

2015 REVIEW OF CHINESE CLONE BRANDS

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**Blatant
copyright
flouting!**

**Hideous
tubbyfigs!**

**New
BFC
award!**

**Quite Good
Best-Lock!**

COMMUNIST LEGO 2015

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

BRAND LIST 2015

China

Rest Of The World

REVIEWS

Scoring System



Ausini

Construction Digger

Police Helicopter

Lexington Park (Ausini)

Racing Championship

BELA

Friends City Park Cafe

Best-Lock

120 Piece Army Set

Bloc Kits (PeiZhi)

Dune Buggy

Water Jet Ski

BLOCK TECH

Dinosaur Island

Dinosaur Island Figures

Girls Go Shopping

Advent Calendar 2014

Fright Nite / BLOCK Tech

Pumpkin Head

Skull

Funtastic / BLOCK Tech

Monster Blocks

Robot Blocks

Armed Forces: 4x4 Vehicle

Armed Forces: Tank

Armed Forces: Surveillance Drone

Super Cars: Formula GX

Building Site: Forklift

Building Site: Foreman

Fire Fighting: Helicopter

Fire Fighting: 4x4 Fire Engine

Fire Fighting: Fast Response Vehicle

Blox

Ice Cream Van

High Speed Tanker

Home Sweet Home

Mission Helicopter

5 Individual Figures (x3)

Character Building

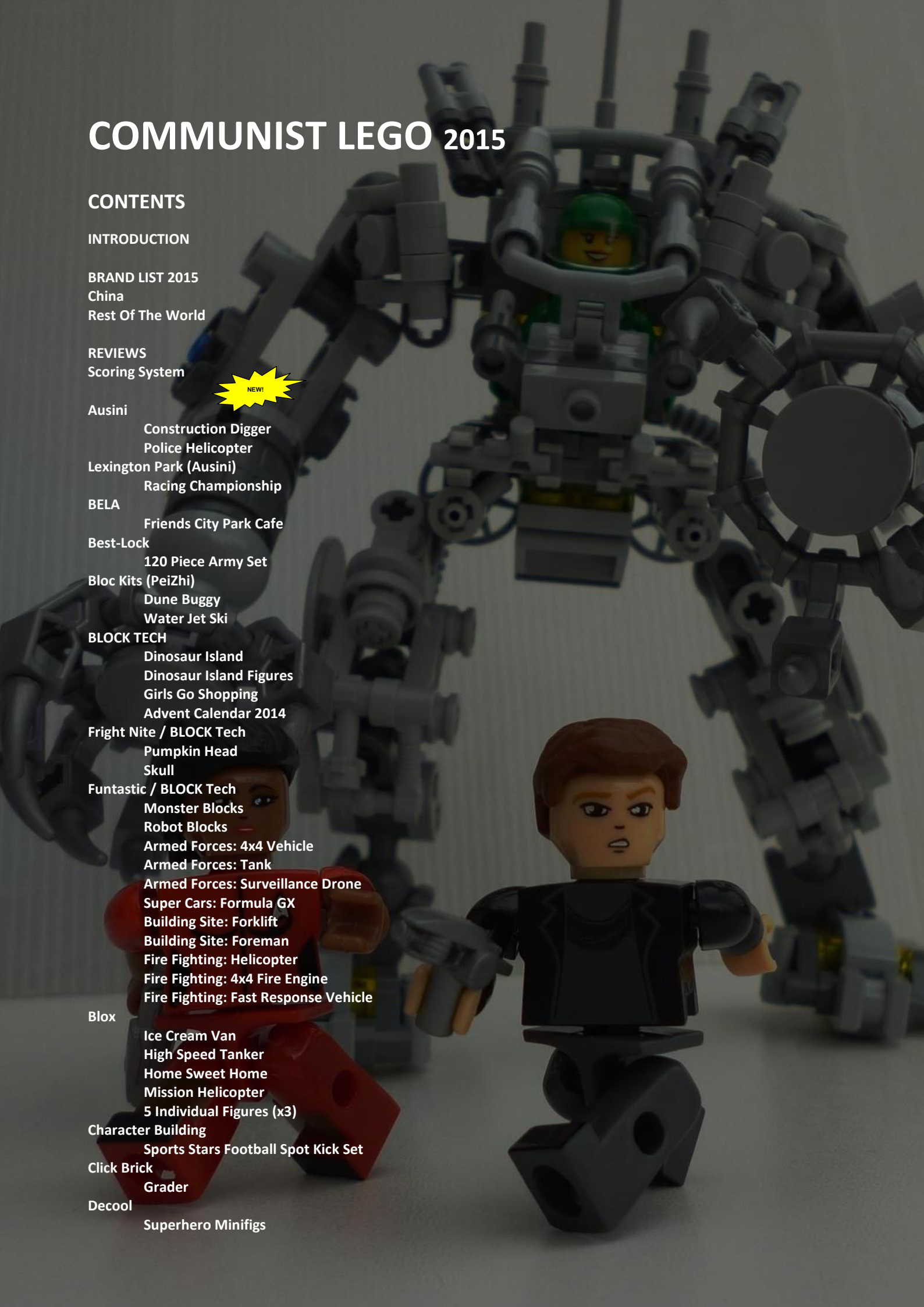
Sports Stars Football Spot Kick Set

Click Brick

Grader

Decool

Superhero Minifigs



Big Superhero Minifigs
Dragon Ball Z Minifigs

Donglin

Riddle Toy Bricks - Fashionable

BLOCK Tech (Gudi)

Santa Claus
Snowman

Kre-O

Klingon Bird of Prey

LELE

The LELE Movie

Mega Bloks

Call Of Duty Chopper Strike

M.Y Toys (Leyi)

Fire Engine

Liteup Blocks

White Street Lamp Post USB Light

BLOCK Tech (Loongon)

Earthworx Construction Command Centre

LOZ

Ox-Eyed Robots Scooter

Toy Mania (PeiZhi)

Blocks: Battlefield

Blocks: Police Squad

Blocks: Space

Funtastic (PeiZhi)

Combat Force: Rocket 4x4

Combat Force: Tank

PMS International

Building Block Set

M.Y Toys (Star Diamond)

Farm Tractor

Sheng Yuan

Wolverine Superhero Minifig

Star Wars Mini Sets

BLOCK Tech (Weagle)

Police Support Helicopter

Wei Te Feng

Train

REVIEW SUMMARY

Conclusions

Summary

Review Tables

CAMOUFLAGE: TANK GIRLS UPDATE

ZOMBIE NATION UPDATE

FIRING THE IMAGINATION

NEW!



Change History

V1.2 Original release, Autumn 2013

V1.3 Second release, Spring 2014

18 new reviews

Updates and corrections on existing reviews

Addition of covers and introductions

Addition of Camouflage

Addition of Zombie Nation and score tables

Much more sarcasm

V1.4 Third release, Summer 2014

26 new reviews

Updates and corrections on existing reviews, rearranged in alphabetical order

Revised introduction and condensed summaries

Addition of Camouflage: Tank Girls

Lots more pictures and colour to boost toner cartridge manufacturing industry

Reviewer's slow descent into insanity

V1.5 Fourth release, Summer 2015

50 new reviews

Revised introduction and condensed summaries

New additions to Camouflage: Tank Girls and Zombie Nation

Firing The Imagination

No Smurfs

Even more pictures and colour to add to deforestation

Reviewer's occasional ability to function outside of The Institute without the assistance of helpers

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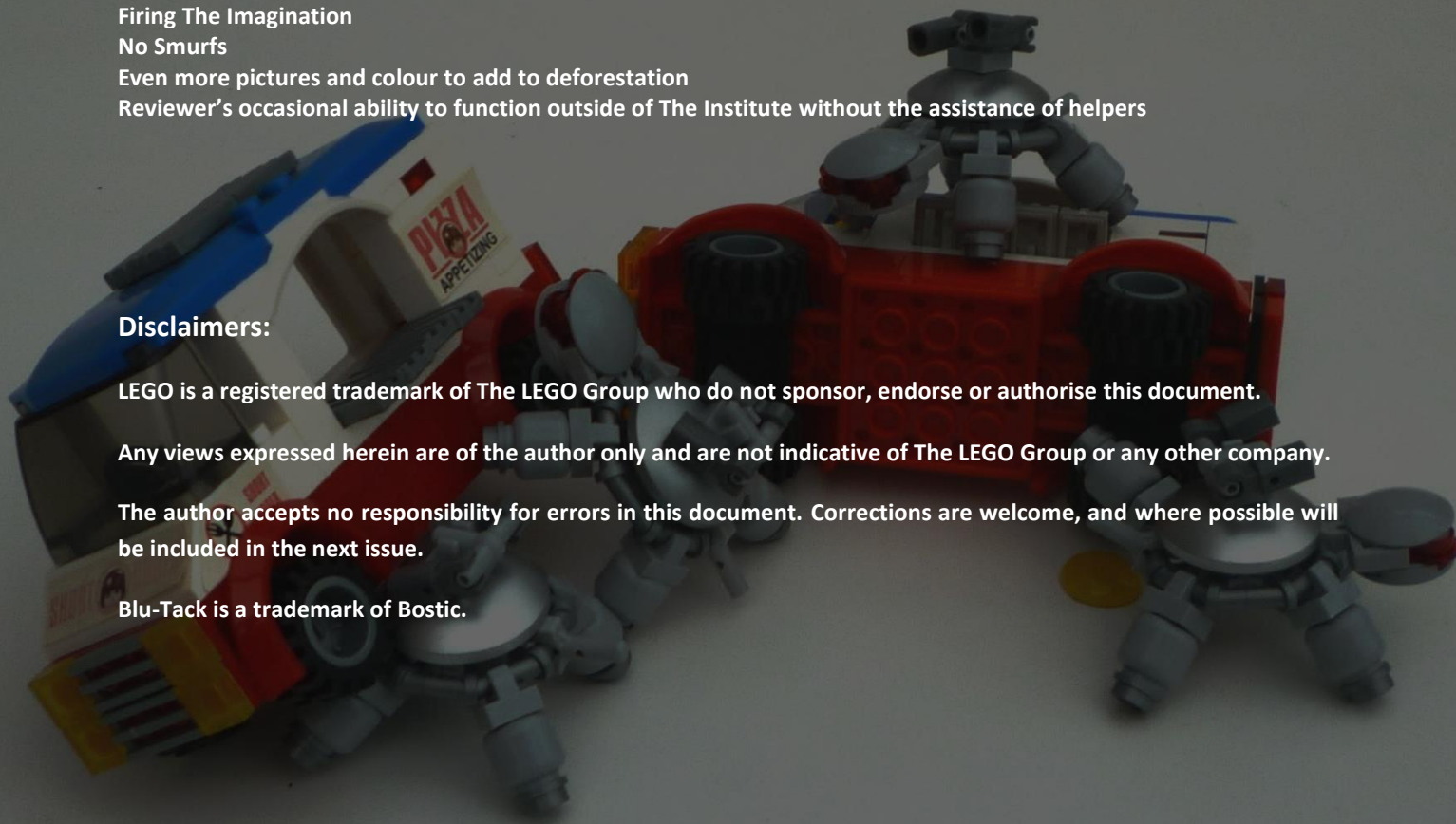
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Blu-Tack is a trademark of Bostic.

Some clone bricks were harmed excessively in the creation of this report.



Introduction

Background

Hooky LEGO. Hate it or love it, it's all over the place. What's good? What's bad? Is there a list of brands, and how good are they?

'Communist LEGO 2015' is a UK AFOL's review of a random spread of some Chinese-made LEGO-compatible kits. The sheer size of the industry, coupled with the rapid expansion and constant changes to company stock, manufacturing facilities and branding, means only a small percentage of available sets could be looked at. Previous issues – see "clonebrands_v1.4.pdf" for the earlier reviews – dealt with the more accessible kits in the UK, along with a determination to build up a cheap Zombie Army of terrible minifigs. This version, covering 2014-2015, has changed tack slightly, targeting more legally dodgy copies along with some newer sets appearing on the market.

As of 2014 LEGO became the biggest toy manufacturer in the world. Given its enduring popularity as fulfilling the human instinct to create, it is more than likely that production will only increase in the coming years. The patents for LEGO bricks have long expired and companies are allowed to make copies. This isn't the case for the minifig, which still has a few years to go, and recent rulings have made the shape a trademark. However, the more serious issues with the clone brands are intellectual property rights and copyrighting – the effort put into set design and marketing is where the recent success of LEGO really lies. This is where the Chinese cloners can be, and have been, very naughty. The culture and mindset of The Middle Kingdom can be opaque and strange to Europeans, and blatant flouting of copyright does not always have the same moral overtones as it would (supposedly) in the West. Is greed a universal failing?

Set Choice

The main purchase driver for this report was, as always, cheapness to get as much variety for the least outlay. Many UK discount stores allowed ample opportunities for this. Additionally, there was a focus on the more dubious brands that blatantly copy LEGO designs and themes. A few sets were thus bought from abroad when the opportunity arose. Moral issues on rewarding these companies by buying their products were more than compensated for by swearsy damning reports.

Review Style

Communist LEGO reviews are not written in a clinical way: 50 Clone LEGO reviews would be very, very dull without spleen venting. Some variety was tried in style, from the tedious to the angry. Hopefully it might raise a smile or two for internet-land to read yet more examples of British self-deprecation randomly scattered with swearwords, and totally baffle any unfortunate Chinese who try to actually use the report to choose what to buy. Previous literary encounters with multiple personalities have been expanded with mental stability and forays into Tourette's blissfully blurred, probably matching reality. Blogs are for others who do it far better.



Brand List 2015

LEGO is a global brand and has been the subject of many copies over the years. The US company Tyco were the first with 'Super Blocks' in 1984, after LEGO's brick patent expired in 1983. Almost every attempt at cloning has been inferior, mainly due to production costs being lower resulting in inferior grade materials and poor fitting pieces. Set design has generally varied from mediocre to rubbish. However, the recently invigorated factories of China have begun to churn out various LEGO clones. It's worth noting that the potential Chinese domestic market is far, far larger than that of Europe and America combined.

There are many Chinese companies making LEGO copies, with new ones starting up at an astounding rate. Minifig copying seems to be endemic, taking advantage of enormous demand for collectable box sets that LEGO cannot do due to contractual reasons. A brief trawl of the AliExpress export website finds a list of 50 companies making plastic building blocks, with probably at least half doing LEGO clones. Most if not all are based in Chenghai, the toy capital of China. Some companies appear to source their products from each other and subcontract, so working out exactly who makes which branded kits is not always straightforward. Many are of random quality and there is a lot of chaff and little wheat. The following is an incomplete list of some of the more actively promoted brands. By the time you read this, there will probably be more. It is interesting to note that many Far East websites list the keyword 'Enlighten' above 'LEGO'.

Many of these names have been found from import websites, internet blog sites and video reviews, of which there are many. Some of the reviews are very comprehensive.

NOTE: Brands and descriptions are subject to change, as companies and names appear and disappear. Many are flouting trademarks and copyright, and may rebrand every so often as part of this.



SY's contribution to annoying LEGO, Mattel and Universal Pictures. How close is Heartlake City to New Salem?

China

Ausini – Manufactured by the Guangdong Ausini company, and has a very wide range of products generally matching the larger Chinese clone companies. Set design seems quite good, with the latest railway kits probably the best available in China. They state they have an in-house design team producing 200 new products per year (although these may include other non-brick items). They appear to be well priced. However, minifig expressions have the mildly disturbing huge-eyed look typical of East Asian tastes, and the skin colour is verging towards the zombie. Interestingly they package in either English or Russian, giving some idea of their perceived markets.

BanBao – This brand (made currently by the Penbu Toy Factory) have mostly moved into themes where LEGO do not produce sets, and have new minifigs called Tobees that look a bit like characters from South Park. The plates and bricks are about 15% higher than standard LEGO and compatibility is helped by using a hammer. New kits include a large 1400-piece Long March 2F space rocket. They also market under the **BaBlock** brand name.

BELA – Brand of a currently unknown manufacturer, possibly also selling under the name **Jilebao**. Produces blatant copies of Ninjago, Bionicle and Hero Factory, Technic and (recently) Chima and Friends sets. Have also been copying the Cars sets under the “Let’s Go!” theme, and Minecraft under My World. Another Dragon Ball Z minifig manufacturer.

Blocko – The brand name of the **Coco** Toy Company based in Nanjing, China, also marked as **Kimboli**. Their product range covers DUPLO, naval vessels (military and historic), farm and town, fantasy castle themes, and the military. The HUMVEE sets (both military and civilian) look particularly impressive. They apparently have 43 design patents listed in China. The minifigs are of a slightly different design with wider torsos.

Blue King Kong Toys – See **JLB**.

Bohzi – Minifig cloner which has copied the usual Star Wars and Superhero figures, but has also done the now rare Collectible Series 1 and 2. Passable quality. Beware of these fakes when buying second-hand. Of more interest are their Anime series.

Bom Bom – Brand name of an unknown manufacturer making blatant rip-offs of LEGO Star Wars (called Star War). Has amusing logo of a round black bomb with a smiling face on it looking upwards at the lit fuze, presumably representative of upcoming legal action.

Brick – A rather awful cheap copy brand producing small kits that appeared in the US a few years ago, but may have been rebranded to **IQ Block** after a few legal words (and damning website reviews).

CB Toys – Currently unknown manufacturer. Makes mediocre blatant copies of Legends of Chima minifigs.

Chaobao – Currently unknown manufacturer. Makes copies of Tamiya model and radio control sets, but also includes a range of LEGO clones.

Chuang Li – Currently unknown manufacturer. Relatively good quality copy brand making small city-type sets.

Coco – See **Blocko**.

COGO and **Little White Dragon** – Manufactured by the **Loongon** Animation & Toys Industrial Company Ltd. This company proudly states their product is compatible with LEGO and even shows off pictures of their factory machinery. Their range includes all LEGO sizes (Quatro, DUPLO etc.) and standard brick sets include pirate ships. They originally used their own name, but now market under both the COGO and the Little White Dragon brands and oddly seem to overlap some themes. Their products apparently meet European and American standards. COGO cheekily have ‘Expert to Enlighten Children’ written on the boxes. Loongon make sets of the famous Chinese boy pig hero ‘GG Bond’ and have (apparently) recently picked up the rights to produce ‘Monkey King’ kits - the 2010 52-episode cartoon version of ‘Monkey’ – although whether these will be brick-based kits remains to be seen.

COKO Bricks – Clone brand producing mainly DUPLO-type sets. They have an elephant logo and are available in Asia and Australia.

Concord Toys – See **Enlighten**.

Dargo – Another of the brands that copies minifigs, such as DC and Marvel Superheroes. Passable quality but some incompatibilities.

Decool – Bizarrely-named brand that specialises in Technic-based clones, including the supercar sets and Hero Factory robots. Recently has produced blatant Ninjago, Superhero, and Chima minifig clones, including many not available in LEGO. A new series for 2015 include 'Zombie World' – zombie versions of LEGO Collectible minifigs.

Diamond Blocks – See **LOZ**.

Donglin – This company makes **Riddle Toy Bricks**, suspected of being the origins of one of Poundland's **Quick Brick** types.

Dr Luck – See **Ligao**.

Enlighten – The trade name of the **Zhongyue** Industry Company that makes many LEGO copies and is *the* major brand in China. Currently they market under the name **Concord Toys**. They make a full range of LEGO themes, and also a lot of military sets with camouflage patterned bricks (although they can be a rather startling green colour). Some more recent sets have begun to diverge from duplicates, although mostly the kit design is not as good as LEGO and is rather blocky. They sell their non-motorised train sets as separate kits, so whole rakes of trucks and carriages can be purchased. Enlighten minifigs are direct copies of LEGO. Rather more unique is their kit of a worryingly realistic full scale working handgun that fires 3x1 technic rods (set '407' is *well* worth a web search).

Everlasting Bioer Plastic Factory – oddly named producer of cheap bricks. Photographs suggest they are the most plausible manufacturer of the other version of **Quick Bricks**, although there is no direct evidence.

Fuh Yeah – See **IQ Blocks**.

Funny Toys – See **Peizhi**.

Gudi – Relatively new brand name manufactured by **Xin Le Xin**, who also make **SY**. Appears to be excellent quality, which is a turn-up for the books.

GX Toys – See **Weagle**.

Hawk Blocks – Cheap copy brand available briefly in the US. Not only was it badly made, it was a different size to all of the other clone brands. Managed to score 0/10 on a review site.

HELO – See **Zephyr Knight**.

HOLI – Stud name on some **Xing Qi Le** bricks.

Hui Mei – Export brand for the **Xing Dou Cheng** company. Concentrates on small impulse-buy kits. Some have found their way into the UK via **M.Y Toys**.

Intelligence Bricks – Small designer-type sets found in the US, with the maker name **Xingda**. Bad Chinglish but original designs and quality found to be quite good according to internet reviews.

Intelligence Toys – See **Xin Qi Le**.

IQ Block – Used by BLOCK Tech as a supplier. Different under-brick locking method that is almost incompatible with LEGO. Probably rebranded from **Brick**, judging by the logos and lack of quality. Also amusingly printed as **IQ Blook**.

IQ Blocks – Not to be confused with **IQ Block**, these are produced by the **Fuh Yeah** company and look to be DUPLO size. They may or may not be compatible.

IQ Blook – See **IQ Block**.

Jia Li Bo – See **JLB**.

Jie Da – This brand markets town and pink princess kits. They have two types of minifigs (possibly for home and export) – a standard clone shape, and an odd rounded figure that resembles a small DUPLO figure. The company exports to Russia.

Jilebao – See **BELA**.

JLB – Expands to **Jia Li Bo**. Brand name for **Blue King Kong Toys** that produce many heavily copyrighted minifig clones. One of the rival Dragon Ball Z manufacturers. Also makes astoundingly hideous Monster High friendfigs (as do **SY**), not related to the **Mega Bloks** figures.

Jubilux – This company market themselves under both the elephant logo Jubilux, and the four-plated **Woma** registered in Hong Kong. As with other brands they produce a variety of themes, some rather closely modelled on genuine LEGO (such as the pirate ships). They make their own Army range and a **very** pink princess castle theme. The 'Space Team' logo looks suspiciously Lucasfilm, although the kits themselves appear to be home designed. Woma and Jubilux are exported to many countries and can be found occasionally in the UK, sometimes rebranded as **BLOCK Tech** or **Blox**. The minifigs are similar in shape and size to LEGO but have moulded knees and weird heads.

Kanitong Toys – Copiers of DUPLO.

Kazi – The **Kaiyu Toys** Company is a rival to Enlighten, with a full range of LEGO clones branded Kazi. Their recent kits look to have had some thought put into them, although earlier sets copy genuine LEGO or are fairly basic. Kazi appear to compete with Enlighten on cost, with inevitable quality issues. Kazi is also spelt 'KaiZhi', although for the UK, Kazi are probably not fully aware of brand-name irony.

KIDDIEBRICKS – DUPLO copy marketed by Asda in the UK.

Kimboli – See **Blocko**.

LEBQ – New minifig cloner brand copying the usual LEGO copyrighted brands. Also one the cloners making the hugely popular Dragon Ball Z sets.

LELE – Clone brand slavishly copying Ninjago, Bionicle, Ninja Turtles, Jurassic World, and even LEGO Movie minifig sets. Manufactured by **Qun Long**.

Le Qu – This cloner manufactures cheap-looking DUPLO / Mega Bloks equivalents.

Leyi – a new company with another mildly amusing name, made by the Shantou **Megafun** Toys Industrial Ltd. Their mottos include 'Products can be copied but not the value', and 'We highly value honesty'. Their stated selling point appears to be producing stuff that doesn't harm the environment or children (insinuating that their Chinese rivals do). A brief browse of their website shows a vast array of their own kits (including a 2000-piece aircraft carrier) but also many blatant copies of LEGO sets, including Star Wars and even using the LEGO and DUPLO names on the boxes. Rubbish quality.

Li Cheng – This brand is one of two (the other is unidentified as this went to press) which use the same product. The brand has a logo of three 1x1 plates (red, green, yellow) and produces a variety of town-based sets.

Ligao – Another copy brand with a somewhat amusing name, made by the **Wange Toys** Industrial Company. Previously also occasionally branded as **Riddle Bricks**, the **Wange** name itself, or used as a sub-contractor, they have a wide product range which includes DUPLO, town vehicles, and 1000-piece architecture kits such as Big Ben and Tower Bridge. They seem to be a low-cost brand. Interestingly, their safety compliance documentation is missing off the export website... Wange Toys have recently launched the '**Dr Luck**' range that seems to be replacing the Ligao name. They have started copying LEGO themes such as Cars.

Lingnan – Brand of the Lingnan Toys Co. Ltd, who also market **Zhi Ling**. Their website states 'It is all about imagination', which is probably the only sensible translation of any of the clone brands. Products are the typical range of town, boat, and pirate themes. Minifigs appear to have yellow heads and hands.

Little White Dragon – See **COGO**.

Loongon – See **COGO**.

LOZ – brand name made by ZhenFeng Science and Educational Toys. According to their website they were formed in 1998 to make plastic toys, building blocks and baby potties (which they still do). Many early LOZ sets are very blocky and reminiscent of late 1970s LEGO. The **Diamond Blocks** brand (marketed as **Microblox** in the UK by **BLOCK Tech**) uses half size bricks to standard LEGO, sometimes with odd-looking half-scale minifigs. The sculptures in 9300 'Gift Series' of Diamond blocks has what has to be the strangest product line in China, ranging from (amongst others) a watermelon, a Minion, a toucan, Captain America, a piano, Bender, a Chinese vampire, Steve Jobs, and a toilet. Newer

products include a Pirate-themed motorised fairground ride range with Znap-type blocks, although the minifigs seem closer to zombie pirates forcing the punters to stay on the rides. LOZ appear to aiming at the Chinese domestic market with 'only' \$10m in exports.

M38 – Lug printing on newer **Sluban** bricks.

Megafun – See **Leyi**.

Microblox – See **LOZ**.

OK – Basic building sets available in the Far East.

Pengcheng – See **Plastic Toy**.

PeiZhi – Another brand marketed by **BLOCK Tech**. Their kits are either direct copies of LEGO or strange blocky creations reminiscent of those made with the leftover bits at your gran's in the 1970s. PeiZhi have also been marketed as '**Funny Toys**' to the mild amusement of some of their US customers. They are one of those brands that have 'contents may differ from artwork' on the boxes which doesn't exactly instil confidence.

Plastic Toy – made by the **Pengcheng** Toy Co. Ltd, who are subcontracted by others (such as Loongon). Various kits are shown on their website with the box logos blurred out. One kit of interest is the **Loongon** brand military sand-coloured MLRS with sandbags. The minifigs look fairly similar to those used by **Best-Lock** in the past.

Pioneer Blocks – LEGO Basic clone sets of appalling quality, probably aimed at the US and Canadian market as the boxes have English and French writing.

Qiao Le Tong – A brand producing town-style sets which appear to have unique designs and some special vehicle pieces.

Qigao – This brand is only available in Asia and looks to be a close copy of Enlighten.

Qun Long – See **LELE**.

Riddle Bricks – See **Ligao**.

Riddle Toy Bricks – See **Donglin**.

Senno – This is the band name of the **Sen Nuo** company. These have a number of clone kit ranges, and appear to have reasonably competent box art.

Sheng Yuan – See **SY**.

SL Toys – Another minifig cloner, examples include Minecraft.

Sluban – Named after Luban the famed inventor, this company mainly copies old South Korean **Oxford Toys** kits (a copy of a copy?) complete with slightly odd-looking minifigs. They have a Europe-based export company based in the Netherlands with an easy-to-use mail-order website. There are many military kits which include a dark olive green colour, various town-based sets, and DUPLO clones. Some older sets appear rather blocky, but the website looks very professional and they even display building instructions. They have recently brought out new themes including train sets, which have black plastic tracks with half the curvature of the standard LEGO track (although they don't look directly compatible). Another new subject is 'Redcliff', a mediaeval Chinese castle theme suited to their domestic market. Best giggle comes from the Navy submarine kit, which is translated simply as 'Nuke'. New sets for 2014 included an impressive 1800 piece aircraft carrier. Uses **M38** on newer bricks.

