



Galibricks (GB): I suppose it's inevitable to talk about the current circumstances. How you doing with the quarantine? Are you building more than usual? Any special projects planned during confinement?

Jeremy Williams (JW): We're doing OK with the quarantine - we were self-isolating for two weeks because my wife developed a dry cough but it didn't get any worse. Now we can go out to exercise and shop for food, but it's mostly indoors.

I've not built since the quarantine as I have been working hard at my business, but I will do so over Easter. I'm planning a new spaceship at the moment. Sadly I'm a slow builder so the virus may have receded before it's finished!

GB: When it comes to building MOCs, is there a topic that interests you besides space? And is there a particular topic you'd like to see become a LEGO theme?

JW: I'm mainly a spacer, but I also love fantasy including knights and castles, so a full return of the castle theme (with dragons, wizards, goblins etc) would be great. The problem is the overlap with the Elves theme and Lord of the Rings/The Hobbit, but I'd love the LEGO Group to develop more in-house themes.

GB: How is the process of creating a MOC? Where do you start?

JW: I look for concept art as an inspiration (rather than to copy), and then try to think of cockpit ideas that produce some nice angles or which use connections I haven't seen before. I then work outward from there. I occasionally use LDraw to play with some designs, but it's more typical that I have several failed builds and then something works - you can sense when you have the beginnings of a good ship.

I don't visualise well, so I almost never have a clear idea of how I want the MOC to turn out. I keep refining as I go, and eventually I get to the point when I can't improve the design any further. It's then time to photograph!

I'm currently very keen to build ships that I can disassemble into several stages, so that I can work on these and refine them. I'm especially inspired by Nick Trotta's (Galactic Plastics') work and he is very good at doing this, so I'm learning as I go!

GB: Do you use custom parts or stickers in your MOCs? Where do you get them?

JW: I don't use custom parts, but I have occasionally dyed or painted trans-clear windscreens to resemble trans-yellow. I frequently use either custom stickers (which I design on the Mac and then print) or I find stickers or decals from Airfix models. I buy sticker sets from fighter jets on eBay and use these. Waterslide decals give a much cleaner result than stickers, and since I rarely disassemble a good ship, I don't mind adding a permanent decal.

I'm not a purist, but have never used cut or broken elements (apart from tubing). I don't object to people doing whatever they like to their elements, so long as they're happy!

GB: Which of your MOCs is your favourite?

JW: My Ares Rover is probably my favourite. I felt so inspired by The Martian novel and movie, that I was determined to build a rover that combined a Technic frame with steering and motors, with a System shell. I managed to drive it around a fake Martian surface at a local space museum, which was a huge highlight. It is somewhat underpowered (just one XL motor for the drivetrain) but crawled around magnificently.

GB: What are your main sources of inspiration?

JW: First and foremost, it's the work of other builders (see below). It can be a little daunting seeing the work of the top spaceship builders out there and although I'm not a hugely competitive person, it provokes me into doing better and not being lazy with the design.

I also get inspired by sci-fi films, books and concept artwork. I'm not much of a gamer, but a lot of the visuals in games such as Titanfall, the Mass Effect series etc are also inspiring.

GB: I know you attended the Paredes de Coura Fan Weekend last year (you met there with a couple of members members of Galibricks). Do you enjoy these AFOL meetings? Which one do you like the most? Do you have any curious anecdote of an AFOL event that you can share?

JW: I do enjoy them - I have been twice to Paredes de Coura (PdC) and it's a fantastic show from a creative and welcoming LUG. I've also attended Skærbæk a couple of times, and been to various shows in the UK (though sadly not this year, for obvious reasons).

Some shows are focused on the visitors and we spend most of the show talking to the public about our MOCs - these are rewarding but very hard work. PdC and Skærbæk are much more focused around the builders, although the public also see the MOCs, and are relaxed and great for meeting new builders from around the world.

The most curious thing I've ever done at a show was sneaking into a farmer's cornfield with some of my fellow builders to grab a couple of corn cobs that were ripening, to eat with a barbecue. They weren't particularly tasty but we chewed them down. Afterwards we discovered that they were grown for pig food rather than for human consumption. Served us right!

GB: What is the first LEGO set you remember buying? And the last one?

