEGO Group haven't really done these things before. Everyone has really had to pull together to make this project happen, and it is something we feel extremely proud to have achieved.

I imagine that designing sixteen very distinct minifig characters for each series takes a considerable amount of effort, do you do this alone? Or are you supported by a team of people? If so could you let us know who they are and what roles they have?

I have an excellent team of designers working on this line together, and to be honest, they are the ones that do all the hard, detailed work to bring these characters to market.

Laurence Dawes, and now Tara Wike, have overseen the day to day development of the line and have also been heavily involved in executing many of the minifigures accessories; they focus mainly on all the handheld items, and more geometric headgear pieces.

Gitte Thorsen, Niels Milan, and Stewart Whitehead use their excellent hand-sculpting skills to develop our more organic head-pieces, accessories, and wigs, etc.

Last, but not least is the fabulous Michael Patton, the graphic designer on the team, who illustrates the character's decals and facial expressions, bringing the figures to life.

Have you been involved with this line from the start, and, if so, could you give us a little background on how the original concept of a collectable product line of minifigs came about?

Yes, I have been involved since day one, and have really had to dig my heels in to get this project through. To be honest, this is a concept that has bounced around the organization for years; I even remember ten years ago I presented this idea as a junior designer (and I probably wasn't the first) and I was pretty much laughed out of the presentation by a certain marketing person (who shall remain nameless… but he is now eating his words! ;)). Reflecting on this now, I appreciate the timing was not at all right back then, so it was definitely the right decision.

There were many years when the LEGO Group were not putting enough focus on minifigures, and they were almost seen as secondary to the bricks — kind of more of an accessory. It has taken many years for us to rebuild the LEGO Minifigure as a true icon and increase its popularity across the world.

To achieve this, we have really had to refocus on creating consistent and appealing minifigure designs, and increasing their presence and importance within products. We are now at a stage where Minifigures are super cool again, a real emotional hook and in many cases a kid's entry point to LEGO products. I also think that the way we have executed TV commercials, comics, and our video games has also played a huge part in the kids perception of Minifigures as that has really brought these figures to life. Our little square blocky characters are now seen to be brimming with personality, character, emotion, and fun.

So all in all, the timing of this concept was the most crucial thing, if it had been launched a few years back, then we would definitely not be seeing the same success that we are now.

When it came to the concept itself, we knew exactly the sort of characters we wanted to do, but it was figuring out the best way to sell them was the tricky bit. Surprise Bags was pretty much the best and only option that would work for us to sell the types of characters we wanted. If we had done sets where consumers could choose which characters they wanted, this would have meant that we would have had to have made a much narrower selection of characters. All characters would have to perform equally well and pretty much be guaranteed sellers and safe bets, which would have completely ruled out anything like a cheerleader for example. This option could have also been an absolute logistic and forecasting nightmare and with a high risk of some products being left on shelf, not performing.

Luckily, through testing, we found and proved that the concept of "surprise" bags was extremely appealing to kids and a perfect reward gift or impulse buy for parents. Kids wanted the minifigures much more when they were packed like this; it made them feel like the figures were rarer — like little treasures and the kind of adrenaline rush and suspense of not knowing what they would get really excited the kids. It also made them want characters that they would otherwise not be particularly interested in to complete the set, so the range of characters we could execute was much broader. The goal of collecting an entire series leads to a real sense of pride and achievement for the kids. This also really helps create more hype and buzz around the product. Kids talk about the products more, show off which ones they have got, talk about which ones they need and this can, in many instances, lead to kids swapping them like trading cards.

So we were onto a win-win situation!

Could you describe the key stages involved in the design process of the CMS: where do you start (i.e. are you given or have to develop a list of possible characters) and where do you hand over responsibility and consider your task complete?

I basically work with the team to establish the mix of characters within each launch to make sure we have a good balance of figures that will appeal to all our different LEGO consumers. We have developed a formula to get the mix right, which has been refined series by series. Initially, we did test the concept with kids to define which sort of characters they would be after, and then mixed them up with the types of characters that adult fans would appreciate (these are generally not the same). Establishing the mix, we gather reference material and inspiration from the different sources, and then I sketch up a quick image of an iconic version of that character.

Once the range is determined, we look into which new elements need to be developed, go through a series of meetings to ensure we have the budget to develop all the new molds we need, and then divide new elements