Star Diamond – Strangely-named brand made by the Lianhuan Toys & Crafts Company which started up in 1994. Has a relatively wide range of products and a very slick advertising campaign. They have their own kit designs, with extremely similar instructions to LEGO and identical minifigs. New sets in 2014-15 include transforming robot-vehicle-handguns. Excellent quality but high prices. Star Diamond kits are not directly imported to the UK, but some are rebranded under **MY Toys**, and parts have been used by the UK-based **Click Brick**.

Subor – see **Xinh**.

SY – Expands to Sheng Yuan. Utter rip-offs of LEGO Friends, Super Heroes, and Star Wars minifigs, using the same artwork, names and designs. Made by **Xin Le Xin**. They have cheekily put a trademark next to the Friends writing. So-so quality and morals.

VIGE – Brand name of the **Wei Gao** company, producing DUPLO clone kits.

Wange Toys – See **Ligao**.

Weagle – Also known as **GX Toys** and manufactured by the **Zhi Ying** Toy Factory. They appear to have a wide list of products, but the website is currently inaccessible so may have been closed down or rebranded. Some designs have been imported into the UK by **BLOCK Tech**. The consensus amongst European reviewers is that they are shite.

Wei Gao – See **VIGE**.

Wei Te Feng – See **Wit Toys**.

Wit Toys – These creator and DUPLO clones are made by **Wei Te Feng**. They occasionally have **Bela** on the box, but it is not obvious whether they are the same **BELA** copying modern minifigs or a completely different company. Set 8879 has the phrases ‘Fully exert your inagination’ and ‘Amazing visual convulsion’ on the front. Not sure the wording would make anyone who spoke English buy it. The DUPLO creations seen are motorised train sets with big figures having the standard Chinese zombie pallor and expressions. Really scary.

Wo Fu – Brand name connected with technic robots, similar to Bionicle.

Woma – See **Jubilux**.

Wonder Land – Branded series taking Friends clones into a VERY pink princess-style castle setting with wind-up musical boxes.

Xin Le Xin – Manufacturer of **SY** and **Gudi** Brands.

Xingda – See **Intelligence Bricks**.

Xing Dou Cheng – See **Hui Mei**.

Xing Qi Le – Sometimes abbreviated to **XQL**. A cheap copy brand producing **Intelligence Toys** a few years ago. They may be responsible for, or be the same as, the much maligned **Zephyr Knight**, as the packaging and products look very similar. Stud names include **YIHE** and **HOLI**.

Xinh – Brand name of the **Subor** company, covering Bionicle and Hero Factory type technic robots, and minifig clones such as Ghostbusters.

XQL – See **Xing Qi Le**.

YIHE – Stud name on some **Xing Qi Le** bricks.

Yixing – The most likely manufacturer of BLOCK Tech Junior pieces, although no direct evidence.

Zephyr Knight – Awful cheap copy brand found a few years ago in the US. May be related to **Xing Qi Le** and **Intelligence Toys**. The bricks have **HELO** printed on the studs.

Zhi Hang – This company produces their own sets, typical of LEGO Basic and Creator kits.

Zhi Ling – See **Lingnan**.

Zhi Ying – See **Weagle**.

Zhiao – A minifig cloner, making various box sets of heavily copyrighted LEGO themes such as Ninja Turtles and Marvel and DC Superheroes. Also makes Manga sets, such as Kishimoto’s Naruto series.

Zhongyue – See **Enlighten**.

Rest Of The World

For balance, there are various **non-Chinese** companies producing LEGO-type products, although almost all are probably made in China anyway.

Airfix QuickBuild – The brand of the plastic model company Airfix, covering LEGO-style bricks making realistic aircraft. The sets are manufactured wholly in the UK, apparently to guarantee quality. Parts are unique for each model with a few LEGO-type plates.

Best-Lock and **Cobi** – Best-Lock were originally a joint UK and German company (although registered in Hong Kong), and merged with the Polish-based Cobi a few years ago. Cobi produce a lot of military sets, McLaren, Jeep and Boeing-licensed models, and a girls-themed series that seems worryingly red-light district to UK eyes. Cobi are the source for some of the UK-based **Character Building** Toys, who produce various themed kits including Doctor Who, UK Armed Forces and Scooby Doo – albeit with completely different minifigs vaguely similar to LEGO Jack Stone. **Chad Valley** also use Cobi-sourced bricks for their own range. Best-Lock mainly source from China, are the cheaper end of the range, and tend to sell in the US. Cobi used to be made in Poland, but have switched some production to China. Best-Lock are licensed to produce US Army military kits, and recently acquired the rights to produce Stargate SG-1 and Terminator branded kits, selling themed minifig sets in a similar way to **Mega Bloks**. Wilkinson **Blox** range were mostly old Best-Lock or **Jubilux** kits. Asda have also used Best-Lock.

BLOCK Tech – This is a UK import company that supply many UK retailers and rebrand Chinese cloners.

Blox – Brand name of Wilco's range of clone LEGO. Have used **Best-Lock** and **Jubilux-Woma** in the past, but now source from **BLOCK Tech** and use the new tubbyfig.

Brik Tek – French clone brand, unknown supplier.

BTR – Produced some GI-Joe themed kits about 10 years ago. Minifigs were like small versions of Action Man.

By The Pound – Canadian brand made by Northern Technology. Sold as basic bricks in big buckets in the US.

Byggis – Swedish copy brand that has produced Super Mario, Flintstones and Jurassic Park themed minifigs and sets. Also may be related to the **Kloss** brand.

C3 Construction – US brand of loosely similar LEGO clone bricks who produce the Minimates figures.

Chad Valley – See **Best-Lock**.

Character Building – See **Best-Lock**.

Cheva – This is the brand name of the Czech manufacturer Chemoplast BEC. Products are vaguely similar to LEGO, but have different underbrick grab designs and straight-armed minifigs.

Cobi – See **Best-Lock**.

Construblock – A fairly new Spanish brand, originally appearing to use old **Oxford Toys** sets but branching out by having more unique minifigs similar to LEGO Jack Stone.

Cra-Z-Art – US brand of LaRose Industries LLC based in New Jersey, making the **LiteBrix** range of clear LEGO-type sets with... lights.

Funtastic – Brand company name for some Poundland products, using a variety of Chinese cloners either as sources for entire kits, or pieces for own designs.

Famoclick – Spanish re-branded **Cobi** products.

Ideal – Another South Korean company, formed by some ex-**Oxford Toys** employees.

Kloss – Swedish copy, may be related to **Byggis**.

Kre-O – See **Oxford Toys**.

LiteBrix – See **Cra-Z-Art**.

Mega Bloks – this Canadian-based company has been churning out their own bricks for years. They have licence agreements to make Halo, Call Of Duty, World of Warcraft, Need for Speed, Moshi Monsters, Hello Kitty, Barbie, and Smurf branded sets. Some parts are Improved over earlier products, but quality can still be decidedly random. Mega Bloks are made in China.

Ministeck – German company selling LEGO clones, most probably sourcing from **Jubilux-Woma** in China. A variety of themes, with the most interesting their range of train kits. They sell black railway track with curves double the radius of LEGO tracks. The minifigs appear to have yellow heads and hands.

M.Y Toys – UK import company that rebrands many different Chinese clone manufacturers.

Oxford Toys – This company is South Korean and has produced a lot of town and military stuff in the past. They trade under both the Oxford Toys and the **Kre-O** name. After being bought out by Hasbro they now make Transformer sets and have the rebooted Star Trek franchise. Their new Kre-O minifigs are distinctly different from LEGO minifigs. The standard kits are however very similar, and even have advertising with moving minifigs in the same way as LEGO.

Peacock – This is India's leading brand of hooky LEGO, making what appear to be throwbacks to the 1970s with older style pre-minifigs and the homemaker maxifigs. This should make them desirable, but unfortunately customer reviews seem to be united in their condemnation of atrocious quality and bad fit.

PEBE – The original Communist LEGO, made in East Germany from 1955 until about 1990. Slight different under-brick locking method, but compatible.

Rik et Rok – French LEGO type sets with different minifigs vaguely similar to Playmobil figures. Most sets are themed around town and rescue sets.

Super Blocks – See **Tyco**.

Topaz – French brand looking very similar to the Czech-based **Cheva** with straight-armed minifigs.

Tyco – The first LEGO cloner with **Super Blocks**.



THE REVIEWS

Scoring System

All comments are of the opinion of the reviewer only, and do not represent Brickish, LEGO, or any other person, organisation or company.

The original idea for Communist LEGO was to evaluate the Chinese clones that were beginning to appear in the UK. It soon became apparent that (a) there were far too many to properly review, and (b) almost all were awful and had terrible minifigs. Purchases were then skewed to allow acquisition of military-themed bricks and figures, discovery of new manufacturers, building an army of zombies and Smurfs to be chased by psychotic LEGO Friends, and to generally vent anger at obviously appallingly bad kits.

For the 2015 issue, some effort was expended to look at kits that weren't necessarily crap. This was only partially successful.

Brief analysis of the progress of the previous editions revealed use of the translated text on Chinese websites as an aid to determine which brands to avoid. Comments ranged from interest that outsiders were providing this helpful advice, to observations that such Europeans were rather brutish in their evaluation. So that worked, then.

Many more reviews of clone sets can be found on various dedicated blog sites all over the internet, and most are far better than these ones. However, hands-on experience and scoring from a British point of view may be more relevant to the UK reader, and of some interest from everyone else in internet-land.

Unlike earlier editions of Communist LEGO, older reviews are not included in this document for size and clarity. These can be combined from the 2014 version ('clonebrands_v1.4.pdf') for completeness, if desired. All review scores are included in tables at the end.



The following are reviews of some of the kits. Obviously, the scoring rules are based on a large statistical sampling exercise with a comprehensive auditable peer review process: making up the numbers in the pub.

Results are colour coded, and are split into the following categories, with the important Quality, Fit and Minifig scored twice:

Quality	- how well the bricks are made, including manufacturing defects;
Value	- the overall cost of the set compared to what is in the box;
Fit	- the 'grab' of the bricks against one another and to real LEGO;
Compatibility	- how well the parts would combine with real LEGO if ever given the chance (shudder);
Minifig	- the comparison of a minifig with a genuine LEGO minifig;
Design	- the overall skill and interest of the kit;
Instructions	- the size, colour, layout and helpfulness of the supplied instructions;
Total	- addition of all the above, with quality, fit and minifig being scored twice.

The following is recommended as a helpful guide if thinking of purchasing kits of the clone bricks:

Explanation of colours, scoring and consequence:

Green: 90%-100%+: *no real problems at all. Be happy and build on. Have cup of tea, relax, and survey your masterpiece.*

Light green: 70%-89%: *some minor issues, but generally OK. Get mildly irritated. Have a cup of tea to steady nerves. Relax, it'll be fine from a distance.*

Yellow: 50%-69%: *some problems. Get annoyed. Have a cup of vodka to steady nerves. It'll probably be OK from a distance in poor light with some superglue and if no-one touches it. And it's in a display cabinet. Probably.*

Orange: 30%-49%: *some serious problems. Get angry. Tea, vodka and therapeutic massage by supermodel do not help to steady nerves. It looks bad, even in the dark. Take set back to the shop or attack it with a hammer.*

Red: 0-29%: *Show-stopping problems. Get apoplectic. Prescription medicine does not help to steady nerves. Wonder how the miserly little set ever got out of the factory. Send multiple letters of complaint to shop, company, local MP, Chinese government, Ban Ki-Moon, and Daily Mail. Use home shredder for purposes unforeseen. Burn plastic shreds whilst cackling insanely. Jump up and down on ashes, apologise to neighbours and police officers, sweep up using dustpan and brush, and deposit into tiny urn. Have cup of tea, relax, and survey your masterpiece.*

The lowest overall scoring kit is the winner of the **Crappiest Available Clone Kit (CACK)** award.

New for this edition is the **Bare-Faced Cheek (BFC)** mark, given to the cloners who have blatantly copied LEGO's own products without even bothering to change designs or trying to sidestep copyright. Some of the more furious readers may wish to insert their own words to make up the acronym BFC.





Ausini – Construction Digger and Police Helicopter (Summer 2014)

NEW!

Ausini makes efforts to have a wider export market than most Chinese cloners, but relatively few sets make it all the way across Asia and Europe to reach the UK. A chance find at a car boot sale was a number of very cheap second-hand Ausini-branded sets. Two boxes – Engineering Construction no 29201, and Police 23202 – were bought, with a total of 4 Ausini sets (and figures) found inside. Although these were bought for guaranteed ghastly additions to the Zombie Horde, there was an added opportunity to study original Ausini export sets as opposed to the rebranded items reviewed previously. The boxes seemed strong enough to survive any overland trade route from China to Europe involving most forms of weather, terrain and quadrupedal animal transport. There were no stickers or instructions; these were probably dropped by the previous owners when the true horror of the Ausini zombiefigs became apparent.

Both Ausini boxes promised “High Quality”, “High Performance”, “The Excellent Design”, and “Special For Your Children The All Exciting New Kit Will Give You Infinite Pleasure”. Given that Infinite Pleasure was apparently available with a mere difficulty level of 1 out of 5, the sets were opened almost immediately when taken home, even before the tea had finished brewing. This naïve excitement was, of course, rapidly quashed by the reality of the dull digger vehicle and rubbish helicopter. The digger was a fairly simplistic affair with a boring boxy shape and a movable bucket that didn't really scoop up anything much. It had yellow bricks that were not quite the same hue, and a wonky print on the rear plate. On the plus side, the (severely ugly) tyres were made of a good quality rubber, and the windscreen and steering wheel were of a newer design for Ausini and very similar to genuine LEGO. The minifig was good quality and almost identical to LEGO, although the workman hat was a yellow fireman helmet back to front. The sinister smiling face print, coupled with the Ausini undead tan-grey colour, gave a sphincter-clenchingly scary zombiefig.



Two boxes of Ausini's finest. Skin pallor on box utter lie. Finished vehicle is mostly yellow. Bowel-emptying zombiefig. New wheel, wonky print.

The helicopter was really, really rubbish, far below the mediocre to good design standards seen in previous Ausini offerings. It was small, had non-aesthetic proportions, could not fit a minifig, and had rotors that kept falling off due to both bad design and weak part grab. One plate had moulding flash. The police guy was good enough quality, and the helmet was a non-LEGO design with a peak that looked excellent. It hid the cop's zombie-coloured head that had a rather dull expression compared to the evil grinning construction worker. However, 23202 had an ace up its sleeve in form of an arsenal sprue first seen with Weagle sets reviewed in Spring 2014. It would appear that Weagle copied Ausini, as the supplied pearl-grey Ausini weaponry had moulding details only hinted at with the Weagle shite. It was certain that with this armoury the Ausini policeman stood a good chance of taking on an entire rebel province and bring justice to all. Perhaps the radio thingy was a control device for the helicopter drone which could be equipped with the two heaviest guns. Whatever methods 100 million little Chinese children can concoct, Police helicopter will restore the P.C Country.



Rubbish 'copter, but cop heavily armed. Great helmet and visor hides zombiefig. Silver arsenal of death to keep country PC. Crap moulding error.

Ausini are getting close-ish to pulling off tolerable LEGO clones, but these two sets show they still miss. The minifig quality is quite good, spoilt only by the skin tone which switching to yellow would easily solve. The set design seems to vary between OK to poor; the digger was acceptable, but the helicopter was clunky and ugly. The use of pearl grey as opposed to grey looks cheap, and a few persistent moulding errors do not add confidence to a progressive quality control. The police helmet and weapons sprue show some original piece design skill. It is a pity this does not extend to the sets. And don't play with it in daylight, or the figures will scream and turn to dust.

Summary: Construction and law enforcement employment opportunities for the alternatively alive with a phenomenal arsenal.

Scores	Construction	Police
Quality*	70	60
Value	80	100
Fit*	80	70
Compatibility	90	90
Minifig*	70	80
Design	60	30
Instructions	N/A	N/A
Total	74	62

A boring Sunday car boot sale wander was mediocrely enhanced by this chance find. The Ausini 'Fast Racing Formul' had been found before, but what made this marginally more interesting was the new company, Lexington Park. After the exorbitant £1 purchase, research showed Lexington Park was registered in Nottingham with a couple of small office addresses suggesting an import company more than a full blown manufacturer. The standout feature on the box was the use of quoting the actual LEGO name with compatibility. No-one else does. Perhaps they got permission, but if not it would be very, very unlikely this would not be subject to a quiet word or ninety from legal representatives of the world's most powerful brand name.

Once the amusingly foolhardy box was opened, the familiar contents of Ausini kit 26204 were revealed. Apart from not having the Ausini logo, the kit was all but identical. Staring out from the bag was the truly terrifying racing driver with his soul-boring eyes and unholy skin tone. The kit itself was reasonably well made, easy to put together and good value. The stickers were of good quality with a close fit and colour to the green, which was a shame as the separate colours were printed wonky and looked decidedly unprofessional. The Ausini yellow colour verged on the weak, and the grey was closer to the older LEGO light grey. Comparison with an existing Ausini car showed no difference whatsoever. So... now I had two. I wasn't that inspired to race them.



It's Ausini, with that skin colour bullshit and Max Fast, famous driver from the grave. You just can't kill him off. No, really. Holy crap, I'm scared.

The real joy of this kit was the well made but astoundingly scary minifig. Max Fast was one of the best zombiefigs found so far, with a truly terrifying expression and appalling skin colour. Since now two exist in The Horde, they can shepherd the lesser immortals from the sides and focus an overwhelming stampede of shite plastic figures onto an unsuspecting LEGO community. Needless to say, the Heartlake City zombie dominance training sessions stress the importance of eliminating the Max minifigs, being essential to combatting head-on invasions. This particular Max Fast was identified by having a strange couple of black marks on the torso rear, suggesting a sub-optimal production line in Chenghai central.



We are left wondering whether Lexington Park got a phone call or letter. Stickers and torso printing done by someone pissed as a skunk.

Well, whoop-di-doo, another mediocre small impulse-buy racing car set. Actually, the Ausini sets are of decent enough quality, and the score of this one approaches 80% even with scary Max. Yes, of course the kit isn't LEGO, but as a toy it isn't that bad (albeit a bit formulaic) and it is compatible with LEGO building blocks without the use of a hammer. I did not feel guilty giving this to a charity shop. Guessing whether Lexington Park are going to quietly vanish and re-emerge in another guise to bypass solicitors fees is probably the most interesting part of the entire review¹.

Summary: Max Fast is one of the best minifigs for inducing mental trauma. Car design is a bit rubbish.

Scores	Fast Formul
Quality*	70
Value	100
Fit*	80
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	70
Design	70
Instructions	90
Total	79

¹ Well... Tyco did it.



BELA – Friends City Park Cafe (Summer 2014)

NEW!

BFC
Award!

Some Chinese cloners do not export to Europe much, probably because they do not need to. They sell their products at home and as such appear fairly immune from copyright prosecution. One such company is BELA, who have been directly copying many lucrative LEGO products. It specialises in themed minifigs, but another recent addition to its range is a whole gamut of Friends kits. These do not try to build on or approximate LEGO sets – they **are** direct copies and differ only when specific parts are not available. BELA 10162 is a blatant copy of the LEGO 3061 City Park Café. It was sourced from Hong Kong, and arrived with a slightly squashed box in a packet marked “mobile phone case – value \$2.59”. This inauspicious start was confirmed by carefully comparing the box art with the original LEGO. BELA did not try to mimic the set with a photo of their own product: it actually copied the LEGO picture, and adjusted it to blank out LEGO stud markings and change the cake and glass cover.

The box (copying the size and shape of the original, of course) held a number of bags of parts, an instruction sheet and a sticker set. The parts bags were arranged by size and type, not instruction steps, so everything had to be emptied at once. It was immediately apparent that quality was the only aspect BELA did **not** copy, with parts resembling something between COGO and Ausini in feel and colour. The 16x16 plate was as bent as BELA itself. Putting the pieces together showed that the grab was surprisingly adequate, although some of the wall stages needed careful lining up. Close-up viewing showed no manufacturer’s marks, some slight flash moulding errors, a bit of mysterious organic contamination, some quite horrid printing errors, and mediocre colour matching. The stickers were amusingly badly offset which was most obvious on the door sign. When finished the set looked OK; there were no missing parts, but no spares either. Two pieces were different from the LEGO set – the pie centre was a distasteful blue instead of white (why? Most Chinese food isn’t blue), and the clear globe was a jar. Apart from this, 10162 was a direct copy of 3061.



Blatant cloning: LEGO 3061, BELA 10162. Picture is copied and subtly changed. Are BELA a bunch of evil, cheating, copycat weasels? Hell yes.

The minifigs were supplied half assembled, oddly with legs attached but the arms still on sprues giving the impression of Terminator Friends. Joining the arms and torsos required only strong hands, not immensely so. Both of the hips and legs assemblies showed mismatched colours. The hair was badly moulded and was nowhere near as rubbery as the genuine article. The printing on the faces was poorly done and off-centre: Andrea had a wonky mouth with metal teeth, and Marie’s brown eyes were too low giving the impression they were falling out of the sockets. The overall quality was far off the mark from genuine LEGO, and zombie Friendfigs became another addition to the huge army of undead crap menacing Heartlake City.



Andrea’s mouth is disturbing, Marie’s eyes are falling out. Shite quality printing on bricks and stickers. Marie is on the hunt for brains, brains...

The set itself is probably OK for domestic consumption and playable enough, albeit with the usual cloner issues of cheap plastic, shite quality, and organic contamination. There is, however, no doubting that it is a flagrant breach of copyright. Interestingly, BELA has continually openly copied LEGO material, giving the impression it feels it is unlikely to get prosecuted. Whether this is down to blissful ignorance or believing it has “protection” is not immediately apparent. Maybe it is revenge for centuries of exploitation by The True Barbarians. Er... no. It is far more probable BELA is copying the worst practices of the very ideology Communism was meant to replace. This is a thoroughly dishonourable act.

Summary: BELA brings shame on the entire nation of China.

Scores	Friends Café
Quality*	50
Value	50
Fit*	70
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	50
Design	100 / 0**
Instructions	100 / 0**
Total	47

** all points deducted for illegal copying

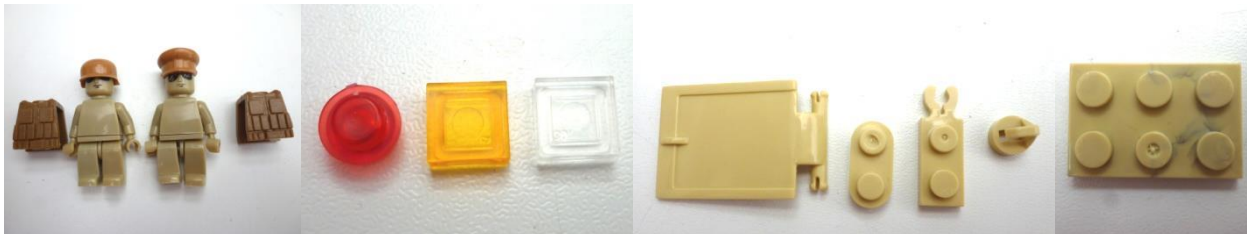
This Best-Lock kit had been on the shelves at the local Asda store for a few months before it was reduced in a sale to £3. Previous experience had shown an overwhelming consistency of crapness in all things Best-Lock, so it was only the enticement of creepy minifigs for the already swollen Zombie Horde that got the set into the shopping trolley. Strangely, there was no set title or number anywhere on the box to identify the kit.

The box was well presented with the inner box whole. Pieces were supplied in two bags, with reasonably sized instructions and a big camouflage sticker sheet. It was evident that, although not covered in the instructions, the camouflage brick effect was supposed to be achieved by somehow cutting out the stickers to the correct size and attaching them to the desired bricks. This was quite annoying. The instructions themselves were well staged but the colours were printed too dark, so that the joins between the black parts were very hard to see. However... opening the bags showed a real surprise. The pieces were nothing like previous Best-Lock plastic and felt genuinely good quality. OK, there were a few sprue marks, the black was mildly washed out, and one tan plate had some colour mixing problems, but overall the parts were far higher quality than the usual Best-Lock crap. Also, the designs of both the jeep and the field gun were reasonably good, being a real departure from the bluntly abysmal efforts of older Best-Lock kits. Assembly of the set was quite enjoyable, if punctuated with frequent periods of disbelief. There were no Best-Lock logos on the pieces, and diligent searching eventually produced a match with the design of the jeep from Loongon's Little White Dragon brand.



Best-Lock kit with no name or number to describe what it actually is. Camouflage is just a sticker sheet. Finished set with gun, jeep and bike.

Then... there were the minifigs. Oh dear. The box proudly stated that the Best-Lock minifig had its own US patent, and shape-wise the supplied figures were slightly different to older efforts. They were fairly similar to the new Little White Dragon soldiers, but had different legs. The minifigs were supplied assembled, although the instructions assumed they were not, probably to make up the total of 123 parts in the box. The colour was dark tan as opposed to the light tan in the photos, and the box art showed the Loongon leg design. The torsos were similar in shape but slightly thinner than the Lego equivalent, with quite good quality arms. The leg assembly was not really an assembly, with very poor fit resulting in any play leading to inevitable and rapid limb loss. The supplied bulletproof vests were identical to earlier Best-Lock items found in police sets, and were the only clothing issued to the apparently (and disturbingly) completely naked soldiers. The helmet and cap were of OK quality, although the helmet sat very low on the minifig head. The supplied weapon sprue was in a cheap pearl-grey colour, and required a cutting device to remove each part. The guns, rocket launcher and radio were however quite good, with the heavy machine gun having a front stand which fitted very well.



Minifigs worryingly naked, with loose legs to boot. Clear parts and tan bits look very Cobi-ish, but are probably Loongon. Odd colour error.

Best-Lock went to Loongon (probably) to fix their atrocious reputation. From previous reviews this would seem monumentally foolhardy, but Loongon (or whoever) appear to have invested in new colours, plastic mixes, and moulding equipment to produce decent quality bricks. Although there are still some problems, this kit is so far removed from earlier nightmare offerings that Best-Lock has, in one move, gone from the bottom of the league to near the top. Unfortunately, the new minifig design seems to have backfired with even worse leg fit than before. If this is ever fixed, Best-Lock would become a viable choice at the budget end of the clone market, which is, quite frankly, amazing.

Summary: For Best-Lock, this is astoundingly good quality and design. Everything is let down by pointless stickers and poorly made minifig legs, and the fact that soldier minifigs in the nuddie are really quite disturbing.

Note: I suspect that, in the UK, having a selling point of 'over 120 pieces' is far less important than making sure the minifigs are not shite.

Scores	Army Kit
Quality*	70
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	30
Design	90
Instructions	70
Total	74



BLOCK TECH (unknown) – Dinosaur Island (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

Stock for Christmas 2014 began to enter the local shops in early November, and this included a latest batch of BLOCK TECH kits. The new range (along with the fully capitalised logo and single brick to match their similarly revamped METAL TECH Meccano clone logo) consisted of four smaller sets, some rather optimistically priced larger sets, and various games with earlier small kits sprinkled in to make them ~~less~~ more enticing. Of the four small sets, only one had any interest and even with a 'buy 1 get 1 half price' offer, just "Dinosaur Island" was put in the shopping basket. Dinosaur Island was an obvious rip-off of Jurassic Park and at least gave a plausible explanation for the oddly-attired Robert Downy Junior lookalike pilot in the Blox helicopter kit (qv). The photo on Dinosaur Island showed a tubbyfig called "Alan" and a raptor design that appeared half decent. There was no statement saying that contents and colour could vary from the box art. Itching to meet "Alan", the set was opened soon after getting home even before unpacking the rest of the shopping, which was, to be honest, a tad optimistic.

The inner box held a stupidly small set of instructions and a bag of pieces with a stupidly large barrage of multi-lingual warnings on the dangers of small parts and plastic bags. It rapidly became apparent that Alan as pictured was not present, but his rather more LEGO-like cousin was. Let's call him Bob. Bob had LEGO-type legs, torso, head and cap, but had tubbyfig short-sleeve arms. Bob also appeared to have spent the past 5 years inside in the shade, as he was very pale. Maybe Bob was scared of his zoo. Anyway, Alan was most closely matched from combining parts from one of the Blox '5 individual figures' sets, although his torso had a slightly different print than the front photo. Bob had a much more reddish-brown hue to his trousers, compared to the standard brown of Alan. Maybe Bob was *really* scared of his zoo.