JW: The first set I remember buying was 6801-1 Moon Buggy. Still gives me a thrill of excitement to see it, although it's an odd set if you think about it (why is the computer screen facing the pilot's back?). That was the start of my adventure into Classic Space, which filled every birthday and Christmas for years.

And fittingly, the last set I have bought was 10266-1 NASA Apollo 11 Lunar Lander. I do buy sets other than spaceships, I should add!

GB: What is your favourite LEGO set of all time?

JW: Although it's tempting to say the Galaxy Explorer 928 (name a spacer who would disagree), I'd have to say it's the 21109-1 Exo Suit for very personal reasons. I was lucky enough to be involved with The LEGO Group in developing the marketing campaign for the set when it launched, and it was a huge pleasure to do so.

GB: Reading the interview you did with The Brothers Bricks in 2017, I find out that you used to use the LDraw software. Do you still use it nowadays or have you switched to another one?

JW: I tend to use LDraw (in Bricksmith, the Mac app) still as it's the one I'm most familiar with - I never had much LDD experience. However I have used Stud.io recently especially for the great rendering output, and it's becoming a favourite.

There are certain MOCs for which LDraw is so useful - for instance, if an assembly needs to be replicated such as a wall panel. You can then change the master copy and all the others instantly change - a great way to preview your design before building. It can also make ordering parts much more straightforward. The challenge with LDraw is that it is very easy to make a design that does not hold together in real life, either because the connections are missing or because of physical stresses on the elements.

GB: Have you ever built a motorized MOC?

JW: Yes, I have built a few - typically buildings, which feature a motorized door (such as blast doors on a hangar). But my Ares Rover was also motorized for drive and for steering, too - the outer axles steer in opposite directions. I would like to motorize a spaceship - e.g. have rotating engine pods or moving wings. Watch this space!

GB: What advice would you give a rookie builder who doesn't quite know where to start?

JW: The first is to build, with whatever you have. Microscale (in whatever genre) is a great way to use a few elements in creative ways, and to explore connection points in detail. So even if you have a small collection, you can explore how to come up with miniature models.

My second advice is to learn from others - find someone who inspires you and study their MOCs. Some builders produce instructions or breakdowns allowing you to see how they achieve their results. Even downloading and reading set instructions can be helpful, especially for newer sets, as they use brackets and other elements creatively to add strength and detail.

I think it can be very disheartening to compare your own work to that of top builders, and it doesn't get easier - there are always so many existing and new builders who are better than you! You have to enjoy the experience of building, and being prepared to keep failing before you produce something you like.

GB: As you know, LEGO has recently acquired BrickLink. What's your opinion about it?

JW: I'm nervous about the takeover. I can't directly see how users benefit and I fear that the Group will begin to clamp down on the trade of new and used elements. I'm also worried that they want to use the data on our buying habits as customers in ways that benefit the Group but not

necessarily us.

I think the Group could do more to reassure AFOLs that they will directly benefit from the takeover, and how this will happen.

GB: Any other prominent hobbies other than LEGO?

JW: I'm a musician, but don't have much time for LEGO let alone other pursuits, sadly. Most of my current musical energies are LEGO-related - I, along with a couple of UK AFOLs, have formed a band of LEGO robots called 'Solid State' and we have written and recorded several songs, which play as part of a stage set built by Peter Reid. So the brick still rules!

GB: Could you name some of your favourite LEGO builders?

*JW: There are so many that have inspired me, but two people stand out. Peter Reid, the designer of the Exo Suit, is the person whose work ended my 'dark age' and got me into building spaceships. He's a close friend (and band member - see above), a continual source of inspiration especially regarding scenery, and his book **Lego Space: Building the Future** (with Tim Goddard) is excellent for getting the inspiration flowing. I used to spend hours poring over his Flickr feed in my early days, and I know some of his images by heart.*

Secondly, Nick Trotta, who I met a couple of years ago at a show, has been incredibly helpful and his stellar work is consistently amazing. He displays design flair, a great sense for angles and connections, and is kind enough to freely share his skills and to offer encouragement.

GB: Who would you like us to interview next?

JW: Tim Johnson, of New Elementary fame...

GB: Anything else you want to add?

JW: We're all facing unprecedented upheaval at the moment due to COVID-19, and spending all day in the home can be a big challenge to us and our families. Thankfully, building LEGO can help us to keep sane and creative, and can bring joy to others, too. There's never been a more important time to build and share our work.