Somehow BLOCK TECH can afford refresh. Dino looks OK but has eye missing. Alan's cousin Bob less legal. Design flaw compounded by poor grab.

The dinosaur was a surprisingly good design, using the relatively few pieces to produce a reasonable raptor. Although the parts were of quite good quality, the fit was a bit loose on some parts and so the dinosaur tended to fall into at least two parts if played with anything other than gently. This was compounded by a missing piece, leaving the poor reptile with only one eye. When complete, the legs had enough give to allow posing and also letting Bob ride on the back. The only bad point of the design was the inability of the jaws to shut, instantly making it a rubbish set for the majority of BLOCK TECH's customers, but probably letting Bob get less pale and have less browner trousers. Bob's head looked very similar to Best-Lock with an inner square hollow to the head stud, but close examination showed that Bob's head itself was a less rounded design than Best-Lock, so the minifig manufacturer is a mystery.



Here is Alan. Here is Bob. Here is Alan and Bob. Alan is on the instructions, but Bob is inside the box. Who made Bob? We may never know.

BLOCK TECH has tried to source better quality parts, and seems to have partially succeeded. Admittedly, this wasn't too hard as their previous offerings often used Weagle who consistently produced shite. This example probably uses Loongon or an almost identical cloner. BLOCK TECH supply Blox with their legal new tubbyfig design, but appear to only show it on the box art for its own and Poundland's kits. Is Bob better than Alan? A bit. Dinosaur Island overall was a good kit for the price. Shame about all the others.

Summary: Improvements over Weagle, but this is not hard. Alan replaced by Bob. Bit missing. Could still do better.

Scores	Dinosaur Island
Quality*	60
Value	100
Fit*	70
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	60
Design	80
Instructions	60
Total	71



BLOCK TECH (unknown) – Dinosaur Island Figures (Winter 2014)

The local Poundland had been doing rather well, selling out of all the sets I had previously slated and showing they know rather more about the retail industry than some numpety adult who plays with toys. To fill the enormous gap left by the Quick Brick bags, a vast number of BLOCK TECH minifig packs appeared in December. Despite much searching it was apparent that only the Dinosaur Island box was on sale. The new BLOCK TECH sets had named characters, and this was no exception. These were the tubbyfigs that should have been in the new kits; this time, the clear window proved they were actually in the box. Apart from being hideous tubbyfigs and thus not exactly the most obvious purchase for any child not willing to have nightmares, the characters were presented fairly well. The box showed Bret (sic) the driver, Travis the dino hunter, Tim the tour guide, and Owen the security guy. I'll leave it to you, the reader, to guess how much the box cost from Poundland.

The pictures on the box were computer generated and slightly out of proportion. There were also a few minor changes to print colours. The BLOCK TECH box designers had gone to town with a nice diagram of the tubbyfig extolling its "unique features", although unique was an odd word to use as there are already about 7 billion LEGO minifigs that do the same job (better), and even these Dinosaur Island tubbyfigs shared a head print. The four dinonauts were extracted from their plastic prison and found to be very good examples of tubbyfig. All had OK quality printing, legs that varied from a bit stiff to a bit loose, annoying arm connections that were too weak coupled with hands that didn't fit underneath LEGO plates, and headgear incompatible with any other brick brand. Aesthetics aside, the tubbyfigs were quite well made and an absolute bargain at 25p each.



Here are Bret, Travis, Tim and Owen. It's obvious that colour and contents have varied a bit. Four brave tubbyfigs out of the box. Tim looks evil.

There seems to have been effort expended by BLOCK TECH to create their new tubbyfig range, although the word 'misguided' seems inevitable to appear in this sentence. There are certain similarities between these and the Click Brick gorillafigs, although Click Brick copied the style of the Mega Bloks gorillafig resulting in (a) the company less likely to get sued and (b) figures incompatible with anything else and just as rubbish as the tubbyfig. BLOCK TECH's choice of the shirt sleeve joint is bold (or crap), as they have a particularly loose fit and tend to fall off when played with. The legs are well made but standing or sitting the figures on studs of LEGO or any of the clones requires considerable effort and usually the destruction of the vehicle or model involved. The heads are a ridiculously tight fit for no apparent reason, and most have nasty expressions.



Unique features? Bret and Travis have the same head. Makeup of a tubbyfig. At least Tim's hair looks less like a bowl. What a pile of poo.

The look of the BLOCK TECH tubbyfigs is so bad that there does appear to be a good chance that the whole thing is a put-up by some reality TV show and will be revealed as a huge joke sometime in the future. If only. More realistically, it's a bit like watching Sunset Beach and waiting for the punchline, until it gradually dawns that it's not a spoof. Even comparing the tubbyfigs to the Mega Bloks and Click-Brick gorillafigs still does not go in BLOCK TECH's favour. But for 25p each, a reasonable enough effort.

Summary: Character naming is good. Everything else is not.

Scores	Dinosaur Island Figs
Quality*	N/A
Value	N/A
Fit*	N/A
Compatibility	N/A
Minifig*	N/A
Design	20
Instructions	N/A
Total	20



BLOCK TECH (unknown) – Girls Go Shopping (Winter 2014)

NEW!

Christmas shopping in a local toy shop found a small uninspiring display of BLOCK TECH kits next to a huge inspiring display of LEGO kits. The re-booted BLOCK TECH design squad had gone away and created a range of subjects with each set having named tubbyfigs, which seemed like a good idea on the surface. There was 'Roy' the fireman, 'Norman' the soldier, 'Buzz' the spaceman, 'Chris' the policeman, 'Ted' and 'Andy' the airport workers, and 'Kate' the girl with the Paris top. A mild form of pity welled up when confronted by the "Girls In The City" car with 'Kate'. Put diplomatically the aesthetic success was open to debate, but basically, it was shite. The Better Half bought a LEGO advent calendar but refused to buy the BLOCK TECH kit in the same transaction, so "Girls Go Shopping" was quietly purchased from the till in the corner, with head held in shame. A failed effort to spice up a dull journey home revolved around whether 'Kate' the tubbyfig would be inside the box, as this time the BLOCK TECH quality motto was "Contents may vary!" As if ripping punters off was all a joke. Yeah. Thanks.

The traditionally weak BLOCK TECH inner box disintegrated when extracting the contents - stupidly small instructions, and one bag of parts holding both the pieces and the surprisingly fully assembled minifig. The car was indeed as rubbish as the box art suggested, albeit with a normal size steering wheel and wheels that filled out the arches. The design was not only bad from an artistic point of view, but also from a construction standpoint. Any pressure applied to the car broke the connection between the main chassis plate and everything else, so that putting the driver in or out resulted in many car bits. The parts themselves were of reasonable quality: the grab was OK, the windscreen was not scratched, and the pink parts were fine. This did not detract from the overwhelming feeling of disillusionment that any girl getting this kit would surely feel.



Pity the marketing guy who had to try to sell this. Let's really hope "Contents May Vary!" Oh. They don't very much. Dreadful car still dreadful.

The minifig – let's call her Geri – was a close clone of a LEGO minifig, and totally different to Kate on the box who was all but identical to the Paris girl tubbyfig found in the Blox ice cream van kit (qv). Geri had a quite well printed and only marginally unsettling head, although it appeared she had applied her eye makeup with a pressure washer. Unlike Bob in Dinosaur Island, Geri's arms were standard minifig, presumably so she could hold shopping, and had yellow skin. The hairpiece was fairly thin around the edges but fitted well. Geri was, to be honest, far better than Kate, and if printed on the box would have made the kit far more desirable than its ugly self. Geri made the set worthwhile.



Here is Kate. Here is Geri. Here is Kate from Blox. Kate is ugly. Geri is not. Car is ugly from any angle. Geri goes shopping in ugly car. Lucky her.

BLOCK TECH seems to be playing a very odd game here, with the box art showing the tubbyfigs poor old Blox use, but supplying a half-decent LEGO clone. Having gone to all the effort of naming the characters, it is strange the set doesn't contain them. The reasons behind this could range from not daring to put a clone figure on the box, not having enough supply and letting Blox have first dibs on the tubbyfigs, or forgetting how to be competent. Or perhaps contact with the photo division is only done every other year.

On the plus side, the quality of the pieces isn't too bad.

Summary: Named characters are a good idea, but playing the BLOCK TECH contents lottery is getting rather tedious.

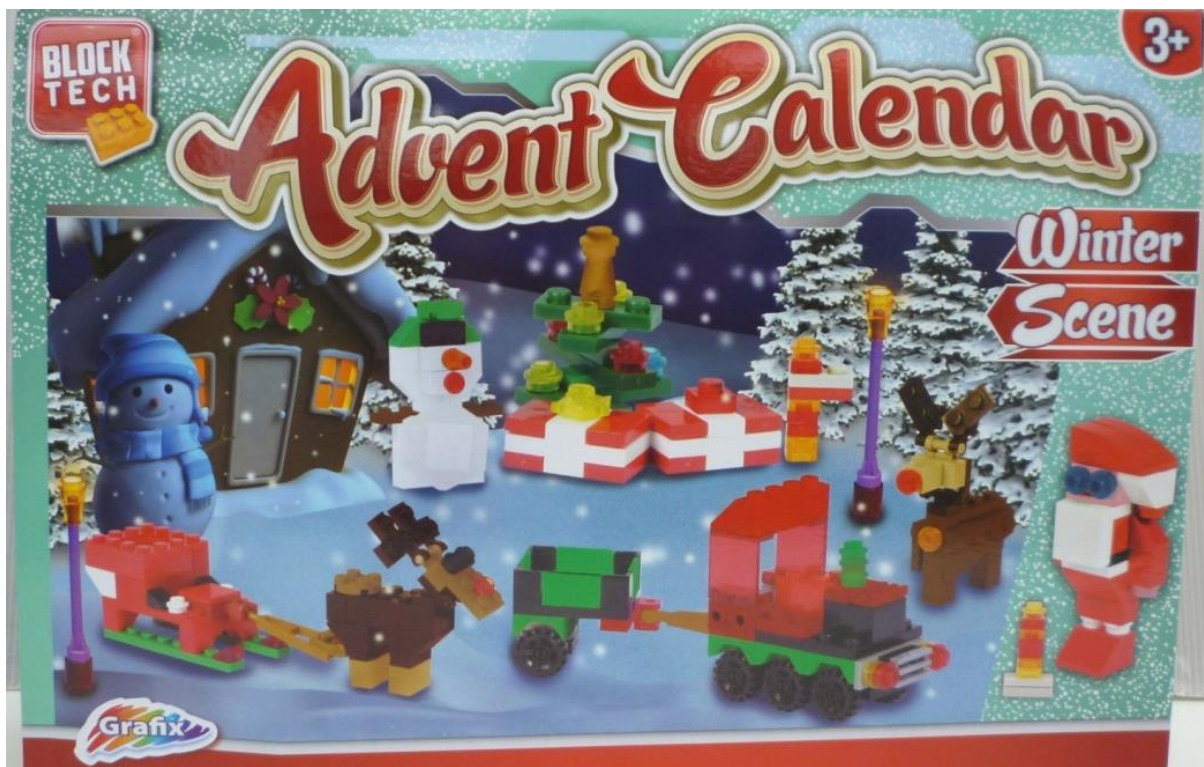
Scores	Girls Go Shopping
Quality*	60
Value	100
Fit*	70
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	70
Design	20
Instructions	50
Total	65



BLOCK TECH (unknown) – Advent Calendar 2014 (Winter 2014)

NEW!

On the 1st day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some brown bits, apparently part of a reindeer. Not enthused.
On the 2nd day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some surprise instructions, and some more reindeer bits. But not the correct ones. Oh good.
On the 3rd day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some more reindeer bits, but only one antler, and it's meant to be complete on Day 3.
On the 4th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... the 'thing' to the right of the presents in the picture. What is it? And where is the antler?
On the 5th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... two purple lamp posts. Not a good day. Still no antler.
On the 6th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... a present. Literally. Maybe I'll give up on the antler.
On the 7th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some train bits, not in the correct order.
On the 8th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some more train bits, including the wheels, but still not in the correct order. Getting worried.
On the 9th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... yet more train and truck bits, and still not enough to complete either. Not sure about this...
On the 10th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... the final pieces. Ooh, a completed train! And the missing reindeer antler. A week late.
On the 11th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... another present. I'll put it in the train.
On the 12th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... the bizarre light pole thing. It's all there, but I feel cheated. I'll play with the train again.



What could possibly go wrong? Surely not even BLOCK TECH would make something bad for Christmas and upset all the children...

On the 13th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... the bottom of the snowman. Definitely not Gudi.
On the 14th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some more snowman, but no front plate. Feeling both disappointed and excited.
On the 15th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... all the pieces to finish snowman. A bit flat. Not excited. Disappointed.
On the 16th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some parts of the second reindeer. Probably. Colours black and tan, unlike box art.
On the 17th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... yup, it's definitely the second reindeer. Parts randomly supplied.
On the 18th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... what's meant to be the rest of the reindeer. No hinge for the head. Had to improvise.
On the 19th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... some sleigh bits. Not really in any sensible order.
On the 20th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... the final sleigh bits, and the reindeer neck at last. It's OK, I suppose.
On the 21st day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... the tree. Well, I say tree, it's more like a small pot plant. At least it's complete.
On the 22nd day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... Santa's legs and arse.
On the 23rd day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... Santa's body, although his hands appear to be rockets.
On the 24th day of Christmas, BLOCK TECH gave to me... Arrgh! Santa is a rocket zombie!! Mummy...

Summary: BLOCK TECH spoiled Christmas.

Scores	Advent Calendar
Quality*	50
Value	30
Fit*	70
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	N/A
Design	40
Instructions	70
Total	60



Funtastic / BLOCK Tech (unknown) – Monster / Robot Blocks (Spring 2014)

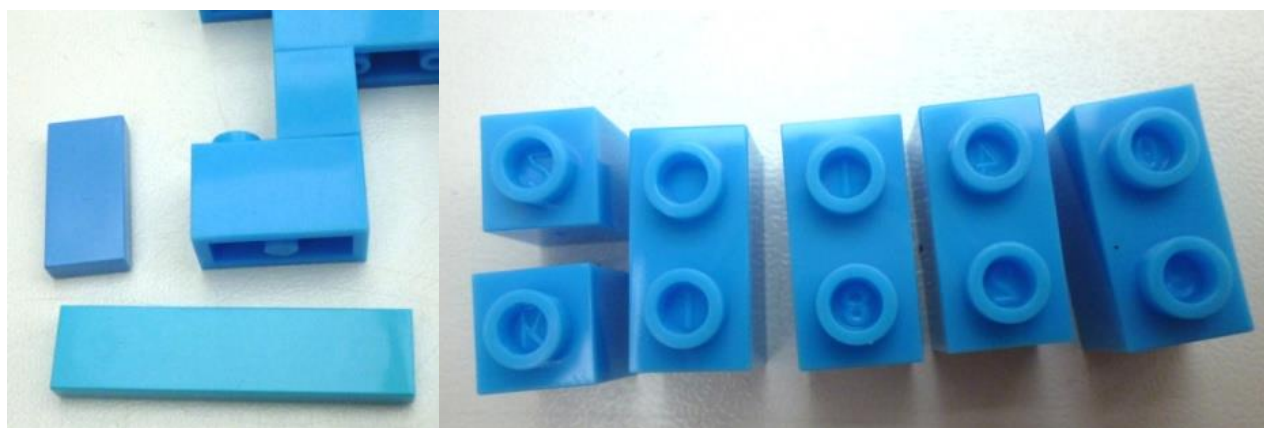
Poundland's Funtastic range covers a wide range of toys that often change as supplies alter. One speciality is rebranded BLOCK Tech kits. The Monster Blocks and Robot Blocks polybags appeared in the local store in Spring 2014, next to thousands and thousands of unsold Quick Bricks bags, and were priced up at 3 for £1. Monster was a light pastel minty blue-green colour with flowers and a pink background on the bag (presumably aimed at girls); Robot was a darker blue colour with a blue background, bizarrely bearing a striking resemblance to a certain German autistic plush toy hippo. Two Monsters and one Robot were bought to review.

The Robot bag was opened first. This immediately revealed that the instructions and stickers were a very tight fit in the bag so that ripping it open also ripped the contents, which was very, very annoying. The pieces were inside a plastic bag, and when extracted were found to be of relatively high quality. The 1x1 and 1x2 bricks had hollow studs with random reverse numbers inside, whereas the 1x3 and 1x4 bricks had solid studs. There was no indication of manufacturer, and at time of writing the maker is still unknown. Robot had three 1x1 round plates in trans-orange that were very close to genuine LEGO. Both the Robot and Monster kits had about 20 pieces and were relatively quick to assemble. Brick grab and feel were surprisingly good and roughly the same as genuine LEGO. Comparison of LEGO with Robot showed the colour was somewhere between Medium Blue and Medium Azure. Monster was a minty blue-green toothpaste colour that did not have a LEGO equivalent.



33p each is quite cheap. Contents are nicely packaged if you don't rip them. Pieces look odd but surprisingly good. Robot and monster thingies.

The stickers were quite cheap, but when applied did the job reasonably well. There were enough to customise the models in various ways, which as at least one would be duplicated was probably a good thing. Applying the stickers took longer than building the kits. The models themselves would thus be a fairly short distraction for any competent child, but the colours would be a useful and cheap addition to a brick collection. The number of bricks is actually quite low for the price, but a couple of dozen Monster sets would, for example, give a reasonable supply of the minty-green colour for any number of small building projects. The psychologically scarred blue hippo Robot is of less use, but monitoring of the local Poundland stock showed that it sold out far quicker than Monster, of which, at time of writing, there were still loads of packets left.



Toothpaste colour unique; powder blue between LEGO medium blue and medium azure. Studs have odd mirror-image numbers inside. Weird.

Readers of previous reviews will be expecting me to blather on and on about some nonsense concerning the strange back-to-front numbers on the bricks, suggesting that Monster and Robot are from The Mirrorland of Nightmares and will chase me up the never-ending escalator of doom. But... I'm not going to. Maybe I am cured of the horror of the wide staring eyes. Maybe I'm being lazy. To be honest, Monster and Robot are not really scary at all. I'm already being stalked by the Mega Bloks Smurf Clown, Weagle girl-zombie, Ausini and Loongon minifigs, and most likely several bored members of Unit 61398. The Funtastic Monster and Robot will have to join the queue. I actually bought more Monsters to get a good supply of toothpaste coloured bricks. For the record, they worked out at an eye-watering £30/kg.

Summary: Not bad for the price, some interesting colours and parts. Only limited indications of devilry.

Scores	Robot Blocks	Monster Blocks
Quality*	80	80
Value	100	90
Fit*	80	80
Compatibility	80	80
Minifig*	N/A	N/A
Design	60	50
Instructions	80	80
Total	80	78



NEW!

Fright Nite / BLOCK Tech (unknown) – Halloween Models (Autumn 2014)

Poundland was found to be selling Halloween-themed brick model sets in October 2014, next to vast amounts of unsold Quick Brick bags. This took the form of a blind bag series of 4 models under the name 'Fright Nite'. The manufacturer was marked as BLOCK Tech, with 'Fright Nite' copyrighted. It was noted that the descriptions were in English and Spanish, perhaps a result of Poundland's first mainland European 'D€ALZ' store opening in Torremolinos in the summer. Feeling and viewing the bags gave quite a good idea what was inside, as the models were of different sizes and the colours showed through the bags to some extent. The pumpkin and skull were chosen to best represent the series. An earlier purchase of two BLOCK TECH Christmas sets had shown a great quality 'Gudi' product. Hopes were high that another excellent product was in the offing.

Fail. The contents were not Gudi. The brick mouldings were identical to those on the 'Monster blocks' marketed under the Funtastic brand in the Spring, of which at time of writing the manufacturer has still not been identified. These were OK quality, with odd back-to-front numbers inside some brick studs and seemingly random choices on stud design. Fright Nite pieces were not supplied in plastic bags but were instead heaped in the bag itself along with the instructions. Pumpkin had some interesting green slopes; skull had some white single SNOT 1x1 bricks, a modified 1x2 plate with 45 degree slope, and four clear 1x1 round plates. Assembly of the kits was patchy; the pumpkin was easy enough to build, with the skull not quite as expected from the bag picture and also difficult to see on the instructions how it went together. The skull had the added scariness factor of unidentified organic goo on some bricks, with the subsequent small but plausible possibility of free bubonic plague to liven up the short Halloween season.



Frightening mediocre designs in English or Spanish. Finished pumpkin face just about recognisable. Skull really could have had a bit more work.

The finished models were acceptable enough but didn't exactly feel like good value, even for £1. The pumpkin was very two-dimensional and was a bit fragile; LEGO pumpkin kits over the years have proved rather more imaginative. The skull was three dimensional but didn't really look right. Oddly, the eye sockets were left white: a bit of imagination could have seen some grey bricks used to improve this no end. The ultimate driving factor here was likely to be cost, and perhaps the larger number of bricks in the skull kit reflected cheaper white bricks.



Can't say I'm enthused on getting the full set. Yellow and orange pieces have the strange mirror writing. This piece not available in LEGO.

Judging by the style and type of bricks, it is considered most likely that these are a result of Poundland subcontracting the in-house BLOCK Tech design studio using a supply of Chinese clone pieces sourced from an anonymous factory in Chenghai. The sets are OK for the price, but nothing special, and had not sold out in the local store by the 31st October. One can only wonder whether the Spanish have emptied the shelves of their more expensive €1.49 version. They may gather dust next to Quick Bricks.

Summary: Fright comes from the mysterious organic compounds and bricks sourced from The Mirror Dimension Of Nightmares.

Scores	Pumpkin	Skull
Quality*	80	60
Value	70	70
Fit*	80	80
Compatibility	80	80
Minifig*	N/A	N/A
Design	60	50
Instructions	60	50
Total	75	71



Funtastic / BLOCK Tech (unknown) – Armed Forces (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

Poundland's continuously rotating stock lines produced some new BLOCK Tech blind bag series, found in the local store in Autumn 2014 in front of the myriad rows of still unsold Quick Bricks. These were themed similarly to previous sets: 'Building Site', 'Fire Fighting', and the 'Armed Forces' reviewed here. As with many of the bagged clone LEGO themes, they were sold under the BLOCK Tech logo but commissioned under Poundland's Funtastic name. The bag pictures suggested inflation was starting to creep up on Poundland's ability to sell clone kits for £1, as the models were noticeably smaller than earlier offerings. The three random sets were a surveillance drone, a small 4x4 vehicle with two guns, and a 'tank' which did not look very inspiring.

Past experience with 'Easy To Store' blind bags lead to very careful opening so as not to tear any stickers or instructions inside. As before, the bags were not 'Easy To Store' as they ripped badly and had no re-sealable strip. Each set had loose bricks in a bag, an identical sticker sheet, and instructions printed for the benefit of midget pixies with strong magnifying glasses. All kits had a pleasant surprise – a passable soldier minifig with a helmet and white opaque visor. First up for review was the 'Tank'. On the bag this was shown as a small rubbish design. The contents showed that the supplied model was a different small rubbish design. This rubbishness was compounded by the absence of the single 2x6 plate upon which the entire model was built. Once a spare PeiZhi piece was found (noting that the fit with the unidentified hooky parts was fairly ropey) the model was rapidly assembled in all its rubbishness. The minifig more than made up for this, although his expression suggested he was well away with the fairies, required, of course, to read the tiny, tiny instruction sheet. He was taller than the tank and didn't sensibly fit in it. The army colours were different to all other reviewed clone sets, but the minifig would only need a LEGO head and bespoke helmet to turn him into a fairly good soldier.



No minifigs pictured, but one provided. Tank pieces not all there. Finished tank is not like picture, which would be OK if they weren't both crap.

Next up was the jeep thingy. This turned out to be identical to the bag picture in physical form, if not totally in colour. Both sets showed the correct number of pieces, and the bonus soldier minifig. The design was a bit sparse and ugly, but as a small vehicle it worked and as a bonus the minifig fitted. Another selling point was the inclusion of two guns, probably meant to be M16 rifles. Although a bit cheaply moulded, this made the entire set fantastic value for the arming of any LEGO-themed Counter Zombie Dominance hit squad. Finally came the surveillance drone. BLOCK TECH contents bingo was in overdrive for this and what was in the bag bore little resemblance to the artwork aft of the nose, being smaller, duller, and generally more rubbish. Still, the bonus minifig seemed very happy, and did make the kit vaguely satisfying after the disappointment of a major breach of the "Contents May Vary" gentleman's agreement to which BLOCK TECH seem to have been blackballed from.



Vehicle actually works. Solider guy has opaque visor for those dangerous moments. Drone is far removed from picture. Tiny, tiny instructions.

The Army themed Funtastic kits are always worth a look as they can provide military colours and minifigs that LEGO does not. This makes them far more desirable over the mediocre construction and emergency services sets that have no real selling point other than cheapness. In this case, it appears that PeiZhi have dropped out of favour in place of another as yet unknown supplier. Poundland seem to have no problem selling these kits; the addition of a minifig on the bag would increase their desirability hugely over and above the rather run-of-the-mill models. Maybe green branding is all the customer needs, as these sets rapidly disappeared from the local store. Or maybe not showing the minifig is a way around possible legal action from overworked Danish copyright lawyers noticing a more than passing resemblance to Billund's finest.

Summary: Source of military colours, bonus minifigs better than PeiZhi. Contents lottery likely to piss everyone off. Again.

Scores	Car	Tank	Drone
Quality*	70	50	70
Value	100	80	70
Fit*	70	70	70
Compatibility	70	70	70
Minifig*	80	80	80
Design	60	30	40
Instructions	40	40	40
Total	71	62	66



Funtastic / BLOK Tech (unknown) – Super Cars (Winter 2014)

NEW!

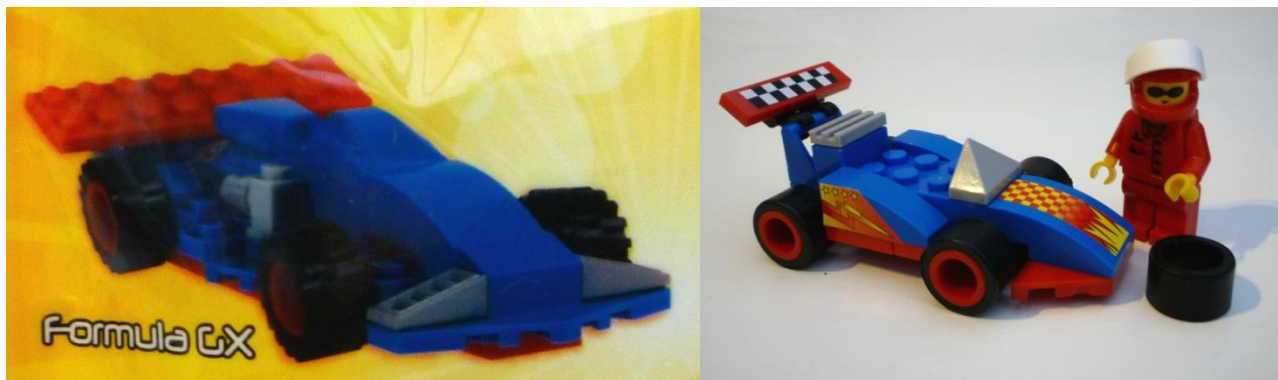
Playing blind bag lottery at Poundland in late 2014 was getting amusing, not only from the cheapness and variety of the kits, but from the fact that the contents had a good chance of bearing no semblance whatsoever to the bag art. Emblazoning “What Will You Get?” on the front was very prophetic – the answer invariably being “Not any of these”. Next up on the shooting-fish-in-a-barrel scathing review list was the ‘Super Cars’ pack, a very optimistically-named set of three racing cars. These were called the “Formula GX”, the “Rally Championship”, and the “Dakar Cabriolet”. Of the three, it appeared the Dakar Cabriolet would be the biggest lie as it seemed too big for the bag and had what appeared to be the IQ Blook minifig that had turned up the year before in a Click ‘n’ Snap set. One was bought to see whether the contents would actually turn out to be bricks of some kind or just some random bits of plastic stuffed in a bag and shipped to Felixstowe to improve China’s carbon footprint.

When opened, it was guessed that the set was probably the Formula GX. Probably, because although the parts made up a blue and red racing car, the finished product was nothing like the picture on the bag. The plastic and parts were remarkably good, with the set OK to put together and producing a competent if somewhat small car. The few supplied stickers did actually fit and were of reasonably quality. The wheels were slicks, and the car proved very effective whizzing around the floor. As a bonus, the supplied bonus red-suited minifig could be used as a driver if his legs were removed, although his white visor was not best suited to avoiding the table legs. And there was a spare tyre supplied, although it is suspected that the next bag probably had only three.



None of these three is inspiring. Inside is... actually a quite good racing car with a minifig. If that was put on the bag, maybe more would sell.

As with the season’s other batches of blind bags, this kit came with an unexpected minifig. The racing driver guy was all but identical to the workman seen before except thankfully in red, and had a helmet with a Joo Janta 200 Super-Chromatic Peril Sensitive² white visor. The minifig wasn’t exactly LEGO quality but was better than PeiZhi and made the entire kit worthwhile.



Apart from being a blue and red racing car, contents are completely different. Why? It’s less crap! Spare tyre as a nod to the Blox tubbyfigs.

Formula GX inspired me again. The photos convey withering irony on their own. Not only was the blind bag actually blind, the supplied Formula GX was far better than the set shown on the front. The entire stock of Super Cars disappeared from the local shop within a week. Poundland must be doing something right.

Summary: Takes ‘Contents May Vary’ to a new extreme.

Scores	Formula GX
Quality*	80
Value	90
Fit*	90
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	70
Design	60
Instructions	50
Total	77

² Apologies to Douglas Adams



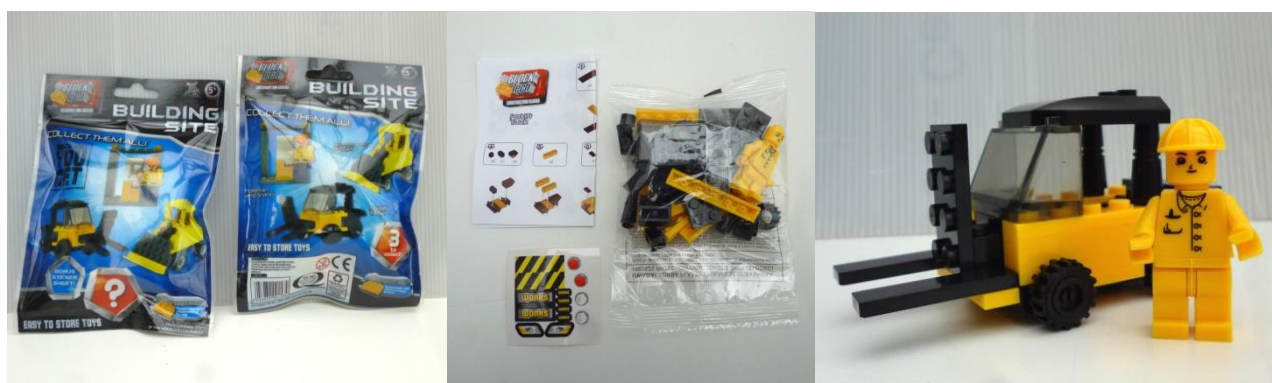
Funtastic / BLOCK Tech (unknown) – Building Site (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

Previous experience with Poundland's Funtastic blind bag range in 2013 had resulted in a number of Weagle sets, almost all of appalling quality. The bags are usually a group of three based around one theme, with designs on the front but no idea what is inside. This is much like the LEGO minifig collectors sets, except they are half the price, include a vehicle of some sort, and are rubbish quality. Although the construction theme had been covered before, the 'Building Site' packs had BLOCK Tech's new legal and hideous tubbyfig on the front. The photos suggested the tubbyfig was only available in one of the bags. Three different sized packs were picked up to try to stand a good chance of getting the Robert Downey Jr lookalike.

Opening the 'Easy To Store' bags showed that two packs contained the forklift and one had the foreman, but as a bonus there was a minifig included in all. The figure was a LEGO clone, fully assembled, and disturbingly all yellow. The instructions were very, very small and needed reading glasses for this fat old AFOL to view properly. The pieces were in a separate clear bag, with many warning notices written all over it with the primary language Polish. The parts were of OK quality, certainly better than most of the cloners reviewed before, with no identifying marks anywhere. Assembly of the rather minimalist forklift was rapid, noting that the movable mechanism promised on the bag picture had been replaced with solid bricks. The standard BLOCK Tech construction stickers were included but the small size of the model did not exactly entice much adornment. The wheels were of a design not seen before, and were an acceptable if slightly wobbly fit on the axle stubs. The minifig fitted in the forklift, but this required (a) considerable force as the legs did fit well on the plate studs, and (b) rebuilding of the forklift after the event as it had a design fault making the back wheelset break off if any pressure was put on the inside. At least it looked OK.

The foreman construction set was really small. And really rubbish.



None of these three is inspiring. Two forklifts found. Minifig already assembled. Finished vehicle vaguely like bag picture. With naked man. Argh!

The bonus minifig was presumably an afterthought, as it would have been a vast improvement on the frankly uninspiring pictures on the front. Or maybe the lack of minifig pictures was insurance against copyright legal action. Whoever had designed the workman had unfortunately decided on yellow clothes, which with the yellow head and hands gave new meaning to the phrase 'Honey – where are my pants³?' Leaving aside the disturbing lack of togs, the figure was initially suspected of being Ausini, due to the same feel and style. Closer comparison with an earlier Ausini minifig however showed differences in the torso, head and leg designs. The head shape was closer to IQ Blook or Hui Mei, but as the quality was far better it was considered unlikely these were the suppliers. As it stands, the manufacturer remains a mystery.



NO! Naked workmen are wrong! Head shape not Ausini. Foreman is not the same and set is very small. Blox builder for comparison. Still rubbish.

BLOCK Tech probably did a deal with the manufacturer after taking the photos for the bags. Poundland use BLOCK Tech and must trust them to deliver. Have they? Mostly.

Summary: Certainly an improvement over earlier Weagle rubbish and includes a compatible naked minifig, but still disappointing.

Scores	Building Site Forklift	Building Site Foreman
Quality*	80	70
Value	100	30
Fit*	70	70
Compatibility	80	70
Minifig*	70	70
Design	70	20
Instructions	60	60
Total	75	60

³ As stated before, the UK meaning of pants in the clothing sense is male underwear. This is childishly funny compared to the boring US meaning of trousers.



Funtastic / BLOCK Tech (unknown) – Fire Fighting (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

Another of Poundland's Funtastic blind bag series found in October 2014 was 'Fire Fighting'. This showed a varied triplet of models: an "Aerial Firefighter" helicopter, a "Fast Response Vehicle", and a large "Fire and Rescue Truck" with shirt-sleeve tubbyfig. This looked like a game-show lottery – the helicopter was OK, the truck looked like the first prize, with the car being the wooden spoon as it resembled some woeful early Best-Lock crap. Three bags were bought from the local store, with one being chosen as it had a large mass of contents to try to guarantee getting the fire truck. It was noted that the set had the phrase "Colour and contents may vary", which, bearing in mind that BLOCK Tech colour and contents tend to vary even without this phrase, suggested disappointment was a very likely outcome.

The three bags were opened in sequence. First up was a helicopter. This turned out to be identical to the pictured "Aerial Firefighter" with the added bonus of a minifig resembling a LEGO figure and not a BLOCK Tech shirt-sleeve tubbyfig. The helicopter pieces were of good quality and unmarked. The model went together quite well, although a magnifying glass was considered appropriate to view the comically small instructions. The helicopter itself was a bit small but was of OK design. Unfortunately the minifig was not a good fit: the rotors were too low down and the result was a pilot whose head was inside the blade rotational area. For most children this scenario would not end well for the pilot. The minifig was thus a welcome addition, but only from a sacrificial viewpoint. Maybe this was considered a major selling point more than a hurried afterthought.



Ooh, hope I get the fire truck! Nope, got the chopper - but it has a free minifig. Not a bad design, but starting the rotors may cause a headache.

The second was the "Fast Response Vehicle", which turned out to be different and thus much better than expected. It had wheel arches and was a bit shorter than the terrible picture shown on the bag. The provided minifig could fit in once the roof was removed. This set was OK, albeit much changed from the photo. It was definitely a variation in contents, but in this case it was a Good Thing.

The third kit was revealed to be a fire truck with LEGO-style minifig. It was not the fire truck as pictured. In fact, it was nothing like the fire truck as pictured, and was actually closer to, and worse than, BLOCK Tech's previous Weagle fire truck reviewed earlier in the year as "pants". This fire truck was minimalist in the extreme, with the mediocre bricks making a trivial and uninspiring vehicle with badly-designed ladder positioning. It was far, far too small to even attempt to accommodate the driver. The ladder on the truck would only lower to about 30 degrees, giving an ungainly stance. Certainly it was far removed from the photo. The colour was same (erm... red...), but the contents varied in almost every way. The "Fire and Response Truck" picture on the bag may well have been a mistake, as it would be impossible to physically fit the parts inside the bag supplied. This particular example of "Colour and content may vary" was so off reality to make it almost comical in its naivety.



I got the truck but feel kind of cheated. At least the minifig is 'normal'. Fast response vehicle is the opposite – not pants, although still too small.

It seems hard to comprehend how a company can be so economical with the truth. The small value of the sets makes it unlikely that anyone would pursue or prosecute BLOCK Tech for such a flagrant misuse of contents. The parts themselves were not top quality but were playable, so it seems odd that BLOCK Tech would deliberately lie about its products. The bigger truck is a £2.99-range BLOCK Tech kit; the smaller kit is currently found in a BLOCK Tech game. Presumably the wrong kit got printed on the bag, but even if a genuine mistake it hasn't exactly done BLOCK Tech or Funtastic's reputations any good. Again.

Summary: Exactly what long term benefit does lying about contents actually bring? Come on chaps, someone should try harder.

Scores	Helicopter	Fire Truck	Fast Response Vehicle
Quality*	70	70	70
Value	90	40	80
Fit*	70	70	80
Compatibility	80	80	80
Minifig*	70	70	70
Design	60	40	70
Instructions	60	60	60
Total	71	65	73



Blox (Loongon [probably]) – Ice Cream Van (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

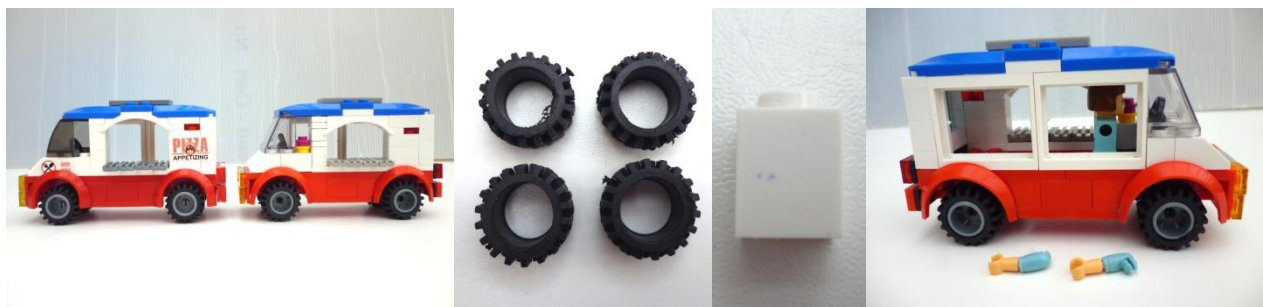
Wilko recently refreshed their Blox range with the help of BLOCK Tech, throwing out the abysmal old Best-Lock rubbish and replacing it with familiar clone kits with repugnant tubbyfigs. The first was reviewed in early 2014. September saw the local Wilko store stock lots more sets at a discount. ‘Summer Treat Ice Cream Van’ appeared to be another version of the BLOCK Tech rebranded Ausini ice cream van, with the two hideous Ausini minifigs replaced by two hideous BLOCK TECH tubbyfigs. It was bought for a very reasonable £2. Opening the box showed the standard slightly screwed-up Blox instructions along with two bags of parts and the familiar BLOCK TECH sticker sheet which didn’t match the Ausini version.

Closer inspection of the set revealed that it was different to the ice cream van reviewed before. The bricks and plates were remarkably good quality, with excellent feel and grab. The windscreen was supplied in its own bag; the tyres were shite quality; the pearl grey parts were old light grey; and there were subtle changes in the mouldings. The construction of the van had altered slightly as the wheelarches and window arch were of a different design to the Ausini versions. The 1x1 plates had a lip underneath, and the underside of plates, bricks and roofing parts were also not the same as Ausini. The minifig hands could not hold the 1x1 round plate ‘ice creams’, so the instructions had them plonked on the van driver’s window.



Summer treat looks familiar. Where are my...? All because the zombie is too big. Fashion and Paris have good skin colour but are still hideous.

The two female tubbyfigs were supplied unmade and only required reasonable force to make their ugly selves. The tubbyfig design deserved some analysis. It was plausible that some pissed-off Chinese guy drew out some decadent Westerner minifigs for a bet or revenge, and some idiot middle manager unwittingly accepted them. The heads had noses, chins and ears, which (a) made the hair monumentally difficult to put on and impossible to take off without metal pliers, and (b) gave the figures the look of angry bee-chewing bouncers. The torsos were quite wide at the top and had what was best described as a spare tyre around the waist, giving the unfortunate girls a very dumpy look indeed. The shirt-sleeve arms-hands combination only added to the look of furious gangster’s wives, and made them too wide to fit in vehicles. The legs were OK quality, with indents where the figures had presumably been kneecapped, but proved almost impossible to sit down on studs. The only redeeming feature of the tubbyfigs was the skin colour, which had actually been chosen for the Western market and was thus very un-zombie. Although tolerably good quality, the figures were of such mirror-shattering ugliness that it was hard to see how anyone seriously signed off the design without a sense of humour. I certainly found them hugely amusing, as everything about them was bad.



Not Ausini (left), but a copy (right). Terrible quality tyres, and ‘something’ on a brick. Again. Loss of other limbs required to fit in driving seat.

It was apparent that Blox had directly copied the Ausini van and sourced parts from another manufacturer, along with the newly-designed ‘legal’ tubbyfigs. As the sticker sheet was the same as the BLOCK Tech sheet and not the Ausini sheet (which, oddly, had been used for the promotional photos on the front of the Blox box) suspicion immediately lay with BLOCK Tech. The most likely scenario was that Blox sourced from BLOCK Tech, who, on reviewing the legality of clone minifigs and the cost of sourcing from many factories, had got a single manufacturer to remake all their best-selling kits. As seen with The Works-supplied BLOCK Tech kit and the newer Best-Lock sets, Loongon seemed to be the most likely supplier, although if true it must have changed some of its mouldings. This was, of course, both amusing and ironic: European importers forcing the Chinese cloners to clone each other to supply sets. In effect, the only legal parts of this kit are the tubbyfigs. Which are crap.

Summary: Surprisingly good quality bricks and plates, mostly not diseased, rubbish tyres, unbelievably ugly tubbyfigs.

Scores	Ice Cream Van
Quality*	70
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	20
Design	60
Instructions	80
Total	70



Blox (Loongon [probably]) – High Speed Tanker (Winter 2014)

NEW!

Much sniggering accompanied one small Christmas present for which I had to feign some form of thanks. This Blox kit had been reduced for ages at £2 but had not instilled any purchase desire. High Speed Tanker was a BLOCK TECH direct copy of the PeiZhi 0296 set, with similar but not identical stickers and colour changes for the front mudguard and exhaust stacks. PeiZhi market a range of similar-sized vehicles which together would probably make a reasonable playset. BLOCK TECH and Blox appear to only market this one. The combination of 'High Speed' and 'Hot' also might not seem an ideal combination with a tanker, but there was no indication it was for fuel and instead could be for slurry. The presence of the four tool chests and the exact significance of 'High King' were not investigated further.

Contents revealed a bag of parts and a well sized instruction sheet. Construction proceeded rapidly with only two problems: firstly, a 1x2 panel was missing from the trailer, and secondly the tanker was fitted by simply placing it on top of the trailer. This meant that even with a full parts count it would be all but impossible to wedge the tanker unit successfully to the rest of the kit. Bostic's finest blue sticky stuff was yet again employed to fix this. The tanker itself showed up the terrible fit of the parts, and application of the three-piece stickers helped considerably to hold everything together. It was noted that the stickers were of very good quality and fit. They appeared slightly different to the PeiZhi version. The tyres were made of acceptable rubber, but moulding quality was terrible with significant flash evident.



Blox version of BLOCK TECH copy of PeiZhi set 0296. No tubbyfigs a huge advantage. Missing part and mediocre fit not a huge advantage.

The finished model was OK for £2 once fixed with Blu-Tack, with reasonable proportions and a good size. Astoundingly the BLOCK TECH kit had an RRP of £7, and even at the (permanently) discounted rate of £3.50 seemed poor value. The kit also stands alone in the Wilko (and BLOCK TECH) range, and it is odd that more vehicles have not been added as a collection would surely add to the kit's appeal. Careful examination of the parts suggests the manufacturer is not PeiZhi and seems similar to the other new BLOCK TECH kits (guessed to be Loongon), although it possible that PeiZhi could have changed their moulding equipment. Whichever company it is, they still have some way to go judging by the poor fit of the tanker.



Familiar Blu-Tack application to solve design mistake. Fit is ropery at best. Truck unit is a good design. Sticker quality great. Tyre quality shite.

Yet again BLOCK TECH have used an existing design and re-engineered it, probably using a different manufacturer. It's not clear how copyright works in this case – maybe PeiZhi are the maker, or maybe they have been faced with some intellectual homage just as our favourite Danish company. Am I bovvered? No...

Summary: Tools required: file, craft knife, sticky goo, another missive to the Wilko customer complaints department. Reasonable quality bricks and plates, not diseased, fully legal. A bit disappointing, but the best Blox kit out there.

Scores	High Speed Tanker
Quality*	60
Value	80
Fit*	70
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	N/A
Design	70
Instructions	90
Total	76



Blox (Loongon [probably]) – Home Sweet Home (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

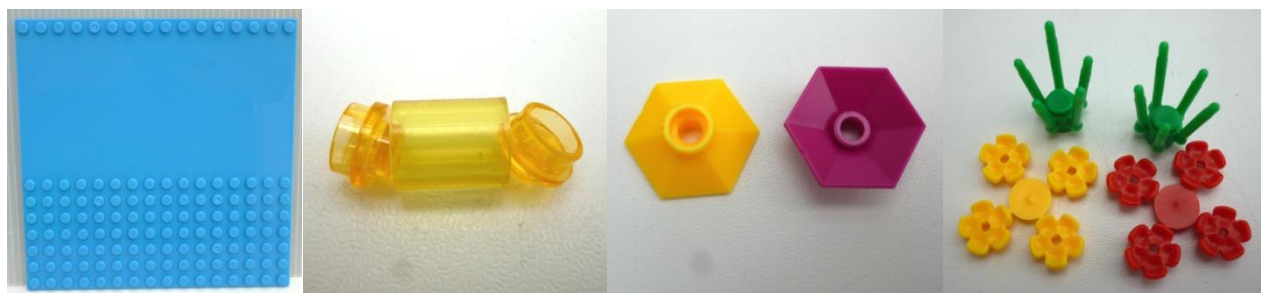
This Blox kit was bought purely on impulse from the picture on the front - it looked absolutely terrible. 'Home Sweet Home' had more than a hint of COGO, with garish colours, bizarrely-worded stickers, and poor design. The butt-ugly tubbyfigs served to significantly enhance the already substantial aura of awfulness. Internet searching failed to find a set like this one, so it was not known which manufacturer originally made it, or even if it was a Blox (or more likely BLOCK Tech) design. And, to be fair, £4 seemed quite good value.

Contents this time consisted of fairly flat instructions but a bent sticker sheet. Two bags held the pieces, with the minifigs in a separate bag. Building the set was surprisingly quite enjoyable, as the parts fitted together well and the instructions gave sensible steps. The completed house was a bit small but certainly OK for the outlay. Aesthetics had unfortunately completely bypassed the car design. The stickers were an amazingly good fit, although some edges began to self-unpeel soon after being applied; the 'beautiful' sticker for the car obviously had taste. The horrid obnoxious tubbyfigs had surfer liveried torsos for some unknown reason. The expressions were not angry; they were more of an evil smirk that looked as if they'd just successfully mugged a group of nuns, straight after putting tripwires outside a fracture clinic and setting off the fire alarm.



Blox make a villa in Jaywick. Contents include bent sticker sheet. Finished product with hateful, hideous, fat, smirking, repulsive figures. Not nice.

There were some interesting parts. The 16x16 plate had half a smooth top for a roadway, although quite who decided it should be light blue as opposed to green or grey is a mystery. There were some rather natty hexagonal 2x2 radar dishes, and an open-ended 1x1 cylinder to make some SNOT lanterns. The 5-pronged flower stalks looked like Ausini or COGO examples; unfortunately they more closely matched the COGO versions which were rubbish quality, and the flowers didn't fit properly and fell off if nudged by anything stronger than a gnat's fart.



16x16 baseplate in medium blue; useful SNOT cylinder; hexagonal radar dishes; rubbish 5-pronged flowers stalks and flowers which don't fit well.

Due to certain parallels with the Loongon manufactured COGO Princess Palace (reviewed earlier in the year and miraculously not thrown away), the two were compared to see if Loongon made both. There were many similarities but some differences in the parts, with the arches and seat being a slightly different mould, and the colours not matching. The plastic was better quality, so it is possible that Loongon have refreshed their manufacturing equipment. However, it cannot be 100% proven that they are actually making this stuff, as another company might be copying *them*. Which would be amusing.

Was the set any good? Well, the brick quality was certainly OK, and although there were a few sprue marks the parts fitted fine. The choice of colours was, um, strong, but not excessively awful if you're into that sort of thing. The car looked bland and the door lantern and flowers were too loose. Buying two and making a bigger house would probably result in a fairly decent villa. But of course the tubbyfigs were terrible, so no, not really.

Summary: Surprisingly good quality bricks and plates, not diseased, probably fully legal, garish colours, but really really ugly tubbyfigs totally destroying any desirability.

Scores	Home Sweet Home
Quality*	70
Value	100
Fit*	90
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	20
Design	60
Instructions	80
Total	70



Blox (Loongon [probably]) – Mission Helicopter (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

Superficially the Wilko Blox mission helicopter appeared to be a copy of the PeiZhi attack helicopter marketed previously by Poundland under the Funtastic name and sourced from BLOCK Tech. The Blox set was on sale for £1, which although the same price as the PeiZhi kit was worse value as it was shown to have a non-military tubbyfig. The rear of the box proudly stated it was 'Awesome', which produced a wry smile at the bad timing and fully deserved negative spin of the word after The LEGO Movie. So I won't mention it in this review... well, not very often.

Extraction of the awesome contents showed some awesome dark olive green parts, the awesome but strange BLOCK Tech sticker sheet with standard awesome minifig torso stickers, and an awesome new neatly folded instruction sheet. The helicopter went together much as the PeiZhi original: not very well, as the not awesome design meant parts kept falling off. The awesome tail boom, attached under a 1x2 slope in the PeiZhi version, was now placed on top making the whole awesome thing very prone to coming off; this would have awesomely happened even it had been proper LEGO and not some half-arsed distinctly un-awesome clone. The awesome undercarriage was also not very well attached. This set was missing one of the awesome control levers, which didn't say much about quality control. Also, the clear windscreen present in the original PeiZhi design had been recast in solid olive green, giving the pilot no awesome method of seeing out unless he stuck his awesome head out of the awesome side. The green colour was a slightly lighter hue from Sluban military green and nothing like the PeiZhi colour. The tail rotor attachment had been awesomely changed from the PeiZhi original, as had the awesome side gun which didn't fit very awesomely well.



Not sure what mission this fulfils. Weird BLOCK Tech stickers included which don't fit. Finished 'copter very flimsy and has opaque windscreen.

The awesome pilot tubbyfig had been supplied annoyingly unmade, with the instructions showing the poor guy even more ugly than his actual already hideous self. When assembled he was of reasonable but not awesome quality, and came with a rubbery helmet. This material allowed the helmet to bend around the ears on the head (awesome), but tended to make the visor fall off (not awesome). The torso logo seemed to be copied from the LEGO Dino-hunter theme. The poor leg-stud fit meant that trying to put the pilot in the helicopter typically ended with a lot of ex-helicopter parts and a pilot not quite attached to a green plate. Awesome. Or not.



Real pilot less ugly than instructions. Some sort of dinosaur hunting Robert Downey Jr vibe going on here. Blox on left, PeiZhi helicopter on right.

Blox and BLOCK Tech seem to have produced a real clanger⁴. The helicopter kit is a blatant copy of a PeiZhi design where changes have made it worse, the parts are poorer quality, and the tubbyfig is ugly. The only real selling points of the original kit were the green pieces and the military figure. With this kit, the colours are different and the tubbyfig is not even military. I suppose it's not bad for £1. Well, OK, it is bad.

Summary: Awesome my arse.

Scores	Mission Helicopter
Quality*	60
Value	90
Fit*	70
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	20
Design	50
Instructions	70
Total	57

⁴ As in 'epic fail', not small pink knitted Moon-based space-mouse. Pity.



Blox (Loongon [possibly]) – 5 Individual Figures (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

Some parts of aesthetics can be ascribed to mathematical formula or connected to primal human survival instincts. Others cannot be explained except down to personal prejudice. For example, I do not know why there are brown cars, or understand the social context that makes FABULAND not scary. I certainly couldn't see a plausible reason for the following sets. But I bought them anyway. Why? Zombie packs for £1.25 were way too good to miss. No guessing on what would be in the box, no wondering what would be missing, no immensely strong hands required for assembly. Awfulness guaranteed.

"5 Individual figures" were Blox tubbyfig packs that, presumably, Wilko assumed would allow any budding brick builder to populate their creations with figures. Three different versions were found in store. The marketing department had decided to make the packs with clear plastic so that all 5 figures could be seen before purchase. You have to feel sorry for them when it became apparent how hideous the design of the figures actually was. Suffice to say, since appearing in the local store they hadn't exactly been whizzing off the shelves, so it's probably not just me that recoiled in horror. At least they came assembled.

All the figures had flesh colours that were not repulsive to Europeans, which at least was a positive point. Set one had a fireman, racing driver, alien, pilot and cowboy. The next set had a builder, two racing drivers, military guy, and policeman. These figures were ugly, but tolerable enough. The third set, based around a beach theme, was something else. The white girl was a 'copy' of the appalling Weagle female figure seen in various BLOCK Tech kits, and was of course a vast improvement. The male surfer dude was probably the least weird, with the tummy button print on his spare tyre a highly amusing touch, although probably not intentionally so. The female sunbather had an equally fat waist – and wide shoulders – and the same evil smirk that suggested kicking sandcastles over was a mild distraction of hers between biting the heads off seagulls and swearing randomly at bins. The last two tubbyfigs were identical to the pair found in the Blox set 'Home Sweet Home', except that they had torso prints that were badly blurred, and the male guy had somehow lost his trousers which did seem a tad worrying. All were utterly loathsome.



5 bloated tubbyfigs in a box, all for 25p each. Somehow I am not enthused. Skin colour is OK. Quality is OK. Everything else is not OK.

Strangely, the utter crapness made the sets vaguely desirable. The beach-themed bunch of oddballs in particular could provide a vast array of storylines and scenarios for any child who recognised them for what they were. Yes, of course they didn't look like real LEGO minifigs. Yes, they looked as if they could march through the centre of the East End on a Saturday night spilling pints and insulting the locals with impunity. Yes, they couldn't grip things very well and the forearm connection was poor. But this variety in an otherwise perfect world gave a reality that was refreshingly different and could represent the more seedy sides of society. And they were very cheap.



Stark in a thong. Tubbyfigs work if taken as a joke. Chubby beach dudes need more exercise. Dire? Yes. Then again, let's compare with Weagle...

These sets scored quite badly, but was this a disappointment? No. The tubbyfigs were of a decent enough quality; they had variety, the skin colour was good, and they looked really weird. The aesthetics were so awful that they came full circle and were actually desirable. Maybe it is pathological irony, blind pity, or a basic human instinct to care for the needy, but I will probably buy more of these. Unfortunately for Wilko, I appear to be the only person in the entire country willing to do so.

Summary: Really, really shite. Perfect for recreating those alcohol-fuelled, nicotine stained summer evening punch-ups at the seaside. More please.

Scores	5 Individual Figures
Quality*	N/A
Value	N/A
Fit*	N/A
Compatibility	N/A
Minifig*	20
Design	N/A
Instructions	N/A
Total	20



Character Building – Sports Stars Football Spot Kick Set (Summer 2014)

NEW!

Character Building is a UK-based toy company. Part of the range consists of LEGO clone sets, and these are used in various licenced themes such as UK Armed Forces, Doctor Who, Scooby Doo, and Sports Stars Football covering some UK Premier League football⁵ teams. The minifigs are of a unique design, with inverse-tapering legs, thin hips, less bent arms and sculpted heads. The CB themed figures are mostly sold in blind bag series, intended to be part of the pocket-money purchases typical of the LEGO collectable minifig series. The CB Sports Stars Football theme started in 2012 and used Liverpool, Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea team members, although more are now available at time of writing. There are also pitch and stadium kits, along with accessories. This example of the Spot Kick Set was found in reasonably good used condition at a car boot sale for £1, with the only issue being that neither of the two players was a goalkeeper (Andy Carroll will pretend to be Roy Carroll for the duration of this review). As new, the kit had a standard price of £10, although most current retailers have tended to discount this substantially.

The UK Armed Forces sets reviewed previously were made by Cobi. However, this set had no Cobi markings at all and instead had the CB logo on the underside of the parts – not to be confused with Click Brick who have CB written on the studs. The mouldings looked vaguely similar to the ‘new’ Best-Lock pieces but were unlikely to be sourced directly from Loongon. Interestingly, the appearance of the CB logo (and postcode) on the underside of the parts showed some investment in CB-specific moulds. Quality was quite good, with LEGO-class grab. The Spot Kick Set had half a pitch which was made of 12 sections that were densely packed in the box. There were also 4 green 2x2 plates, a goal, a ball, two players, a stand for the striker, and a stand with a stick for the keeper. The goal was made of a more pliable plastic. The football was a very good design as it was a multi-faceted shape as opposed to a sphere, which meant that unlike the LEGO football of some years back it would stay in one place and not roll around too easily. The non-colour line-drawn instructions were more geared to how to play the game than on making it, and the assembly steps were pictured at a far shallower angle than most LEGO and clone kits.



It's table-top football with bricks. Reality is a little less whoosh, and you'll need a friend and a big run-off area. Sagna goes for 4 points.

The CB minifigs found in the box were Andy Carroll of Liverpool and Bacary Sagna of Arsenal. The moulded heads gave some level of effort to depict the players, showing Carroll's ponytail and Sagna's (then) blonde hair. The CB minifigs were found to be able to have some parts swapped with genuine LEGO: the heads, arms and hands were all interchangeable, although the fit was not perfect. The set was quite good to play with after some practice, although of course a friend (or enemy) would be needed to defend with a moving goalkeeper.



Hair is OK. Comparison of Character Building soldier, footballer, and LEGO minifig. No name on studs, but CB logo (and postcode) underneath.

The Spot Kick Set was not difficult or time-consuming to assemble, and its intended purpose appeared to be to provide a table-top flick football playing experience more than a construction challenge. The quality of the parts was good enough to work as designed, and modifications to the stadium sets, for example, could use genuine LEGO with no major problems. The minifigs themselves were different to LEGO, but worked as intended and had detailed heads.

Summary: A good kit for fans of table-top flick football, but not really challenging enough for anyone else.

Scores	Spot Kick Set
Quality*	80
Value	70
Fit*	80
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	50
Design	80
Instructions	50
Total	71

⁵ As in soccer. That game the US are better at than us.



Click Brick (Star Diamond) – Grader (Summer 2014)

NEW!

UK-based Click Brick use Chinese-sourced bricks for their own sets, and recently changed their kit line-up and supplier. Previous reviews commented that the older sets used very high quality bricks made by Star Diamond, but had rather mediocre designs. The newer kits still have high quality bricks (from an unknown supplier) and a new 'gorillafig', different to a LEGO minifig (i.e. legal) and closely resembling the Mega Bloks 'Block Squad'. An internet search revealed that some older sets were being sold off cheaply, and as no large competent Click Brick kits had been reviewed this seemed a good opportunity. Grader dutifully arrived – in a dented box – but otherwise intact.

The pieces were supplied in 4 bags, with an instruction booklet and stickers. All bags had to be opened together, including the annoyingly unmade minifig. The pieces were Star Diamond and of a quality the same as Lego. The instructions were very well presented and easy to follow with a sensible number of pieces to add per step (unlike modern LEGO instructions, which seem to be sponsored by The Massive Glossy Paper Booklet Company). The grader itself was a good design, and unlike Star Diamond kits the roof could be taken off easily to fit in the driver. The side clips were marginally stiffer than the LEGO equivalents giving a stronger grab on the rear-view mirrors which was a bonus. Building the model was enjoyable. There were no spare pieces supplied. Searching catalogues showed there were no equivalent Star Diamond kits, so Grader was assumed to be a unique Click Brick design, which in this case was very good – albeit of a decidedly specialised subject.



Grader construction kit – a bit specialised but competent. Pieces in bags with annoyingly unmade minifig which has orange arms, not white.

The minifig was annoyingly unassembled but went together with little trouble. Figure quality was excellent, and featured Star Diamond's 'keen' expression. As with all Star Diamond figures, it was extremely hard to tell the difference between it and a genuine LEGO minifig when assembled, although the torso-leg attachment was different inside. The box art showed the minifig with white arms; the guy supplied had orange arms. Also, one mirror was missing off the photo on the box, although this may have been removed to show the figure inside the vehicle.



Finished Grader in all its glory. Committed minifig likes to smooth all day. Great quality figure, probably ripe for legal action. Wheels are superb.

Most of the Click Brick set designs seen look to be fairly mediocre, but it must be said that in this case Grader is very good. There is nothing really that would distinguish it from a LEGO kit, although the studs have 'Star' written on them and the dark bluish grey is a slightly different hue to the LEGO equivalent. Quality is first rate, and the marginally tighter 'grab' actually works better for the side mirrors. If you're looking for a construction grader – and you never know, it could happen – get this set. Oh, and you'd better hurry, as it's now old stock.

Summary: I can't really fault this kit at all over genuine LEGO, so it is the first of the cloners to score 100%.

Well done Click Brick... except you no longer make it.

Scores	Grader
Quality*	100
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	100
Design	100
Instructions	100
Total	100



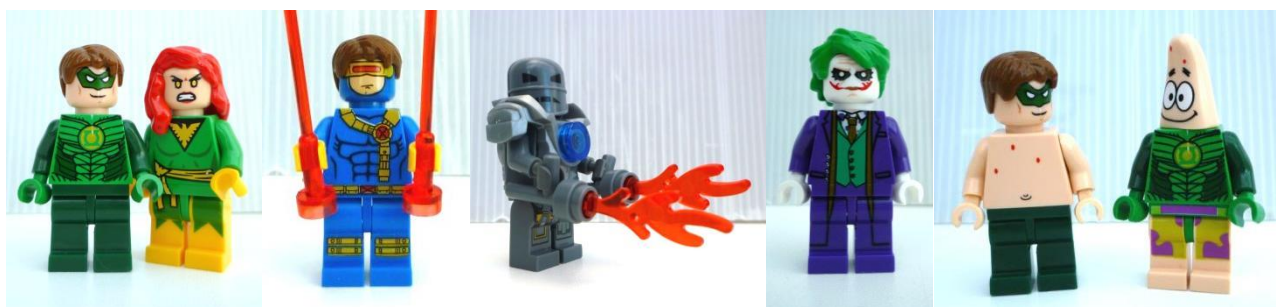
Decool – Superhero Minifigs (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

BFC Award!

One area where the Chinese cloners work overtime is to produce hooky minifig sets. The most proficient companies include Bozhi, Dargo, Decool, IQ Blocks, LELE, SY, and Zhiao. These tend to be themed around LEGO franchises, although they occasionally move outside these. Examples include Star Wars, Chima, Friends, Ninjago, and even The LEGO Movie. The most popular (and heavily copyrighted) themes are Star Wars, and the Marvel and DC Superhero ranges. LEGO presumably pay through the nose to get the rights to manufacture these sets. The Chinese cloners do not, but as they are not officially exported seem immune to prosecution - and any sense of moral decency - and churn them out in sets at an alarming rate. These are usually aimed at the Chinese and East Asian markets, but can be sourced in the UK either through direct mailing from overseas or through companies that import in bulk. It seems commercial agreements usually do not allow LEGO to sell Star Wars and Superhero minifigs separately, but without this restriction the Chinese cloners tend to market their sets in groups of 6 or 8. Decool in particular produce minifigs which LEGO do not make: examples include Avengers characters such as The Fantastic Four, and various Iron Man versions.

Several Decool figures were sourced: Green Lantern; Phoenix; Cyclops; Black Widow; Joker; Iron Man Mk1; Wolverine in blue; and The Fantastic Four. Green Lantern and Jean Grey Phoenix were, at time of writing⁶, only issued by LEGO in 2011 and 2012 to Comic-Con events and super-rare. These two Decool examples can however be found for £2-3 each in the UK, as opposed to £100 for the real LEGO version.



Most Decool superheroes have slight printing issues, but Iron Man Mk1 and Joker perfect. Minifigs almost completely compatible with LEGO.

The quality of the Decool minifigs was found to be much higher than most of the reviewed cloners, second only to Star Diamond. The plastic looked, sounded and felt identical to LEGO ABS. Arm fit and especially leg fit verged on the loose, a bit like well-used LEGO, with the newest figures having better drag. Hand shanks were not compatible. Decool leg assemblies had blades instead of lugs, which although looking very different to genuine LEGO were completely compatible. The printing on the torsos was surprisingly good, although about 80% had a least one slight error (being very picky, comparison showed that about 30% of LEGO minifigs had similar printing errors). The heads were also quite good, with most having double expressions back and front. Hairpieces and handheld implements were essentially the same as LEGO, but slightly less well defined. Some of the legs had small remnants of the injection moulding sprue marks. The supplied black stands were, however, made of terrible quality plastic.



Fantastic 4 are quite good and not in real LEGO as yet. Wolverine not pants, unlike SY. Decool use a different hip-torso join, but it works fine.

The Decool figures were surprisingly good, with acceptable printing and made of good plastic. The older types seem to suffer from loose legs, with the newer designs having an acceptable stiffness. The production of characters unobtainable in real LEGO shows some nods towards the export market and an ability to create new moulds and prints where needed. Unfortunately, this does not make up for the shame of illegal copying.

Summary: Not quite LEGO quality, but availability of rare and unique figures with cheap price is appealing. Copyrighting blatantly ignored.

Scores	Black Widow	Wolverine	Iron Man Mk1	Phoenix	Cyclops	Joker	Fantastic Four	Green Lantern
Quality*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Value	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fit*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compatibility	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minifig*	90	95	95	90	95	100	95	90
Design	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Instructions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	0**	0**	0**	0**	0**	0**	0**	0**

** all points deducted for multiple flagrant copyright breaches.

⁶ Green Lantern was released by LEGO in his own set in 2015 just as this version of Communist LEGO was finished.



Decool – More Superhero and Dragon Ball Z Minifigs (Winter 2014)

A second batch of Decool minifigs was ordered, this time direct from China. Three groups were picked: a set of nine Superheroes, two oversized figures, and a set of six Manga minifigs. These all arrived in one package, with each figure in a separate bag. Including postage, each minifig worked out to be about 80p, with the larger figures about £2 each, remarkably good value when compared to even second-hand LEGO prices.

First up was a group of Superheroes: Spiderman, Batman, Iron Man, Superman, General Zod, Thor, Hawkeye, Hulk, and Captain America. These were mainly fully assembled in their separate bags, with stand included. Generally the printing quality was excellent, with only slight wonkiness noticeable. Batman had a bad mark on the rear right leg looking like an acid attack, although his head and mask seemed superior to LEGO. Thor and Superman had red capes which seemed a bit old and stained; it was not obvious whether this was a desired effect or not, but it actually enhanced the figures' look. What was really annoying was Captain America's shield, which had a big printing error. Arse.



Decool superhero clones generally OK quality, but Captain America's shield is shite. Big Hulk is a very angry copy; big Thing new. And very angry.

The large Hulk and Thing figures arrived unassembled in bags. Angry Big Hulk was a copy of the dark tan-trousered version from LEGO set 6868; it was faultless and only 10% of the going price for LEGO. He was supplied with a spanner, which did look a bit small in his big angry hand. I suppose I get cross with car maintenance too. Angry Big Thing is not made by LEGO and as far as is known does not feature in any LEGO media, so Decool seem to have designed and made him from new (unless a LEGO prototype went "missing"). Big Thing used the Big Hulk mould as a starting point, etched more to give a cracked texture. As with Big Bruce Banner, Big Ben Grimm had no faults. He didn't have a spanner as he is a competent mechanic, and instead was supplied with a big rock and a 1x4 rod so he could hold it. Both Big Hulk and Big Thing were very, very angry, but in this case it was not because they were bad quality like Best-Lock firemen. They were just very, very angry.



Dragon Ball Z set of six breaking Toriyama's copyright and LEGO's. Quality quite good, but Roshi's beard broke on assembly. Faces excellent.

The final set of minifigs was based on the hugely successful Japanese Dragon Ball Z anime Manga series by Akira Toriyama. The central character Goku was based on the monkey Sun Wukong from the 16th century Chinese story 'Journey to the West', so it could be argued that Decool has some moral excuse copying them. The set of six consisted of Goku, Krillin, Vegeta, Yamcha, Master Roshi, and Gohan. LEGO have produced Manga-like characters in Exo-Force, but not any franchises, and the Decool faces and hairpieces were new. As with the Superhero figures, the minifigs were generally of very good quality, with only a little evidence of wonky printing. The Dragon Ball Z team had tight legs and arms, but Roshi's beard broke on assembly which was annoying. Krillin and Roshi had short legs; Decool's version had stud recesses in the rear which made them better than the LEGO versions which don't. Various weapons were supplied, all copies of LEGO items and only vaguely related to the actual characters. As a set this was quite good, although several other Dragon Ball Z characters were left out and presumably might appear in the future. Shenlong, who is summoned by the Balls, is a Chinese mythological dragon spirit of storms and rain, so seems ideal for us British. Perhaps he'll get made later too. Dragon Ball Z is very popular and made by many of the minifig cloners.

Summary: Nearly LEGO quality, cheap prices, unique figures. Worth getting - with a morality bypass operation.

Scores	Batch 2: 9 Superheroes	Big Hulk	Big Thing	Dragon Ball Z
Quality*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Value	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fit*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compatibility	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minifig*	90	100	100	90
Design	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Instructions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	0**	0**	0**	0**

** all points deducted for multiple flagrant copyright breaches.



Donglin – Riddle Toy Bricks (Winter 2014)

NEW!

Normally on a busy Sunday car-booting I would never consider picking up second-rate incompatible LEGO clones, partially because there are so many and they wouldn't add much to the knowledge database, but mostly because I really couldn't be arsed to carry them home. But something about Riddle Toy Bricks in December caught my eye. Diehard readers of Communist LEGO Summer 2014 may remember the atrocious Cack Award-winning Poundland Quick Brick bags, with two types of a small number of incompatible bricks. This creation by Donglin (and imported by PMS International) appeared identical to one of the Quick Brick designs. The box had been opened and half-folded up to reseal it. A well-rehearsed air of nonchalance managed to get the entire set for 50p, although to be honest the trader probably got the better end of the deal.

The pink and purple Riddle box set no DL6207 had a number of Chinglish notices on it, with a smugly happy Western girl peering out from behind a number of models. Apparently it was unsuitable for children under 3 years due to small parts, although this warning was probably aimed at the ogre-sized end of the demographic as I'd be mightily scared to meet a 2-year old who could swallow any piece inside this set. The word 'Fashionable' had been plastered all over the box, plausibly to either help increase sales in countries where English is a second language by alluding it was 'cool', or perhaps just by stating that the bricks could be fashioned. Three circles explained why this brick-based toy would be a good idea for children - a common addition in the rapidly expanding Chinese toy market. The orange circle stated "The touch and the hand eyes moderate the ability"; pink circle explained "Logic thinking ability"; and green circle finished with "Creation imagination dint", perhaps hinting at a worryingly kinetic method of instilling resourcefulness more than anything else. The irony of shouting the comment "SPECIFICATIONS COLOURS AND CONTENTS MAY VARY FROM ILLUSTRATIONS" before stating "First Grade Product" on the front of the box was probably completely lost on the manufacturer. At least "COLOURS" was spelt as The Queen would approve. Take note, Mega Bloks.



Pink Riddle. "First grade product" under "Colour and Contents May Vary" ironic. Random use of 'Fashionable'. Inside are varied colours, but a lot.

Although second-hand, the contents still had 151 pieces, with the few missing probably not making it back into the box before transportation to Boot Sale land. The colours did indeed vary, being more pastel shaded than shown on the box, but the contents appeared almost identical meaning that the models shown could be attempted. The bricks themselves were essentially identical to the Quick Brick parts – not compatible with any make in the known universe and sized halfway between DUPLO and LEGO. This made it utterly useless with LEGO or all other clones. The plastic was soft and bendable, with some variation in colour shade between bricks and just about adequate grab.



Building with creation imagination dint produced a train, plane, dinosaur, crappy windmill and bird thing. Don't try to play with them, though.

On its own the set was vaguely OK, and would probably give any interested child some hours of building and possibly even fun. Unlike many clone brick sets, the design of the models on the front was reasonably good and varied. Experimentation with building showed that they were mostly possible with the supplied bricks, noting of course that the colours were very different and some slopes were missing. The windmill needed Blu-tack to attach the static sail assembly, which was a bit of a cheat. Maybe the Chinese state version has the rotatable part to gain an edge on the export to the evil Americans and their cowardly Western lackeys... but I doubt it.

Summary: Not a patch on LEGO, completely incompatible with anything else in the entire world except Quick Bricks. Unlike Quick Bricks, an OK standalone set.

Scores	Riddle Toy Bricks
Quality*	40
Value	100
Fit*	50
Compatibility	0
Minifig*	N/A
Design	80
Instructions	N/A
Total	50



BLOCK TECH (Gudi) – Santa Claus and Snowman (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

The local Poundland was found stocking some new BLOCK TECH seasonal kits next to thousands of unsold Quick Bricks bags. As is the norm in retail Britain, the Christmas kits had come out in October. There were two small re-sealable bags, branded with BLOCK TECH's new shouty logo. The designs looked relatively OK, so both were bought for the massive outlay of £1 each. I was not excessively surprised by the price at the till.

The two bags showed no Poundland branding, and had only BLOCK TECH credentials. There was no indication of manufacturer. The snowman bag was misshapen at the bottom due to a machine sealing error, although nothing had fallen out. Extraction of the parts and instructions from the bags was calamity free, as BLOCK TECH seem to have learned from their earlier packaging mishaps. The instructions were clear and easy to follow with a sensible number of parts to add for each step, and with greyed out parts already added. Santa had some interesting flesh-coloured parts, such as headlight bricks and a turntable. The snowman had a very dark brown 1x8 plate for his wooden arms. The parts had 'Gudi' on the studs and were almost identical in quality to LEGO. There was a very marginal stronger grab, and one of Santa's 1x2 plates was a slightly different red. Both went together trouble-free and were basically indistinguishable from similar LEGO sets.



New BLOCK Tech logo in time for Christmas. Bags ripped open without damaging contents. Slightly odd but competent Santa and snowman.

A Gudi is an ancient Chinese bone flute first used 8000 years ago, although the cultural significance when applied to naming a LEGO clone is rather hard to nail down. Searching for the Gudi name showed that it is marketed as a brand by the Xin Le Xin company. Gudi itself appears to be a newcomer to the hooky brick stage, with very few reviews on the internet. Most Gudi kits seem to be military, and nothing like the Christmas sets could be found. The Xin Le Xin website was unreachable, so no product searches could be completed. Further investigation revealed that Xin Le Xin is responsible for the SY brand. This has been noted previously for blatant direct copying of LEGO sets, including Marvel superheroes and Star Wars. SY tend to specialise in minifigs, and produce a wide range of highly illegal copyrighted clones along with their own designs of military figures with various weapon accessories. Internet reviews indicate that the minifigs are of OK quality, but with all-too-common printing errors and loose limbs.



New logo all capitals, but only one brick this time. Gudi name on the studs; nice quality. Thought went into these designs, only some evil.

BLOCK TECH seem to have done a deal with the devil and got hold of some very high quality bricks from one of the *bête noirs* of the Chinese cloning industry. Xin Le Xin appears to now be able to manufacture quality kits at low prices. It is suspected that BLOCK TECH would not import the copied sets nor even the SY-specific minifigs due to copyright issues. Gudi kits are not easily available in the UK, so this was a rare opportunity to sample them in Britain. Rather worryingly, these two sets were essentially the same quality as genuine LEGO, a marked improvement on the shite to mediocre SY rubbish previously tested. BLOCK TECH subsequently ripped off these designs for their massively disappointing Advent Calendar (qv).

Summary: BLOCK TECH hit the jackpot with this supplier. A success!

Now compensate us for the shiteness of absolutely every other kit.

Scores	Santa Claus	Snowman
Quality*	95	100
Value	100	100
Fit*	100	100
Compatibility	100	100
Minifig*	N/A	N/A
Design	100	80
Instructions	100	100
Total	99	98



Kre-O – Klingon Bird of Prey (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

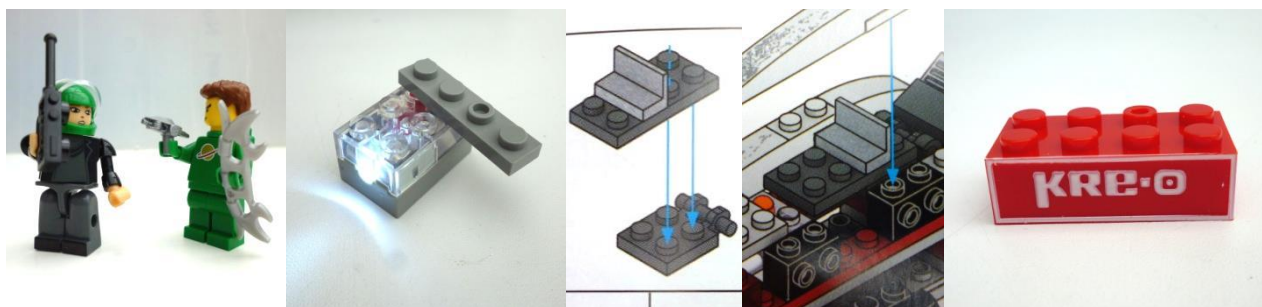
Kre-O is a brand name used by Hasbro since 2011. It is made by the South Korean company Oxford Toys, although parts are invariably sourced from China and are in effect separate from the standard Oxford Toys range. Kre-O / Hasbro have a number of linked-in film franchises, such as Transformers (major financial success) and Battleship (less so). The films of the new version of Star Trek (nuTrek) has also spawned a few sets, with the second 'Into Darkness' producing four. This 'Klingon Bird-of-Prey' A3136 set was based on the small insect-like craft seen in the second nuTrek movie, and came with four 'Kreons' – the name for the new style of minifig made by Kre-O for Hasbro. The nuTrek BOP was found for a reasonable £12.99, which compared to similar sized LEGO Star Wars sets appeared to be very good value.

The BOP came in a large box with a carrying handle. Just like the LEGO Ideas range, the box was designed with a lid so that all the pieces could be emptied into it. **Note to LEGO and everyone else: this is really good idea – make all your boxes like this.** The box proved handy as there were 5 bags of parts that had to be opened simultaneously. The instructions were fairly well laid out, although the colours were hard to make out between dark grey and black and there was a minor mistake. Supplied parts had the trademark Kre-O hollow stud, and were of high quality. The ship was very well designed with use of SNOT to produce a representative shape (maybe the waspish tail could have been longer). The set included a 3x2 light brick with internal batteries and a white LED that was used to light the cockpit in red. Once assembled the Bird-of-Prey was a good size and boasted a collection of moveable wings, an opening cockpit, a storage area, and two firing tip cannons. Stickers for the bricks were mostly wear effects, and although quite hard to peel off the backing were of excellent quality, if a bit glossy. The kit had no spare parts, but did come with a Kre-O branded 2x4 red brick, which unfortunately for Kre-O was of far worse quality than all of the rest of the kit and really should have been left out.



Re-booted Star Trek and Kreons. Finished Bird-of-Prey is very impressive. Kreon minifigs poseable and good quality, but Uhura is a bit chunky.

The Kreon minifigs were supplied in separate plastic bags. The Kreon was the same size as a LEGO minifig but was, in essence, a stylistic evolution of it. The heads had been given chins and facial features, and the hair was a rubbery substance. The torsos were wider at the top and had ball joints for the arms so that they could move outwards. The torsos could swivel around the hips, and the legs were attached with ball joints. The shoulder pad and flared legs gave a strangely 70s look to the figures. The overall shapes worked very well for (the slightly effeminate) Kirk and the Klingons, but left Uhura looking like an Olympic shot putter. Experimentation showed that heads, headgear and handheld stuff were perfectly exchangeable with LEGO equivalents. Out of all of the redesigned 'legal' minifigs reviewed, these were the best by a considerable margin.



Heads and hair interchangeable. Nice light brick, but irrelevant. The mysterious moving 2x1 panel. Kre-O branded brick worst quality in the set.

This set is extremely good, and equivalent to the LEGO Star Wars sets in both design and quality. Unfortunately for Kre-O and Hasbro, there are not many opportunities to make similar sized spaceship kits from the nuTrek universe as depicted in the two films. The Star Wars franchise continues to be a huge success for LEGO as it evolves, changing the hardware and bringing in new and widely varied settings. Most of the Hasbro tie-ins are a bit limited in scope and the sets do not tend to stay in production very long. There are, of course, the Kreon blind bag minifig series which are probably the most lucrative. Perhaps this is the way Hasbro view their foray into the World of the Brick - limited. This is a pity, because this set is really rather good and gets the second highest score ever in this review set, missing out on full marks by only 0.5%.

Summary: Very impressed with this. An excellent nuTrek kit, with a genuinely good attempt at a LEGO minifig rival. But where's Benedict?

Scores	Bird-of-Prey
Quality*	100
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	100
Design	100
Instructions	95
Total	99.5



LELE – The LELE Movie (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

BFC
Winner!

One of the most flagrant Chinese LEGO cloners is LELE. This company has somehow been getting away with blatant copying of LEGO products for a few years now. Their speciality is minifig collector series, usually consisting of the minifig with a stand and some small brick construct along with collectors cards. There are many reviews of these on the internet. Searches in October 2014 revealed LELE had surpassed themselves in shameful behaviour, by not only copying characters from The LEGO Movie, but rebranding them under their own name. Normally, LELE sets are very hard to obtain in the UK, but a chance find on the internet allowed investigation of this travesty of legal protection laws. The LELE Movie series had 8 different figures, and 3 types were found for sale: Blacktron Fan, Sir Stackabrick, and Garbage Man Grant.

The boxes were thin with hanging holes, designed to fit on display arms for shop sale purposes. The boxes stated that "Contents, color and specifications may vary from illustrations". Luckily, when opened they were not filled with a pile of gravel, pit vipers, or arsenic, and contents actually matched the boxes. The LELE was in a bag, with four cards separately supplied. Each minifig was annoyingly unassembled, which required only moderately strong hands to make up. The stand was a LELE-branded 6x4 plate with a smooth bit: this time 'THE LEGO MOVIE' was renamed 'THE LELE BLOCK'. Dioramas ranged from weird to outright bizarre. Sir Stackabrick had a 1x2 brick wall with a flaming telescope. Grant got a white grooved wall with flaming telescope and cone. Blacktron Fan got an arch and brick wall with... well, a starfish head, as the piece supplied was an unprinted flesh-coloured head of Patrick from Spongebob Squarepants. I still have no idea why. All dioramas were essentially pointless.

From the randomly supplied collector's cards, a full set of the worst Top Trumps ever made was put together. Quite what this complete waste of time was meant to achieve was not obvious, as each only had one value ("SP") which would make for a very short and boring game if played.



Three of the most despicable clones yet reviewed. Here's what you get from the box. Grant, Stackalot and Blacktron Fan look OK. Ish.

The LELE figures were found to be attempting to copy LEGO minifigs directly. The quality was as reported by internet reviews: the plastic was roughly equivalent to LEGO material; the printing was OK but noticeably less sharp; the hairpieces were less well defined; the legs and arms were randomly loose or tight; and the hands had moulding ridges. From a distance it was difficult to tell the difference between these and the genuine article, but close-up comparison revealed the poorer quality. The head printing was quite bad on Garbage Man Grant, being black and blurred when compared to the real LEGO minifig. Oddly, while having full compatibility with LEGO, LELE legs were incompatible with Decool, and vice-versa.



First two dioramas are just rubbish, but Blacktron's is rather disturbing. Rewritten logo is unbelievable. Look – all 8 cards. I am not enthused.

The choice of the minifigs in the set was also a bit strange, consisting of secondary or tertiary LEGO Movie characters usually found in bigger kits. It would seem unlikely that anyone who saw The LEGO Movie (i.e. most of the planet) would make a beeline for LELE's display, as their desirability did not seem excessive. Presumably the LELE marketing department assumed that the rarity of the figures would produce sales. The real LEGO minifigs can be bought for £2-4 on the internet, so even if the LELE kits were readily available in the UK for £1 each they probably wouldn't be big sellers. This is, however, all irrelevant. The barefaced cheek of ripping off The LEGO Movie is just indefensible. Bad show, guys. Bad show.

Summary: Mediocre product and utterly shameful.

Scores	LELE Movie Set
Quality*	80
Value	70
Fit*	80
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	90
Design	40
Instructions	N/A
Total	-79**

** Every single point deducted **twice** for unfathomably dishonourable cloning.



M.Y Toys (Leyi) – Fire Engine (Summer 2014)

NEW!

A summer visit to the Essex coast revealed an array of shops selling all manner of hooky block sets. One M.Y Toys kit had a photo of a minifig clone not seen before. It was priced cheaper than another smaller M.Y Tractor (Star Diamond), so it was judged there was a good chance it was mediocre in quality. Searches of the product lists of likely candidates revealed a close but not exact match with Kazi set 8057, similarity with the Fire Car from LEGO set 7945, and finally the real manufacturer – Leyi. This company had been identified previously as one of the most blatant cloners, but not reviewed. It was noted with amusement that many, if not all, of Leyi's products were copied off other Chinese cloners and not LEGO themselves. In this case, Leyi had ripped off Kazi who had, in turn, copied the LEGO fire car in set 7945 and used their own minifig. Leyi had modified Kazi's design slightly to use less unique parts, and copied the Kazi minifig. The UK importer Kandytoys had then marketed the kit under the M.Y brand. This was a rare chance to sample their wares, as Leyi have tended to concentrate on the domestic Chinese market and not export in large numbers.

The M.Y box was sturdy and contained two parts bags, one with small pieces, and a forlorn creased instruction sheet. When extracted, the parts were found to be cheap plastic - worse than Ligao but better than Weagle - with manufacturer markings on the plate studs. The clear red was a horrid pink-red hue; the red was variable in intensity; both windscreens had some opaque markings on either side; and the tyres were variously shiny and matt around the rims. The grab was best described as 'petrified limpet'. Assembly gave new meaning to the phrase 'requires immensely strong hands' and was a real challenge to put together, although this was nothing compared to getting the sodding thing apart which needed metal tools. When made the awful plastic resulted in a bent car which felt very poor quality, and the wheels hardly went round at all. The doors were a much darker shade red than the other bricks and still looked rubbish. The stickers were OK quality, if a little thick. As finished, the car looked rather shabby, as if it had been played with for years. At least all parts were present, didn't break during assembly, and had no diseases.



Evolution of a clone: LEGO 7945, Kazi 8057, Leyi 3602, MY 1871. Is the Leyi design department full of a load of lazy cheating copycats?

The minifig came with the arms attached, but not the hands, which was odd. The style was all but identical to real LEGO, but the horrid orange-yellow colour of the head that varied around the circumference – along with printing error on the back – immediately identified it as a clone. Strangely, the hands were a proper shade of yellow and felt quite good quality. The torso was supplied unmarked, and a sticker was needed for the front that vaguely matched the original LEGO fireman. The face was a copy of the Kazi version. Testing showed that although it looked similar, the legs assembly was not compatible with real LEGO.



Finished model looks OK. It isn't. Yellow randomly orange, marks on head, scratches on windscreens. Leyi logo on studs identifies rubbish quality.

There are many things written on the Shantou Megafun website. Some extol the company's commitment to the environment, some to their care of their workforce, some to their belief in quality. The evidence suggests they copy all the other Chinese companies' designs and churn them out cheaper with flagrant disregard for copyright. In a way, for the mostly closed Chinese hooky LEGO market this could be seen as a massive dose of justice where the cloners themselves are getting cloned and can't really complain as they started it. If Leyi ever start copying BELA, Chenghai will disappear in a huge explosion of irony.

On a more practical level, the review's conclusion is that Leyi are shite: less shite than Kazi, but still shite. The kit is nastier and more expensive than PeiZhi, and physically and morally repugnant to boot. Any child that can successfully play with it will have immensely strong hands and a ruthlessness and disregard of fair play of epic proportions. Maybe this is the hidden agenda. Or Leyi is supplied to Provinces who underachieve.

Summary: Damnation has come to the Chinese cloners in the form of Leyi, who copy them more cheaply. Horrid. Don't buy it.

Scores	Fire Engine
Quality*	40
Value	50
Fit*	30
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	50
Design	80
Instructions	50
Total	50



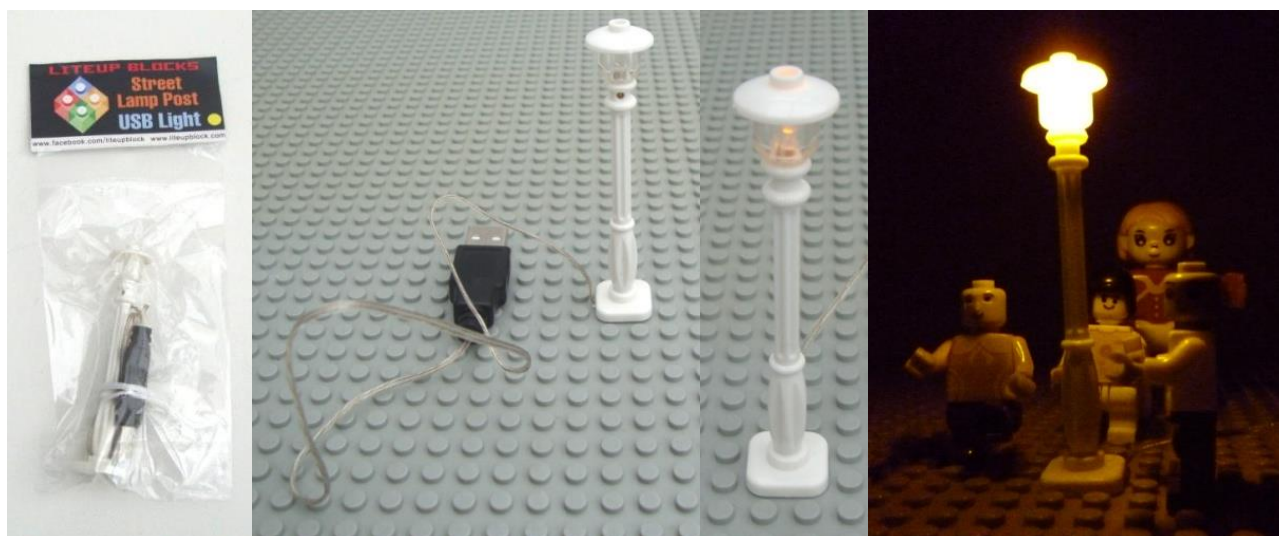
Liteup Blocks – White Street Lamp Post USB Light (Summer 2014)

NEW!

Liteup Blocks are a Hong Kong based enterprise specialising in... yes, light blocks. There are a number of companies around the globe filling in where LEGO do not easily provide – new technology LED-fitted bricks for lighting up models. Most have copied the only genuine LEGO item with a 2x4 clear brick carrying a light and battery. Generally they have produced a choice of colours and some have flashing and colour-changing effects. Liteup also make 2x3 and 2x4 bricks and 1x4, 1x6 and 1x8 plate down-lighters.

Liteup Blocks also decided to market in a different area – that of street furniture. Their new offering was a lamp post, powered by a USB connector running off a 5V supply. This was envisaged to be useful for a number of my building projects, but seemed most appropriate for some station platforms I'd built. Two colours of post were available – black or white – and two colours of light – bright white or amber. Of these, the white post and amber light was the closest match to the slightly faded and depressingly overcrowded cold and drizzly UK Home Counties suburban railway feel. Price was set at \$3, which worked out at around £1.85 each (including postage). It should be noted that just buying the genuine LEGO parts without the lighting on the internet would be at least half this amount. An order was placed for 10 lights, which duly arrived in about 10 days.

The lamp post was based on the older four-fluted LEGO part 2039. It looked and felt identical, and only the lack of markings on the underside of the base identified it as non-LEGO. The glass was based around the LEGO minifig head 3626 but had a completely open stud, presumably to aid heat dissipation. The small 2x2 radar dish also had a hole in the top just as the genuine part. The LED was fixed inside the lamp post, but the glass and dish were not stuck and were removable. The wire was about 15cm in length and came out of a small notch in the bottom of the base so it could be fixed on a flat plate. The large USB connector meant that it would not be possible to run the wire underneath a baseplate and would need some hiding in a typical street diorama. This was not too much of a problem for the station set-up I had intended.



This is what you get – can't fault the description much. USB wire is about 15cm long. Light is very orange – more of a neon glow than amber.

Testing of the light showed an orange colour similar to streetlight neon. The light was of medium brightness, but even this shone straight through the thin radar dish making it glow in low ambient light. This occurred with the Liteup dish or a genuine LEGO part. Solutions to this could include either spray-painting the underside of the dish or applying a thin layer of foil. Lighting has always been a problem for LEGO as the plastic does tend to let light through. The effect was found to be not that obvious in daylight, so would be OK for shows.

From previous experience with the varying build quality of Chinese electrical goods, a 5V 2A USB power supply was deliberately sourced from a UK manufacturer. Connection of multiple lamp posts through USB splitters showed that it could handle the 10 lights. The Liteup Blocks packaging did not state the power of the lights.

Summary: Effective product that fills a useful gap. Quality is very similar to LEGO and price is competitive.

Maybe you'll be brave enough to use a Chinese power supply.

I wasn't.

Scores	Street Lamp post
Quality*	90
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	N/A
Design	90
Instructions	N/A
Total	96



NEW!

BLOCK Tech (Loongon) – Earthworx Construction Command Centre (Summer 2014)

This large BLOCK Tech kit was found on The Works website as an 'exclusive'. It promised 5 minifigs and 392 pieces, which for the sale price of £6 seemed good value. The design looked to be OK from the box photo, with 5 LEGO-style minifigs shown with 2 buildings and 3 vehicles. The set was ordered at the same time as the Click Brick Grader, mainly to provide a comparison. Careful searching showed that although there was not an exact match for the kit itself, the vehicles were all but identical to some Best-Lock sets. Given the revelation that some new Best-Lock sets used Loongon parts, it was guessed that the set might be a good (and cheap) indication of the brick quality of newer Loongon / Little White Dragon ranges.

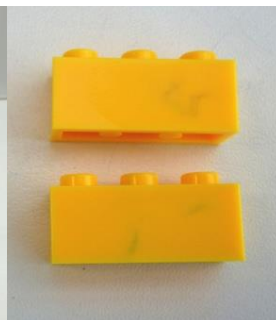
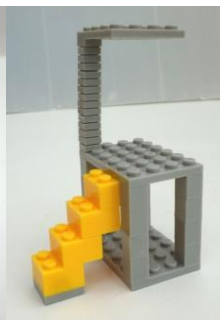
The BLOCK Tech box had a well-made inner tray which held 8 bags of pieces and a large plate. The instructions were on a huge single piece of paper and were correct... well, mostly. It was immediately evident that the brick 'yellow' was the same horrible yellow-orange hue seen in earlier Loongon kits, with the grey reminiscent of sun-blushed old LEGO light grey used in Best-Lock. The minifigs were an even nastier surprise. There were 5, but they were of the new hideous tubbyfig type and not anything like those shown on the box, or indeed like those of Loongon or Best-Lock.

All bags had to be opened at the same time to make the models. The pieces felt relatively close to LEGO plastic and the grab was surprisingly good given the terrible colour. Clear parts were supplied in their own bags, the same as the Blox kits. There were no manufacturer's marks on the studs or anywhere else. Quality was OK, with a few sprue marks evident and a couple of odd colour mix issues. The building designs were unlike anything Loongon but similar to Best-Lock, with the two digger and drill vehicles being mirror images of each other and the lorry having a number of flaws causing it to break apart if not handled gently. The crane worked well with quite a good grabber, but the digger arms were loose. The set would be far better to play with if the pointless strange grey platform was dismantled and the 1x1 plates and bricks used as rubble for the workmen to shift.



Box art minifigs a complete lie. Parts well presented - but look rubbish. Assembly shows parts hold together quite well - but still look rubbish.

The tubbyfigs were identical in style to the new Blox figures reviewed before, and came annoyingly unassembled. Immensely strong hands were needed to assemble the first one, followed by immensely strong stamina and willpower to be bothered to finish all five. Four of them were identical with expressions best described as zombie Tony Stark. The fifth guy was in grey and probably meant to be the foreman. He didn't look like a superhero. All tubbyfig legs were a poor fit, with playing and movement usually resulting in unintentional dismemberment. Also, the tubbyfigs would not fit in the digger vehicles which seemed a rather bad oversight, and it took considerable effort to squeeze a driver into the truck (which would then break). Annoyingly, the tubbyfig skin colour was quite good, unlike Loongon and Best-Lock, making them only mediocre zombies.



Tony Stark zombie builder. 15 1x1 plates to increase parts count, as if anyone cares. Moulding colour errors. Nice control level. Nasty windscreen.

It is speculated that BLOCK Tech have used Best-Lock and married up the Blox tubbyfigs. It is plausible that the tubbyfigs are Loongon's new export versions to circumvent legal action, with Best-Lock going a separate route with their own design (probably also made in Loongon's factories) – although it is also possible BLOCK Tech source them elsewhere. Unfortunately, BLOCK Tech have *yet again* failed to picture representative minifigs and *yet again* failed to put a 'contents may vary...' statement on the box, paving the way for upset children and angry parents to inundate their customer service department with grief about bizarre figures. This is a bit unfair as the kit itself is of decent enough quality for the price.

Summary: OK kit let down by awful colour mix and tubbyfigs. Legal action seems to be stopping minifig clones, but, hey, brick quality is improving.

Scores	Command Centre
Quality*	60
Value	80
Fit*	70
Compatibility	60
Minifig*	20
Design	50
Instructions	60
Total	54



LOZ – Ox-Eyed Robots Scooter (Summer 2014)

NEW!

LOZ are not a standard Chinese LEGO cloner, as they tend to focus on specialist areas. Their Nanoblock copies were covered in earlier reviews. The oddly-named Ox-Eyed Robots range is one of their K'Nex copies, so really should be in the publication Communist K'Nex (no, this has not been written). LOZ uses LEGO-style bricks along with snap fitting cogs, rods and pins. The four kits in the LOZ Robots range have motors to allow them to move. This example was found extremely cheaply at a car boot sale, made once but in almost new condition. Kit number A0011 was called Scooter, although the name was guessed to be a bit optimistic. LOZ suggested that this set was suitable for years 3+, which was surprising given both the complexity of it and the vast number of small parts.

The LOZ box turned out to be remarkably sturdy and, judging by the considerable tearing to one of the flaps, very well sealed when new. The half-made Scooter was disassembled and the parts placed in different containers to aid construction. This example of K'Nex cloning was fairly complicated to make, and the LOZ instructions made this even harder by being both small and very tricky to read due to some odd drawing angles. After some trial and error and some careful studying of the box photos, Scooter was finished. The motor had batteries inserted and when switched on revolved a drive axle, allowing Scooter to push and rotate his centre body up and along by using the outer feet. The motion was more a sedate thumping than a scoot, but the model did move and stayed mostly together whilst doing so.



Scooter is only named on the back. Do you want to collect them all? Me neither. Parts in rare unbroken state. This robot will not chase you down.

Unfortunately for LOZ, their slavish copying of K'Nex did not extend to the basic realisation that making parts that snap together out of cheap breakable plastic was a bad idea. Assembly of Scooter, whilst protracted, did proceed to the end with only one part breaking. Disassembly however resulted in 6 broken pieces, some of them crucial to the entire design. The brittleness of the plastic meant that it would be nigh-on impossible to build bespoke designs without significant part loss. The design of Scooter was not too bad, and the idea was to give the set to a charity shop to sell on once reviewed. However, so many pieces broke that the kit was no longer viable, and the entire set was binned. Similar acts have presumably been repeated across all of East Asia, making LOZ overwhelmingly responsible for a growing underground layer of plastic that in 64 million years' time some insect overlord palaeontologists will assume caused the downfall of the mammals. Judging by the anger the fragility of LOZ is likely to create in the entire region, it may well be close to the truth.



Instructions small and confusing. Plastic is brittle and fragile. Bricks and plates copies of K'Nex. Scooter shows off his sponsor's name. Slowly.

LOZ make a number of other K'Nex copy ranges, including the recently-launched pirate-themed motorised amusement park ride sets. Judging by the shite quality of Scooter's components, it seems unlikely that any of these will survive long enough for the unfortunate child recipient to experiment with other designs.

Summary: Good designs, but quality so crap as to make it unusable. LOZ are just making an entire generation of Chinese children disappointed and angry. Broken LOZ is ideal as landfill to make new islands in the South China Sea. May eventually cause the extinction of humanity.

Scores	Scooter
Quality*	20
Value	80
Fit*	70
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	N/A
Design	80
Instructions	30
Total	57



Mega Bloks – Call Of Duty Chopper Strike (Winter 2014)

NEW!

Olivia is my Friend. Olivia talks to me in my head. Olivia was not happy. With the growing threat of clone zombie invasion, the good citizens of Heartlake City had been running a number of battle scenarios and were not happy with the results. Although the acquisition of the Mega Bloks Abrams, Cobi Challenger and Star Diamond Type 99 tanks had bolstered ground forces, it was evident that some serious aerial support was needed over and above the Cobi Reaper. Olivia interrupted the Christmas shopping by telling me to scope out suitable rotary wing kits. Of the available items, the two Mega Bloks Call Of Duty helicopters seemed most appropriate. The large Blackhawk was fairly new and still expensive, but the smaller AH-6 Little Bird was almost half price at £17 and, as a bonus, a good excuse to use up some Nectar points to get it for next to nothing. A very wet trudge downtown saw set number 06816 come into Olivia's possession. The nagging in my head became less intense. The twitching ceased.

The very sturdy box stated the contents were made in Canada. Out of the 10 bags or so in the box, at least 5 proudly stated they were from China. All bags had to be opened simultaneously to make the kit. The instructions were well presented as a booklet and were arranged with sensible steps, although it was hard to make out colours and some details as they were printed very dark. Most pieces were a camouflage colour mix, much like the previously reviewed Halo and Abrams kits except in dark green. Quality was very good, with excellent grab and moulding. There were a number of very useful parts, including various SNOT pieces and a half-stud shift plate. The helicopter design used SNOT and was realistic in its depiction. As noted before, the scale was about 1:35, too big for standard LEGO minifigs but perfect for Friendfigs. The two M134 miniguns were particularly impressive. Strangely, there were no cockpit control levers. Overall, the chopper was a pleasure to make, not something said often about Mega.



Chopper is at some industrial park in Montreal. Kit looks very good through NVGs. Finished chopper really good, figure-dolls just damn annoying.

Chopper Strike was supplied with two action figures, totally unlike LEGO and designed to be more like small soldiers than minifigs. These were in separate bags unassembled. To say they were annoyingly unassembled would be a serious understatement. They were bloody annoying to put together, requiring procrastination, immensely strong hands, dexterity, patience, a pair of pliers, shouting, five chocolate hobnobs, anger, another cup of tea, threats, an hour of whale song, muscle heat spray, controlled breathing, and finally swearing that would make Gordon Ramsey blush. At least the accompanying firearms and equipment were compatible with LEGO minifigs and Friendfigs. Testing showed that Ewa the Friendfig was a textbook fit in the cockpit, although the holding pin had to be removed and Blu-Tack applied to the seat for Friendfig compatibility. The real AH-6 can be upgraded to a remote drone, so Ewa would also be able to fly it from the ground. This would please Olivia and my head would ache less.



Made in Canada... except half the parts. Action figures require immensely strong patience. Chopper perfect for Heartlake aerial minigun support.

The original cost of this kit was £30, which doesn't appear great value when compared to LEGO equivalents. Once inevitable discounting occurs, the set starts to be desirable. The scaling makes it excellent for Friends compatibility, with the proviso of a lack of seat adhesion. For those animal jungle rescue or Heartlake sightseeing missions, the armament can be swapped for less aggressive items. Or not.

Olivia was very happy. The BELA doppelgangers would be toast. It had been a journey, but I was happy. I needed less pills. Or was it more? I forget. Nurse will tell you. It's time for my nap now. Sign the book before you leave. Visiting is Tuesdays and Fridays between 2 and 4. Please come again.

Summary: Throw away the unmade action figures before an apoplectic fit, and hey presto! One of the best Friends kits on the market.

Scores	Chopper Strike
Quality*	100
Value	70
Fit*	100
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	60
Design	100
Instructions	90
Total	87



BLOC KITS (PeiZhi) – Dune Buggy and Water Jet Ski (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

99p Stores are Poundland's main rival in the UK⁷, and periodically stock their own hooky LEGO kits. A November visit to the local Store found a hitherto unseen brand called 'BLOC KITS', under the logo 'Create & Build' which looked a bit like BLOCK Tech's old sign. The postcode on the back was that of 99p Stores. These BLOC KITS seemed to be aimed at girls, with purple and pink boxes and similar coloured contents. Two kits, Dune Buggy and Water Jet Ski were on display. Box art suggested PeiZhi was the manufacturer, as the minifig looked like their newer design and 99p Stores had used PeiZhi previously. "Colour and Contents May Vary" was written on the back, giving an air of mystery (and carte blanche) to what product lay inside, especially as the minifig picture was computer generated. The substantially thick boxes were dumped in the shopping basket with all the other ~~£1~~ goods at affordable prices.

Inside each box was a reasonable representation of what the photos promised. There was a small bag of parts and an enormous instruction sheet. BLOC KITS were obviously aiming their product at myopic girls fed up with Poundland's microscopic offerings. The parts bag held the kit and the annoyingly unmade minifig. Pieces were of variable quality depending on colour: the yellow looked, felt and sounded like Weagle's worst, whereas the purple and pink parts were relatively decent. Assembly of the Dune Buggy was quite enjoyable if a little rapid, with all 14 1x1 round plates being present. The buggy itself was well designed and although small was OK for the price. The Jet Ski assembly was a bit odd as the first two steps just placed parts next to each other, but the finished product seemed to be good enough. Jet Ski had two spare parts, although one was a yellow 1x1 round plate with a moulding error. Both kits gave a satisfactory vehicle with nice colours.



Purple boxes, girly themed hardware. Small pieces, big instructions. Finished buggy great, jet ski OK too. Strange minifig marginally disturbing.

The annoyingly unmade minifigs were not great quality, and revealed the newer PeiZhi torso cross-peg neck design and hip-torso joint seen in the Toy Mania sets (qv). The face print was the same for both figures, although the blue one had the print a bit too far down for mental comfort. The plastic was fairly mediocre quality, but once assembled (using the mandatory immensely strong hands) there was only some looseness of the arms and the legs were surprisingly tight. The flesh colour was very good and new for PeiZhi. Hairpieces were certainly not copied off LEGO, with the red hair rather interesting and the black one very Manga, turning the boy on the box into a more androgynous character. Both the heads and hair were probably related to PeiZhi's new 'Happy Holidays' Friends-esque line. Torso printing was basic and not well coloured. However, once made they fitted very well and although obviously not LEGO were not a disappointment.



Yellow plastic horrid but finished minifig OK. Blue feels better but looks.. weird... Nice to see Naïve Art in instructions. Beach fun in purple.

The BLOC KITS sets made good use of their small number of parts and both models were actually not too bad. The Dune Buggy in particular was a well thought-out design and compares favourably with other kits in the £1 bracket. BLOC KITS seem new to the scene; maybe they are 99p Stores' version of Funtastic and they will get more. Whether they actually appeal to 99p Store's young girl demographic is a mystery.

Summary: Probably the best budget girly kits reviewed. Cheap quality but good designs. No disease. Limited mental damage.

Scores	Dune Buggy	Water Jet Ski
Quality*	70	70
Value	100	90
Fit*	80	80
Compatibility	90	90
Minifig*	60	60
Design	100	80
Instructions	80	80
Total	79	76

⁷ Were. They were being bought out by Poundland just as this write-up was finished.

**NEW!**

Toy Mania (PeiZhi) – BLOCKS (Battlefield, Police Squad, Space) (Summer 2014)

UK discount stores continue to bring out new kits of clone bricks. Early August 2014 saw “Toy Mania” Blocks appear on the shelves in 99p Stores. Toy Mania sets were distributed by Hunter Price International, a UK import company based in Bury that deals with a wide range of retailers. Three kits were on sale: Police Squad, Space, and Battlefield. Although the pictures on the front were computer generated, it was almost certain that they were PeiZhi. One of each kit was bought. There was no sale on in the shop. Unsurprisingly they were 99p each.

Toy Mania had not skimped on the box material, as the cardboard was probably strong enough to build a full sized house with the boxes. They had also used a lot of glue which made opening the boxes a necessarily violent affair. Inside each was a badly folded instruction sheet and a small bag full of pieces. Each themed kit had about 40 pieces, including the annoyingly unmade minifig. The manufacturer was indeed PeiZhi, with mediocre quality control but quite good grab. The spaceship was mostly white, with a complicated but ultimately rather well executed design resembling a flying chair with a scorpion tail. The police car was disappointingly even smaller than the new Blox car, with at least one wheel hubcap that kept falling out. The Battlefield missile jeep thingy was again smaller than the kits supplied by both 99p Stores and Poundland some months earlier, although it did have a big dragster-style air intake in green. All pieces were present in the reviewed kits with a couple of spare hubcaps (none of which fitted properly in the police wheels). One white spaceship piece had some green marks; these would not rub off and seemed to be caused by rough contact with either green bricks or some machinery more than an infectious disease. Although mediocre quality, all three sets stayed together very well and couldn't really be faulted on playability.



Mania block kits. Instructions bigger than parts bag – and still quite small. Drag-racer missile 4x4, police pedal car, space scorpion armchair.

The three minifigs were OK to assemble, but had a few quality issues with the spaceman having a badly moulded left arm and the army guy having a slightly loose right arm. Space and Police guy had a happy smile, with Army guy having the later non-branded torso and angry face. The Army and Police figures appeared to have a later design of leg with a more rounded toe, much like SY. Quite why this has been changed is unclear, as the legs were not left or right but one type with the hip pin hole on both sides. The arms for all three figures were also noticeably poorer quality than earlier PeiZhi offerings. Once assembled, the minifigs were acceptable and did not fall apart too much when played with. Army guy had the PeiZhi helmet, instantly making the entire kit worthwhile. Annoyingly there was no camouflage torso sticker sheet to cover up the daft print.



Angry soldier, happy spaceman, happy cop. The new PeiZhi leg design. Spaceman has pisspoor left arm. Mysterious green contaminant on brick.

The size of impulse kits seems to be reducing monthly, with these latest PeiZhi offerings being almost as small as possible. The bricks themselves are OK to use (and reuse), with the minifigs a reasonable copy of LEGO figures. From the displayed products, PeiZhi appear to concentrate on the smaller kits of which most have minifigs. Presumably the figures are the main selling point over and above other Chinese manufacturers, and as noted before, the PeiZhi quality is tolerable enough and a long way ahead of similarly-price cloners. It does however seem as if the minifig quality is dropping, so at some point they will cease to be the budget kit of choice. Subsequent purchases of more Battlefield sets for another counter-zombie mercenary squad showed one box had no parts at all, which for even the crap quality control of hooky Chinese bricks is a first.

Summary: PeiZhi impulse kits are getting smaller and smaller, along with their quality control. By next year they will just consist of a broken minifig.

Scores	Battlefield	Police Squad	Space
Quality*	70	70	60
Value	100	80	90
Fit*	80	90	80
Compatibility	80	80	70
Minifig*	70	70	60
Design	70	60	80
Instructions	60	60	60
Total	75	74	70



Funtastic (PeiZhi) – Combat Force (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

The Combat Force range was marketed under the Funtastic brand by Poundland, and was first reviewed in Spring 2014. The sets were a 'blind box' theme, with one box design housing one of four different models. These had been identified as PeiZhi 'Field Army' kits 0329-0332. The previous review had found 0329 and 0331; a total of 6 sets were bought this time, both give a sporting chance of finding the other two kits, and to swell the PeiZhi mercenary army required to help the good LEGO citizens of BrickVille hold back The Zombie Horde.

This time the random sets that turned up were three of '0332', two of '0331', and one '0330'. 0331 had been seen before; these examples had all parts and were relatively OK. They supplied PeiZhi soldier minifigs with helmets, a good bargain for the helmets by themselves. The 0330 had not been seen before, and was a strange affair with a souped-up engine and two missiles uncomfortably close to the driver's arms. The minifig in this version came with three arms and one hand, which was a little unfortunate. The 0332 little tank thingy was a fairly interesting design, but ultimately was small and the soldier could really only stand up in it. The gun would move if the minifig was not next to it. Out of the three tanks, there was one missing piece but three spare ones, including a hand which was a comfort for the rocket 4x4 guy. All sets used round 1x1 plates of various solid colours which looked very cheap. This was odd, as other PeiZhi sets have used transparent parts; maybe these were really scraping the bottom of the barrel to keep costs down.



The terrifying Combat Force mob... or not. Here's an example of what you get. Total haul this time – 3 tanks, 2 flag cars, and a rocket 4x4.

The minifigs were of reasonable quality but were all supplied unmade. Between the six kits there were enough parts to make six working minifigs, although some swapping of arms was done to get the best balance between loose and tight fits. The minifigs were of the older PeiZhi type, with square feet, PeiZhi logos on the torsos, and heads with dopey expressions. The Combat Force kits did not include the torso stickers found in BLOCK Tech sets; it was assumed that Poundland sourced the PeiZhi kits themselves without using BLOCK Tech in this instance. The heads, with their orange-yellow hue and daft looks, would be prime candidates to be swapped for LEGO items.



Rocket car guy hoping for some spares. Flag car guy is happy enough. Little tank a bit weird. This minifig has blue bits in his head. Nice helmet.

The Combat Force sets would appear to be fairly good value, but only if enough were bought to average out the missing and extra parts. PeiZhi quality control seems to be random, with luck being a major factor in whether any single kit has enough bits to finish the model. Poundland's Combat Force series does give bigger sets than 99p Stores' Toy Mania series, and maybe this is all that matters. The minifigs can be relatively indistinguishable from genuine LEGO figures if not handled too much and put at the back in low light. Since these are the older PeiZhi parts, it is probable that Funtastic bought up a production run directly from China separate from their usual BLOCK Tech route, and will not have any like-for-like replacement.

Summary: Good supply of military minifigs on average, but you'll need to get quite a few or be lucky to have the right amount of body parts. Quality control missing as standard.

Scores	Rocket Jeep	Little Tank
Quality*	70	70
Value	90	100
Fit*	70	80
Compatibility	80	80
Minifig*	60	70
Design	60	40
Instructions	60	60
Total	69	72



PMS International (unknown) – Building Block Set (Summer 2014)

NEW!

BACK
AWARD
WINNER!

A chance find at a charity shop revealed a new building set by PMS International, a UK-based import company specialising in sourcing toys from China and probably best known in the UK for soft toys (including many sold at LEGOLand Windsor). The box was small and cost 49p, reduced from 99p. Claims included '32 strong and durable play blocks', 'easy to model', 'easy to play', and a 'quality product compatible with other brands'. It showed a young girl studiously building a square model with DUPLO-sized bricks. There were also two photos of models built (with obviously far more than 32 pieces), using a different brick style than those the girl was playing with. The box also had a fearsome warning, typed out with patchy use of the spacebar, threatening legal action if the design, illustrations and photographs were copied. Descriptions of the box are thus narrative. It was however patently obvious that there was not enough space to fit 32 DUPLO-sized bricks in the box. This, coupled with the legal warning, did not exactly instil confidence in the product matching what was advertised on the box.

The design, illustrations and photographs used on this artwork are the exclusive property of the PMS International Group. Any attempts to copy this artwork in whole or in part will be prosecuted vigorously and damages will be sought and legal action taken where appropriate.

think this means the box artwork can't be shown. In deference to the legal team who appear to be not able to use a word process or this will be adhered to.

The contents were found to be 33 bricks of various types and colours. The pieces were of similar quality to the earlier reviewed Quick Bricks and BLOCK Tech Junior types – a very cheap horrible soft plastic. The bricks were sized the same as standard LEGO pieces, but due to larger studs were totally incompatible with LEGO or any other known clone brand, even with a hammer. It was, unsurprisingly, impossible to build the menacingly legally protected models illustrated on the box due to lack of parts. A decent enough bird-type thing was assembled, but with the terrible fit it was a rather temporary model that fell apart at the slightest touch. Searching possible Chinese suppliers did not show an obvious match with any.



This is what you get, this is what you can build. Curved brick festooned with numbers. Quick Bricks x2, BLOCK Tech Junior, PMS. All crap.

It's not obvious what PMS were trying to achieve here. The photograph on the box of a girl playing with DUPLO-sized blocks bears no resemblance to the contents, and nowhere does the box state that contents could change from illustrations. The two displayed models shown on the box required far more pieces than supplied. The blocks are stated to be compatible with other brands, but none have been found so far that are. The product is stated to be quality whereas it was one of the worst of over 100 reviewed sets. And the box artwork is apparently so special that others could be itching to copy it illegally. Given that PMS are presumably quite used to sourcing and packaging products with their own artwork, it seems odd that there are so many errors.

The voices inside my head have a different explanation:

The girl on the box is of course playing with the proper version of the bricks, so is a 2-foot high Good Pixie. The pieces that look like DUPLO (but are half the size to make them compatible with other brands and still fit in the box) were unfortunately magically changed by an Evil Pixie into the completely rubbish and incompatible bricks actually found inside the sealed bag inside the sealed box. The model photos were distorted into larger ones showing the rubbish bricks by Evil Pixie, but the presence of Good Pixie stopped her photo from being altered. Evil Pixie then got cross and transformed the three missing spaces on the completely justifiable legal warning into a spare brick and put it with the others to make it look like PMS couldn't even write a sentence.

The massively overbearing warnings on the box, coupled with the obviously misleading photos and subsequent disappointing contents give the most likely outcome of a frustrated child and irritated parents. Is this another apparent case of hardnosed business practices allowing a drift into slow commercial suicide that could be so easily fixed? PMS may not expand further into the plastic brick market. Stay with the soft toys. They're OK.

Summary: Trading Standards or Evil Pixies? You decide. I'm going with the Evil Pixies. La la-la-la la...

Scores	Building Block Set
Quality*	20
Value	50
Fit*	10
Compatibility	0
Minifig*	N/A
Design	Subject to legal protection**
Instructions	N/A
Total	14

** all points deducted for pointless badly written overbearing copyright notice.

M.Y Toys use a number of Chinese clone suppliers, ranging from the excellent Star Diamond to the CACK award winner XQL. There seems to be no obvious pattern to which companies are used. The consumer either has to play pot luck or spot clues on the box art to identify which firm has made the bricks. In this case, the tractor had been seen previously on the Star Diamond site list (although in red) so it was guessed there was a good chance it would be decent. The kit was priced at a heady £3.49, which was about the cost of a comparable LEGO kit.

The very well made box had three parts bags and a neatly folded instruction sheet. Two bags had the number 82115, matching the Star Diamond “TD-01” red tractor set, although this M.Y set was green as in the Star Diamond 82116 farm set (a red M.Y kit exists as well). The kit had the same quality as genuine LEGO, and opening the bags showed the excellent Star Diamond pieces which were essentially identical in feel and quality. Most parts had ‘Star’ written on the lugs. Both the minifig and steering wheel were supplied unassembled which was annoying. However, assembly of the kit was straightforward and enjoyable, as it was a good design and the parts had just the right amount of grab. The tyres were noticeably superb quality. The front ‘bumper’ was modelled by a 2x1 panel with a central riser as opposed to the side-placed norm. This was effective, and at time of writing was not knowingly available as a LEGO part. Star Diamond dark bluish grey was also a marginally different shade to LEGO. The supplied stickers were a number plate and the tractor logos. The “Farm” logos were very stylish but a bit pointless.



Randomly, M.Y has chosen a decent cloner. Contents very well presented. Tractor completed with very happy farmer. Ready to do farm stuff.

Star Diamond produces the best minifig clones by quite some margin, with usually excellent quality, and hands that usually seem better than LEGO itself. However, on this occasion it did not score full marks, as assembly revealed a very firm left hand-arm fit. Close inspection suggested there was a slight moulding error inside the arm. This error did not really affect play as the hand would move, albeit it stiffly, but this was an example of worse quality control than the genuine article. The farmer torso was well printed and the head had the Star Diamond trait of white centres in the eyes, which visually was the only clue that it was not real LEGO. The legs moved slightly further forwards and backwards when compared to a LEGO minifig.



Minifig has misfitting hand. Unique centred 2x1 panel. “Farm” tractor stickers look good but are pointless. Still... a very nice tractor kit.

As expected, this Star Diamond kit was another example of excellence, although with a rare (and relatively minor) quality control issue. The tractor was certainly a good value set. Unfortunately, Kandytoys seems to have the most random sourcing policy of any UK-based import company. The connoisseur clone spotter – and how many of those exist? – would probably have little trouble in recognising this M.Y kit as a Star Diamond product, but for the casual buyer it would be purely a matter of luck. M.Y not only import Star Diamond, but have also used the mediocre Loongon, the terrible Leyi, the appalling Hui Mei, and the CACK award-winning Xing Qi Le - one of the biggest piles of shite yet reviewed. This scattergun approach makes Kandytoys very hard to trust for any parent who experiences one of the lesser brands.

Summary: A very good kit indeed, but from Kandytoys, how would anyone ever know beforehand?

Scores	Farm Tractor
Quality*	100
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	95
Design	100
Instructions	100
Total	99



SY (Sheng Yuan) – Wolverine Superhero Minifig (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

BFC Award!

Character minifigs are a big seller in China and around the rapidly growing East Asian markets. These not only copy the LEGO minifig shape, but use the massively copyrighted themes such as The Hobbit, DC and Marvel superheroes, and Star Wars. Sheng Yuan, better known as SY, are one of the most proficient of these. Minifigs tend to sold in small boxes in sets of 6 or 8, typically marketing different versions of the same character that LEGO do not produce. SY also make sets with the minifigs inside, which are mainly different to genuine LEGO sets. SY minifigs are sometimes identifiable by their rounded toes, which none of the other five main minifig clone companies have.

The 2012 Wolverine minifig is found in the LEGO set 6866 "Wolverine's Chopper Showdown". The Chinese cloners not only copy this set, but also produce multiple versions of the character. This SY version was chosen as to match the 6866 version with the bright light orange suit, and was marketed by SY both as a separate figure in SY180 and with a small car in the SY184A set. Here, SY use a different leg design than LEGO, having rounded toes and a hollow rear. The plastic was noticeably much cheaper in feel and sound than the other specific minifigs cloners, almost as poor as Weagle. The torso arms were a little thicker than the LEGO equivalent, and the skin flesh colour was marginally lighter. The printing itself was of OK quality, but a little unclear. This SY figure was supplied with the claws found in SY184A. Experimentation showed that all parts were compatible with LEGO minifigs, although the head fit was a bit tight. There was no baseplate included in SY184A, which was a pity as photos showed an amusing typo error changing 'Hero' to 'Herd'. This would have allowed some very cheap laughs.



This SY Wolverine probably comes from the car kit SY184A and not SY180 from the 'Herd Series'. Very, very angry as he is really shite quality.

Compared to Decool and LELE, SY are far behind in quality. It is difficult to see how they can compete in the closed Chinese market where the other firms also make similar products. It is assumed that they must undercut them on price. Certainly given a choice, there is no way any savvy consumer would pay similar amounts for such a rubbish product. It would appear that Xin Le Xin, responsible for SY, have begun making Gudi sets with excellent quality plastic. It is possible that SY will undergo a refresh, or that yet another minifig cloning brand will soon appear in China under the newer name whilst SY quietly vanish before legal redress can be fulfilled.



Parts fitted to real LEGO. Torso design different, leg rears awful. Fatter arms, lighter skin, dodgy printing, rounded toes, rubbish plastic. Yuk.

Sheng Yuan appear to be big sellers in China. Given the competition, it beggars belief how. There must be many, many disappointed Chinese superhero collectors out there. Perhaps the State puts them on sale only in towns that deserve punishment. This particular example was bad enough to be allocated a spot for scientific flame toxicity testing. At least, that's what I told everyone. Wolverine exited this world dramatically.

Summary: Terrible. SY Superheroes look tempting, but only once. Shite.

Scores	Wolverine
Quality*	N/A
Value	N/A
Fit*	N/A
Compatibility	N/A
Minifig*	50
Design	N/A
Instructions	N/A
Total	0**

** All points deducted for very illegal copying indeed.



SY (Sheng Yuan) – Star Wars Mini Sets (Autumn 2014)

NEW!

BFC
Award!

Sheng Yuan are one of the very few Chinese cloners to have directly copied Star Wars. Given the litigious might that is Disney, this is a surprisingly brave move; even LELE changed their logo to “Star Wart”. Looking through available items for review, a set of four small Star Wars kits was found for £6.80 direct from Beijing. Each had a small spaceship and a minifig with stand. Analysis of the pictures showed that these SY minifigs had square feet, unlike the earlier Superhero figures, so it was surmised that they were from new moulds and might be less crap than earlier efforts. Careful searching revealed that the spaceships in sets SY196A-D were based on the LEGO kits 30241 (2013 Mandalorian fighter, although in dark red); the 30051 X-wing from 2010 with a changed nose; the 30240 Z-95 Headhunter from 2013; and the 8031 V-19 Torrent from 2008. The minifigs were not really connected with the spaceships: they were all copies of LEGO minifigs from 2013, with a Clone Trooper, Captain Rex from set 75012, the Clone Trooper Captain from 75021, and Jek-14 from 75018. The four sets arrived, minus boxes and instructions, in about 2 weeks.

The supplied bags had the set number helpfully printed on them. The minifigs were annoyingly unassembled. Each set revealed tolerably quality parts, with a cheap feel and slightly washed out colours reminiscent of PeiZhi. The X-wing turned out to have two missing 1x3 dark red plates, which was damn annoying. When assembled using moderately strong hands, the spaceships looked good enough and held together, but close inspection showed undulating side surfaces and comparison with real LEGO showed the worse colours. The grab was very strong, which was actually an advantage as the ships stayed together in “test” space battles.



Four minisets with minifigs. All copies. Finished models are OK. Minifigs have their own stands, dubious white plastic and mediocre printing.

The four minifigs were assembled using obligatory immensely strong hands. The plastic was a notable improvement over that used in Wolverine, but this wasn't exactly difficult and still showed a slight translucent hue and felt cheap. The flesh heads were a slightly different shade to LEGO and had poorer printing detail. The helmets were printed with tolerable accuracy and definition, along with the torsos and legs, with no obvious errors. Rex's cloth accessories were very good quality; the lightsabre and guns were also very similar to LEGO items.



Clone captain and trooper furious at being SY. Jek-14 is passable quality but still cross. Captain Rex appears to have just sat on a spike.

Sheng Yuan appear to be making progress towards being not shite, although the path ahead is still a long one. The sets were very good value, supplying four tolerable Star Wars minifigs with four tolerable mini ships. Marketing-wise, this is a bit odd: the four ships make a good set, and the four minifigs make a good set, but together they look mismatched. Presumably they sell. Legally, of course, SY have embarked on a rather chancy road.

Summary: Bargain basement of the BFC companies. Mediocre but very cheap.

Scores	SY196A-D
Quality*	60
Value	100
Fit*	80
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	70
Design	90
Instructions	N/A
Total	0**

** All points deducted for amusingly risky illegal copying.

Car boot sales are increasingly becoming a paradise for hooky LEGO spotting, as disenchanted children and angry parents try to claw back some of their hard-earned cash unwittingly spent on crap Chinese plastic blocks. This BLOCK Tech example was acquired as an unopened Christmas present, which as it was August said something about the desirability of the kit. Obviously the recipient had a sixth sense to not open the box and wisely gave it to mummy to stock the boot sale table. The set was a step up from the smallest BLOCK Tech boxes, so probably retailed at around £3 when new. The box art showed a fairly competent LEGO-style minifig; however, the windscreen was of the curvy type favoured by Ausini and Weagle. It was guessed that there was far more chance the set would be Weagle than Ausini, as Ausini tended to lie about its skin tones and had computer-created pictures more than deceitful photos. It was noted that BLOCK Tech had not printed a 'contents may differ...' get-out clause on the box, which, whilst rather refreshing, did leave it potentially open to a flood of irate calls to its unfortunate returns department.

The set was indeed new, and had three bags and a parts sprue. The minifig was in a separate bag and was the truly dreadful Weagle police guy, seen in several other reviewed sets. The helicopter itself was made from the parts in the two other bags. The pieces were the standard Weagle crap; they did actually fit together, but had some suspicious brown marks, quite a few moulding errors that had to be removed before assembly, some colour changes (no grey, for example), and a general feel of terrible quality. The helicopter was an original Weagle design; this would have been admirable if it wasn't so badly done. It was blocky, ugly, and difficult to play with as the minifig could only be inserted by taking the roof off - a perilous affair as the chance of parts breaking was very real. The rotor blades were small and prone to falling off. The stickers were the standard Weagle police sheet and so were totally different to those shown on the box, but did actually work.



Box art seems OK – how bad could it be? Utter shite – it's Weagle. But look here... it's the Police arsenal sprue! And these bits are to throw away.

Reviewed Weagle minifigs have consistently been the worst quality seen. This example managed to cement this dubious honour with style. Apart from terrible plastic, comically bad leg fit, loose arms, poor torso printing and dire hand-arm connections, the head had been moulded so badly the inside was mostly full. This meant it would only fit half way down the torso shank. The helmet also did not fit properly on the head, leaving Weagle Police guy a barely assembled collection of loose parts. It would be interesting to know whose minifigs the BLOCK Tech photos were taken with. None have ever matched the supplied Weagle figures, so it is supposed that either BLOCK Tech sourced their own, or that Weagle made an 'export special'. The minifig significantly detracted from the kit, which given that it was rubbish to start with was really saying something.



Minifig nothing like box art and utterly crap. Head mis-moulded, legs wonky, hands loose. Flash as standard. Keep weapons for zombie revenge.

The set did, of course, have one positive point. This was the supplied weapons sprue with three big guns, handcuffs, ammo box and radio thingy. Although poorly moulded and badly copied from the Ausini version, the parts would still give significant firepower to LEGO minifigs at a much lower cost (but also quality) than BrickForge / Brickarms / BrickWarriors / CombatBrick / Tiny Tactical / SI-DAN / The Little Arms Shop / BigKidBrix et al. At least *something* didn't get thrown away.

Summary: China is solving its overflowing refuse problem by dumping it in BLOCK Tech boxes and shipping them to Europe. Thanks, guys.

Scores	Police Support Helicopter
Quality*	30
Value	60
Fit*	30
Compatibility	70
Minifig*	0
Design	40
Instructions	30
Total	32



Wei Te Feng – Train (Summer 2014)

NEW!

Wei Te Feng is also known as Wit toys and specialise in DUPLO clones. This train set had, according to sticker on the side, been exported by H W Toys Co Ltd and imported by Harwin UK Ltd in Southall. The set itself was found in a local home goods store and had been marked down in a sale. The display showed two DUPLO-sized zombie figures which were by far and away the scariest seen to date. The set promised a motorised train and full circuit of track, so overall seemed a remarkably good deal even if made of hooky parts. The box itself had a nice carrying handle and a big happy sign on the back extolling “100% non-toxic materials” – which to be honest would be rather unsettling for Wei Te Feng’s previous purchasers who presumably bought sets made *with* toxic materials. A little more reassuring was the admission that “colors and numbers are subject to slight variation”, which beat most hooky LEGO statements that cover themselves to put anything in the box they bloody like. It was obvious from the start that one of the giant zombiefigs had different colour hair to the box art, so the contents were assumed to be a gamble (but only slight). Train 8803 was acquired for a total of £9.

The box had a slide out tray that proved remarkably hard to extract, as the nice plastic carrying handle on the top got caught up with the cardboard. 5 minutes of manipulation eventually allowed the inner box to come out without major ripping. Inside, the parts were well presented in three bags. Once out, it was however clear that the plastic was nowhere near the feel of genuine DUPLO, and had an odd chalky touch suggesting they were covered in dust (hopefully 100% non-toxic) and some strange brown stuff that may or may not have been organic. Underneath this goo the colours were a bit washed out, but the printing on the bricks was OK. Colours of the window brick, 2x2 bricks, 3x2 curved slopes, 4x2 brick and a 1x2x2 brick were different to the box art, but the parts count was consistent. The tree leaves and the creeper were made of a rubbery plastic that seemed OK quality. The fences also had more give and snapped together reasonably well. The tree trunks were strangely different shades of reddish brown.



Big train set with motor functions and huge zombies. Inside is well packaged. Train moves, flashes lights and makes noises. An awful lot of them.

Of interest was the connection design Wei Te Feng had engineered between the DUPLO-style pieces. Real DUPLO fits together with a firm grab and allows fitting to standard LEGO bricks (most easily the 2x4). These bricks had been altered to give a positive click when pushed together. The feel of this was actually rather good, although required a bit of skill for the window bricks to stop them bending. The downside was that the underside had been changed slightly to do this, and standard LEGO (or clone) bricks would not fit underneath and were loose on top. The Wei Te Feng track had a similar click when put together unlike standard DUPLO track, but quite how long it would last was unclear as the track felt quite poor quality and potentially brittle. There were a few flash moulding leftovers and sprue marks on many of the pieces. The giant zombiefigs, apart from their worryingly grey-brown complexion, had small heads, bizarre orange hair, loose arms and legs, and were far removed from DUPLO quality.



Massive zombies with loose limbs. Variations on brown. Chair has encased ‘something’. Bricks click together. Products are now 100% non-toxic!

The train had some batteries inserted and when switched on proceeded to happily trundle around the track at a reasonable speed. It also had flashing headlights which was great. Not so great was the noise it made – tinny train sounds followed by music, repeated about once per circuit... constantly. As the sound could not be turned off it would likely cause temporary insanity in any adult forced to listen for more than 2 minutes, resulting in a sane and surreptitious night time visit to the shed with a screwdriver and wire-cutters to disconnect the internal speaker.

This set is remarkably good value and would provide a good amount of play for the target consumer. However, there are glaring quality issues and the cheap feel of the plastic and the awful racket made by the engine underlie the non-LEGO origins of the kit. The giant zombiefigs attain a new level of scariness for Western eyes.

Summary: Wash parts thoroughly before use. Destroy the train speaker. Replace the figures with real DUPLO. Only then is the set OK.

Scores	Train
Quality*	60
Value	100
Fit*	80
Compatibility	70
Minifig*	60
Design	90
Instructions	N/A
Total	73

Review Summary

LEGO

Some parts made in China, so is communist. Fantastic kits, great quality, and good to superb designs. Instructions verge towards the daftly easy for each step. Stickers instead of printed bricks look cheap and some peel in the sun. Fairly good value, sensible sized boxes and look brilliant. Excellent to play with, too. Friends kits are very well thought out, but Friendfigs do not have movable hands and separate legs which is annoying.

Airfix Quick Build

Made wholly in the UK, so is not communist. Uses LEGO-style fittings to make a scale model. Plastic is like an Airfix kit on the outside, plates are like Mega Bloks on the inside. Have a double 'H' printed on one stud for each piece. Parts are unique for each model with the exception of a few internal plates. Does require strong hands but not immensely so. Some panel gaps. Stickers are very, very rubbish indeed. Finished model is OK.

Ausini

Half-decent kit design, OK quality. Excellent flowers. Blatant LEGO minifig copies with disturbing undead hue and traumatic expressions. Good value but only applicable to playtime after sundown as the minifigs scream and turn to dust. Burns with a bright yellow toxic flame. Plausible rival if minifigs are ever made with yellow heads.

BanBao

Incompatible brick height, rubbish quality, daft legal minifigs and lamentably poor illegal minifigs. Never ever buy it.

BELA

Mediocre quality cloner with no morals whatsoever. Shamelessly copies LEGO kits directly.

Best-Lock

Have been laughably bad, consistently among the worst LEGO copies on sale by some margin. Minifigs had creepy moulded heads, sometimes disquietingly so, and were very, very angry. Atrocious design and atrocious quality, bought for comic effect only. Quantum leap in design and quality from 2014, but minifig redesign has bombed.

Block Bricks

BLOCK Tech's answer to DUPLO. Most pointless LEGO clone in the UK. Epic fail.

BLOCK TECH

UK importer of many clone kits. Have recently sourced new hideous Tubbyfig, amusingly bad. Take 'contents may vary' to staggering new depths. Spoiled Christmas.

Character Building Sports Stars

Quite good quality football-based kits, mostly about collecting figures more than construction.

Click Brick

Mundane set design, high quality bricks. Very good minifigs or deviant gorillafigs. Designed in UK, which is occasionally rather embarrassing. Possible job opportunity for militant Brickish member.

COGO

Lacklustre quality, gut-twistingly horrid zombie minifigs. Separate route for the Loongon company to inflict misery on a whole generation of the world's children. Less dire than Little White Dragon. But still dire.

Cobi

Polish bricks, Chinese figures. Character Building Armed Forces sets licenced by the UK Secretary of State for Defence. Bricks great source for desert camouflage colour and number one choice for kit with 62 tonnes of destructive firepower or for remotely patrolling the skies. Ensures that future British generations will not necessarily have immensely strong hands, but will be used to having military kit that actually works.

Decool

Surprisingly good quality minifig cloner, with unsurprisingly few morals.

Donglin

Mediocre incompatible ¾-sized Duplo-ish building blocks. Amusing packaging. If you see it, walk away.

Enlighten

Good kit design, mediocre quality. Nice windows. Blatant LEGO minifigs copies with legs that keep falling off. Colours not quite right and clink test sounds bad. Hinges rubbish which is very, very annoying. Random missing pieces. Cheap, but not cheap enough.

Gudi

Surprisingly good quality newish clone brand, even more surprisingly made by the company that produces SY. Rare in the UK.

HuiMei

Abhorrent clone brand with patchy design and truly disastrous minifig quality. Importing these kits seems like retail suicide. Tragic.

IQ Blook

Unique but pointless brick locking design that doesn't really work with anyone else's. Set is OK but not really what's on the box. Minifig is OK for the price but odd. Requires immensely strong hands to assemble. Very cheap but trounced by Ausini and PeiZhi. This is not good. Bin fodder.

Jubilux Woma

Amusing blatant Chinese copy of a Chinese Sluban copy of a South Korean Oxford Toy copy of proper LEGO. Quite good quality pieces, but bottom-clenchingly creepy minifigs. Nice military olive green bricks, big Gatling guns and real firing darts. Potentially dangerous both physically and mentally.

Kazi

Excellent kit design, abysmal quality. Blatant LEGO minifig copies with arms that keep falling off. Terrible brick fit, no quality control, unidentified organic substances. Brand name is strangely but satisfyingly apt. Avoid like the plague, which it probably has.

LELE

Mediocre quality minifig cloner, with utterly shameful copying ethic and bizarre and pointless dioramas.

Leyi

Website promises quality and high morals. Utter lies. Copies LEGO and Chinese clone brands badly. Never buy it.

Ligao

Mediocre quality building bricks, unearthly malformed figures, not cheap enough by a long, long way. A bit like Woking.

Liteup Blocks

Useful niche supplier of compatible LED lighting.

Little White Dragon

Characterless kit design, mediocre quality. Minifigs a bit like Sluban but with ghastly undead hue. Equivalent of piped musak that turns children's brains to mush whilst inducing nightmares of re-animated builders. Dire.

LOZ

Could be good. Not. Grubby incompatible half-scale bricks with the quality of Best-Lock and odd-looking full-scale minifigs. Lying box art. Minifigs will suck out your soul. K'Nex copies appalling quality. Different, cheap, irrelevant and infectious. Yuk.

Mega Bloks

Character minifigs reasonable quality, poor quality bricks unless new camouflage colours. Occasionally infected. Mega Bloks think they are now an equal rival to LEGO and can charge the same price. Seemingly tasked with matching the evil Sluban and ensuring future US generations will be angry, militaristic and possess immensely strong hands.

Oxford Toys / Kre-O

OK quality, densely packaged, rather basic and expensive. New Kreon minifig quite good. Niche marketing by Hasbro patchy, much like franchise film quality.

PeiZhi

Poor quality bricks that look dirty when new, kit design for almost the entire range laughably poor. Sets without minifigs are worthless. Quality control is not going up and occasionally diseased. OK minifigs with arms and legs that mostly stay on. Cheapest kits in the UK. Military sets very useful for Russian colours and minifigs, but nothing else.

PMS International

This company should stick to what it knows best. Importing rubbish clone bricks is not part of it.

Quick Bricks

Poundland's wrong answer to DUPLO. Two types randomly in bags, both as bad as each other. Almost the most pointless LEGO clone in the UK. Terrible in every way.

Sluban

Nice website, sets look professional, don't be fooled. Minifigs weird and rubbish quality with arms falling off, poor leg fit and un-grippy hands. Need mallet to assemble sets. Sluban will be solely responsible for 100 million militaristic angry Chinese children with immensely strong hands. Horrible.

Star Diamond

Good to excellent set design, very high quality bricks and good minifigs, can be found occasionally for a competitive price. Apart from a few minor niggles virtually identical to the genuine article and have parts and colours not yet available from Denmark. A competitor to LEGO if kits ever get exported in numbers, which currently they don't.

SY

Poor to mediocre clone brand, blatantly ripping off copyright. Epitome of the darker side of the hooky brands.

Weagle

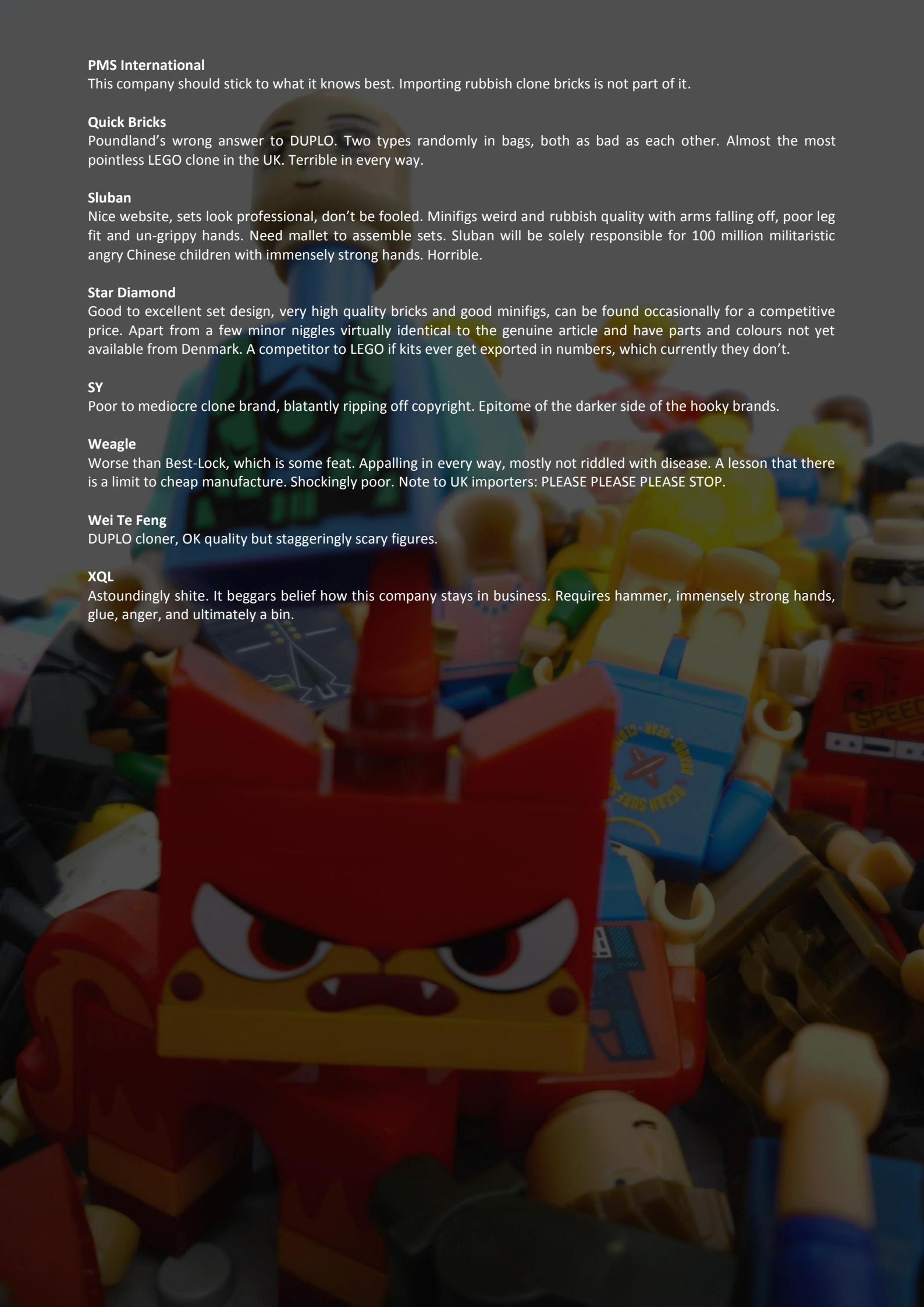
Worse than Best-Lock, which is some feat. Appalling in every way, mostly not riddled with disease. A lesson that there is a limit to cheap manufacture. Shockingly poor. Note to UK importers: PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE STOP.

Wei Te Feng

DUPLO cloner, OK quality but staggeringly scary figures.

XQL

Astoundingly shite. It beggars belief how this company stays in business. Requires hammer, immensely strong hands, glue, anger, and ultimately a bin.



Some related websites

Chinese Brick (shop based in Thailand – stocks most of the Chinese clone brands)

http://www.chinesebricks.com/index.php?lang_page=e

AliExpress (import site for Chinese goods – search engine reveals the vast array of clone brands available)

<http://www.aliexpress.com>

‘Legoland Toys’ based in HongKong is a good place to view a large number of Chinese clone brands and makes

<http://www.aliexpress.com/store/516520>

‘Bluding block’ companies in the ‘Toy Valley’ – an incomplete but still vast list of Chinese LEGO cloner factories and suppliers in the Guangdong area

http://en.toysgu.com/company/list_4_77_p1.html

Highly amusing US blog reviews of rubbish clone LEGO from a few years back, including some early Kazi and Little White Dragon

<http://www.reasonablyclever.com/boots/lego/index.html>

Online UK reviewer of clone kits, duplicating some in this report. And I thought I was scathing about the PeiZhi plane...

<http://commandercottontail.com/index.php/blog/archive>

Online UK reviewer of many appalling Chinese goods, including some clone kits covered in this report. Videos require substantial swear box donations.

<http://www.ashens.com>

Excellent list of many clone bricks, unfortunately with many broken links

<http://www.freewebs.com/orrex/constructionclones.htm>

Ausini building blocks (redirected from www.ausini.com)

<http://ausini.en.alibaba.com/>

BanBao

<http://banbaoworld.com/>

Best-Lock

<http://www.best-lock.com/>

Blox (Wilkinson website)

<http://www.wilko.com/>

Character Building

<http://www.character-online.com/products/Character-Building/>

Click Brick

<http://www.fiatoy.com/Default.aspx>

Cobi

<http://cobi.pl/en/toys/> (Poland); <http://www.bricblok.co.uk/> (UK)

Enlighten

<http://enlighten-brick.com/eng.html>

Kazi

<http://www.kaiyutoys.com/products3.asp>

Kimboli Toys

<http://www.kimboli.cn>

K'nex

<http://www.knex.com/products/>

Kre-O

http://www.hasbro.com/kre-o/en_GB/

Little White Dragon and COGO

http://www.loongon.com/index_en.asp

Ligao / Wange / Dr Luck

<http://www.wangetoys.com>

LOZ / Diamond Blocks

http://www.loztoys.com/profile_en.asp

Leyi (or whatever Shantou Megafun Toys Industrial Ltd are branding their bricks)

http://www.megafuntoys.com/productlist_30.html

Mega Bloks

<http://www.megabloks.com/en-gb/>

Oxford Toys (South Korean, not Chinese)

<http://oxfordtoy.co.kr/eng/index/index.asp>

PeiZhi

<http://pztoys.en.toysgu.com/index.html>

Sluban

<http://www.sluban.co.uk/>

Star Diamond

<http://www.lhtoy.com/en/aboutus.asp>

Review Tables 2015

Company	Ausini	Ausini	Lexington Park (Ausini)	BELA	Best-Lock	Bloc Kits (Peizhi)	Bloc Kits (Peizhi)	BLOCK TECH	BLOCK TECH	BLOCK TECH	BLOCK TECH	Fright Nite	Fright Nite	Funtastic Armed Forces	Funtastic Armed Forces	Funtastic Armed Forces	Funtastic Super Cars	Funtastic Building Site	Funtastic Building Site	Funtastic Fire	Funtastic Fire	Funtastic Fire	LELE
Model	Construction Digger	Police Helicopter	Racing Championship	City Park Cafe	120 Piece Army Kit	Dune Buggy	Jet Ski	Dinosaur Island	Dinosaur Island Figures	Girls Go Shopping	Advent Calendar 2014	Pumpkin Head	Skull	4x4	Tank	Drone	Formula GX	Fork Lift	Foreman	Helicopter	Fire Truck	Fast Response Vehicle	The LELE Movie
Quality*	70	60	70	50	70	70	70	60	N/A	60	50	80	60	70	50	70	80	80	70	70	70	70	80
Value	80	100	100	50	100	100	90	100	N/A	100	30	70	70	100	80	70	90	100	30	90	40	80	70
Fit*	80	70	80	70	100	80	80	70	N/A	70	70	80	80	70	70	70	90	70	70	70	70	80	80
Compatibility	90	90	90	80	80	90	90	90	N/A	80	80	80	80	70	70	70	90	80	70	80	80	80	100
Minifig*	70	80	70	80	30	60	60	60	20	70	N/A	N/A	N/A	80	80	80	70	70	70	70	70	70	90
Design	60	30	70	0	90	100	80	80	N/A	20	40	60	50	60	30	40	60	70	20	60	40	70	40
Instructions	N/A	N/A	90	0	70	80	80	60	N/A	50	70	60	50	40	40	40	50	60	60	60	60	60	N/A
Total	74	62	79	47	74	79	76	71	20	65	60	75	71	71	62	66	77	75	60	71	65	77	-79

Company	M.Y (Leyi)	Liteup Blocks	BLOCH TECH (Loongon)	LOZ	Toy Mania (Peizhi)	Toy Mania (Peizhi)	Toy Mania (Peizhi)	Funtastic (Peizhi)	Funtastic (Peizhi)	PMS International	M.Y (Star Diamond)	Blox	Blox	Blox	Blox	Blox	Character Building	Click Brick	Donglin	BLOCK TECH (Gudi)	BLOCK TECH (Gudi)
Model	Fire Engine	USB Lamppost Light	Earthworx	Scooter	Battlefield	Police Squad	Space	Rocket 4x4	Tank	Building Blocks	Farm Tractor	Ice Cream Van	High Speed Tanker	Home Sweet Home	Helicopter	Figures	Football Spot Kick	Grader	Riddle Bricks	Santa Claus	Snowman
Quality*	40	90	60	20	70	70	60	70	70	20	100	70	60	70	60	N/A	80	100	40	95	100
Value	50	100	80	80	100	80	90	90	100	50	100	100	80	100	90	N/A	70	100	100	100	100
Fit*	30	100	70	70	80	90	80	70	80	10	100	100	70	90	70	N/A	80	100	50	100	100
Compatibility	80	100	60	80	80	80	70	80	80	0	100	80	90	90	80	N/A	90	100	0	100	100
Minifig*	50	N/A	20	N/A	70	70	60	60	70	N/A	95	20	N/A	20	20	20	50	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Design	80	90	50	80	70	60	80	60	40	0	100	60	70	60	50	N/A	80	100	80	100	90
Instructions	50	N/A	60	30	60	60	60	60	60	N/A	100	80	90	80	70	N/A	50	100	N/A	100	100
Total	50	96	54	57	75	74	70	59	72	14	99	70	76	70	57	20	71	100	50	99	98

Company	Weagle	Wei Te Feng	Mega Bloks	Kre-O	SY	SY	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	Decool	LEGO	LEGO	LEGO	LEGO	LEGO
Model	Police Helicopter	Country Train Set	Chopper Strike	Star Trek Bird Of Prey	Wolverine	Star Wars	Black Widow	Wolverine	Iron Man Mk1	Phoenix	Cyclops	Joker	Fantastic Four	Green Lantern	Batch 2: 9 Superheroes	Big Hulk	Big Thing	Dragon Ball Z	Benny's SPACE-SHIP!	Mos Eisley Cantena	Double Decker Couch	SW Advent Calendar 2014	Tractor and Plough
Quality*	30	60	100	100	N/A	60	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	100	100	100	100
Value	60	100	70	100	N/A	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	80	70	110	80	100
Fit*	30	80	100	100	N/A	80	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	100	100	100	100
Compatibility	70	70	90	100	N/A	80	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	100	100	100	100
Minifig*	0	60	60	100	50	70	90	95	95	90	95	100	95	90	90	100	100	90	100	100	100	100	100
Design	40	90	100	100	N/A	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	110	100	100	100	100
Instructions	30	N/A	90	95	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	100	100	100	100
Total	32	73	87	99.5	0	0	0	0	95	0	0	0	95	0	0	0	100	90	99	97	101	98	100

Review Tables 2013-2014

Company	LEGO	LEGO	Airfix	Mega Bloks	Mega Bloks	Mega Bloks	Kre-o	Cobi	Enlighten	Enlighten	Kazi	Sluban	Ligao	Little White Dragon	LOZ	LOZ	KIDDIE LAND	Best-Lock	Best-Lock	Blox	Blox	Blox	Blox
Model	Cement Mixer	Olivia's Beach Buggy	Quick Build F-22 Raptor	Baker Smurf	Brute Prowler	Heavy Armor Outpost	Basic Optimus Prime	Challenger II Tank	Diesel	Carriage	Chinook	HEMTT	Speed Car	Crane Truck	Fire and Police Car	Helicopter and Boat	Farm Set	Racing Car	SWAT	Fire Engine	Combine Harvester	SWAT Cruiser	Construction Truck
Quality*	100	100	80	60	95	95	80	95	80	80	50	60	70	60	40	30	70	Nope	10	None	Still none	Ermm...	Missing
Value	100	80	70	40	70	80	50	90	80	90	50	90	40	50	100	100	100	40	50	30	70	30	20
Fit*	100	100	80	70	100	100	90	90	90	60	70	60	60	60	70	50	60	20	20	15	20	15	15
Compatibility	100	100	70	70	90	90	90	90	100	100	100	90	90	60	20	20	70	60	60	65	60	50	40
Minifig*	100	100	N/A	100	95	70	NA	90	70	70	60	30	20	40	40	30	70	25	30	30	30	20	20
Design	110	90	100	80	100	100	70	90	100	90	100	90	50	40	40	30	70	40	30	20	80	30	10
Instructions	95	100	100	90	100	100	100	70	90	90	80	80	90	70	50	40	NA	30	60	35	50	35	35
Total	100.5	97	82.5	74	94	90	81	89	85	79	69	65	57	54	49	41	71	26	32	24	36	21.5	17.5

Company	Ausini	Ausini	Ausini	Ausini	Weagle	Weagle	IQ Blook	PeiZhi	PeiZhi	PeiZhi	PeiZhi	PeiZhi	PeiZhi	PeiZhi	Jubilux Woma	Jubilux Woma	Click Brick	M.Y / Star Diamond	Star Diamond	Star Diamond	M.Y / Star Diamond
Model	Pizza Van	Ice Cream Truck	Construction Multi-Crane	Garden Cottage	Construction Digger	Fire Tender	UrbanX Sport	Space Cruiser	Space Craft	Military Car	Military Boat	Military Plane	Police Car	Attack Helicopter	Military Justice	Star Fighter	Tow Truck	City Bus	Delivery Truck	Ice-Cream Truck	Military Tank
Quality*	60	70	70	70	0	Pants	60	60	60	60	60	50	60	70	90	90	95	100	100	100	100
Value	100	100	80	100	10	Pants	100	100	100	100	100	100	80	100	80	70	70	100	60	60	100
Fit*	80	80	70	90	20	Pants	70	70	70	70	70	60	80	60	80	70	95	100	100	100	100
Compatibility	90	80	80	90	40	Pants	60	90	90	90	90	90	90	80	90	80	95	95	100	100	100
Minifig*	60	70	70	60	20	N/A	70	80	80	80	80	80	N/A	70	40	40	100	100	105	95	90
Design	70	60	60	90	5	Pants	80	50	60	70	60	10	30	70	80	80	80	90	100	100	90
Instructions	70	70	70	90	30	Pants	50	70	70	70	70	70	50	60	70	90	90	100	100	100	100
Total	73	75	71	81	16.5	Pants	69	73	74	75	74	65	66	71	74	72	92.5	98.5	97	95	97

Company	BanBao	Best-Lock	Blox	Cobi	Click Brick	COGO	HuiMei	Mega Bloks	Mega Bloks	Mega Bloks	PeiZhi	PeiZhi	Quick Bricks	Top Toys	Weagle	Weagle	Weagle	Weagle	Weagle	Weagle	Weagle	Xing Qi Le	Yixing (?)
Model	KFOR Tank	Fire Station	Police Cruiser	RAF Reaper and Remote Pilot	Mini Digger	Princess Playroom	Forklift	DJ Quack Moshi Monster	Schoolin' Smurfs	Smurf's Celebration	Army Vehicle	SPACE TOY FUN BAG	Bag of bricks	Metalix Build Your Own Car	Police SWAT Vehicle	Tipper Truck Roadworks Crew	Fire Engine	Police Car	MODEL TOY FUN BAG	PIANO AND STAGE	DISCO	Combat Mission	Brick Blocks
Quality*	40	0	40	80	90	60	20	50	50	60	50	40	20	40	20	10	0	0	20	60	30	0	0
Value	50	40	40	100	90	60	70	N/A	100	100	100	100	50	90	50	30	40	100	50	80	60	20	30
Fit*	20	10	40	80	90	60	30	70	70	80	70	50	10	60	10	20	10	20	10	50	30	0	0
Compatibility	10	20	50	90	90	70	50	90	70	70	90	70	0	50	50	50	30	50	30	70	60	30	0
Minifig*	20	10	20	80	80	50	20	80	60	70	70	40	N/A	N/A	10	10	10	10	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Design	40	0	20	90	70	70	60	70	80	80	60	30	30	60	40	50	30	20	20	90	50	40	N/A
Instructions	30	70	50	80	90	90	70	N/A	90	90	60	50	N/A	N/A	60	30	40	20	50	50	30	20	N/A
Total	29	17	36	84	86	63	39	70	70	76	68	51	19	65	27	24	18	26	21	51	32	14	5

Company Review Rankings 2015

Ranking	Company	Average Score	Ranking	Company	Average Score
1	LEGO	99 [7]	22	COGO	63 [1]
2	Gudi	99 [2]	23	BLOCK TECH	58 [5]
3	Star Diamond	97 [5]	24	Ligao	57 [1]
4	Lite-Up Bricks	96 [1]	25	Little White Dragon	54 [1]
5	Click Brick	93 [1]	26	Donglin	50 [1]
6	Oxford Toys / Kre-o	90 [1]	27	Leyi	50 [1]
7	Cobi	87 [2]	28	BELA	47 [1]
8	Airfix	83 [1]	29	LOZ	45 [2]
9	Enlighten	82 [2]	30	HuiMei	39 [1]
10	Mega Bloks	80 [7]	31	Blox	39 [11]
11	Ausini	74 [7]	32	Best-Lock	37 [4]
12	Jubilux Woma	73 [2]	33	Decool	32 [12]
13	Wei Te Feng	73 [1]	DNF	BanBao	29 [1]
14	KIDDIELAND	71 [1]	DNF	Weagle	25 [10]
15	Character Building	71 [1]	DNF	Quick Brick	19 [1]
16	PeiZhi	70 [16]	DNF	XQL	14 [1]
17	Funtastic	69 [9]	DNF	PMS International	14 [1]
18	Kazi	69 [1]	DNF	Yixing (?)	5 [1]
19	IQ Blook	69 [1]	DNF	SY	0 [2]
20	Top Toys	65 [1]	DNF	LELE	-79 [3]
21	Sluban	65 [1]			

Scored from 7 categories, 3 of which are double the importance (quality, fit and minifigs), to make 10 overall and thus scored out of 100. Numbers in square brackets indicate how many reviews the overall score is averaged over. The most blatant copying is randomly punished by taking away points.

Some importers use other companies for bricks but use their own designs, such as Click Brick, Funtastic and BLOCK TECH. These are scored when there are differences between the original manufacturer and the brand user.

6 manufacturers are worth getting: LEGO, Gudi and Star Diamond stand out. Decool would also score very highly - if they didn't break copyright.

CAMOUFLAGE: TANK GIRLS

T-90 (PEIZHI AND BANBAO)

Peter and Ewa volunteered to test out the Uralvagonzavod T-90, based loosely around a T-90A model with upgraded equipment. This tank was built on the BanBao “KFOR” chassis, with PeiZhi bricks attached to the top. The lack of a large-scale PeiZhi tank kit required some LEGO pieces to be used for the turret internals and the main gun, but otherwise hooky parts were used throughout. The PeiZhi parts were found to be fairly random in quality, colour and fit, requiring some experimentation and swapping to make a model that would stay together.

There were very few tiles, so the finished tank was lot more ‘studdy’ than the Abrams and Challenger tanks made earlier. The main turret was built using an angled technic core and various SNOT techniques possible with the limited PeiZhi parts bin. The turret was thus too high to scale, but compared fairly well to the other hooky tanks. The main gun was made from LEGO technic parts with a mixture of dark grey and dark bluish grey to give some form of camouflage effect. The PeiZhi pieces had dodgy colour matching giving a slight weathering effect by default. No spare fuel barrels were available so the T-90 looked a little dumpy compared to the Challenger II.



Peter and Ewa in front of the “T-90Z”. PeiZhi parts hammered onto BanBao chassis. Limitations from available pieces, but passable. Great colour.

“Like, it’s a war machine, man.” Peter is not enamoured of his test driver role. “There’s no front hull hatch, and the turret ERA is, well, stuck on. That’s cheating.” Ewa is a bit more positive. “This is a proper old-school tank design.” she says. “There’s no smooth tiles, so studs are inevitable. I like the weathered look, and the detailing is OK. BanBao might make terrible sets but at least the hull and drivetrain are durable. The T-90 is a classic design and although not perfect this example isn’t *too* bad.” Peter is realistic, though. “The PeiZhi bricks are rubbish. They don’t fit very well, and there’s, like, not enough to make the thing. It’s a bad vibe. Everything falls off when you try to move it.”



Peter not quite on message. Turret has Kontakt-5 ERA and Shtora-1 to combat tooled-up zombies. V12 easier to maintain than T-80 gas turbine.

Ewa looks worried. “Reliability is key when you’re facing The Horde. It’s just not on if parts fall off when mashing zombie. This tank will need serious cover if ever used in action.”

Peter has lost interest and is wandering over to his pyramid mobile. “I like trees,” he says, which isn’t very helpful.

Ewa sums up. “The PeiZhi bricks are a good colour but the quality is far too patchy to build anything of significance. The BanBao chassis is a passable basis to hammer on hooky bricks, but it is basically a plastic toy tank and just doesn’t feel like building. This T-90Z is only a mild improvement on the BanBao M1A1, and is more fragile. My opinion? Fail.”

Zombie Nation: FABULAND of Horrors

The main driving force behind almost all of the reviews in Communist LEGO was to find terrible minifigs for a large army of zombies. Many of the Chinese manufacturers use a combination of poor quality plastic, bad fit, awful expressions and badly chosen skin colour to produce what, to some Western eyes, are genuinely scary toys. Feedback on quality and cultural issues has already resulted in change, and it is likely that in 5 years time there will be very few crap clone minifigs. For now, the choice is very wide on the levels and type of cheap undead. Some new candidates were found for this edition, and for this reason some big guns were wheeled out to prove that LEGO can trounce any Panda opposition, no matter what the subject. Were the Chinese merely repeating a Europe-wide social experiment carried out during the heights of the Cold War? That's right, we're talking FABULAND.

Now, I'm sure that there are many fans of FABULAND out there in the global LEGO community, much as there is a Morris Marina Fan Club in the UK. FABULAND was a carefully thought out learning experience with stories, morals and a tailored construction system perfectly suited to the understanding of society, interaction and the implications of right and wrong. Many children in Europe grew up in the 1980s with FABULAND, and what harm did it do? Maybe there is no link to the banking crisis, the creation of One Direction, Bratz, and the theme tune from webuyanycar.com. Anyway, whatever the good intentions of the design and marketing teams, FABULAND usually comes top of surveys to do with the most terrifying LEGO product ever produced⁸, so comparison with the Clone Zombie Army was long overdue.



There were several new makers whose minifigs had not been experienced before, although almost all appeared either competent or boring. BLOCK TECH and Blox were, of course, the exception, with their inexplicably ugly new tubbyfig. These were not exceptionally good zombies and would not come close of toppling the old Best-Lock off the list, as the skin colour was actually quite good and the build quality was OK. However, the evil expressions, unsettling tubby shape and overall ugliness made them a natural choice for the army. Leyi were rubbish quality but boringly yellow. A few atrocious unidentified minifigs were picked up at car boot sales to swell the hideousness of The Horde. The only real gem was the WIT Toys DUPLO clone. This was slightly too grey in skin tone, and had loose arms and legs. The mere size of these giants compared to the rest of the horde was enough to strike terror into anyone holed up in The Winchester or a squad of the Heartlake City Neighbourhood Watch.

I couldn't be bothered to produce a new table, and instead I set up some dioramas. Pictures speak 1000 words, whatever. So, take a position behind the sofa and watch The Horde and LEGO slug it out in the Minifig Of Horrors competition.



"Edward, are you sure the plan will work? They seem to be getting closer." "Colin, you are so scary I know of adults who still scream for 2 hours a night from memories of your face 30 years ago. Just say boo."

⁸ I have no idea if this is true – I made it up – but FABULAND scares the hell out of me and everyone else I know



FABULAND Patrick Parrot and WIT Toys giant Zombiefig. My soul has been eaten. Emmet is really in the wrong place.



Vengeance is sought by the plastic demons of The East, and you will perish. And... why, oh why, are **these** compatible?



"HULK SMUSH!!! THING SMUSH!!!" OK, Decool ARE hooky LEGO, but they're very well made....

Firing The Imagination

One of the many reasons Chinese LEGO clones are reviled is the assumption that the plastic is less safe than the ABS mix used by LEGO. LEGO plastic has additives to reduce flammability, and the older light grey, white, and blue all sunblush in sunlight because of them. Whilst setting fire to LEGO clones seems to be almost an institution on YouTube, it was decided to try to conduct a pseudo-scientific set of experiments to see if any difference in burn resistance could be found. Five of the worst zombie figs were chosen as flame fodder, along with a genuine LEGO minifig who had experienced significant chewing events.

Apparatus used:	Large garden patio area, large aluminium ⁹ tray, large matches, surprisingly small blow torch
Test conditions:	12°C, minimal wind, 70% humidity, scattered clouds
Test subjects:	Weagle, SY, LELE, Best-Lock, Blox, LEGO



Figure 1: This may not end well

⁹ Being a British document, "Aluminium" is in Queen's English. "Num" indeed...

Test 1:

Subject Weagle fell backwards on being ignited. Figure burned for 5 minutes with a bright orange flame, producing significant heat and releasing copious quantities of black pungent smoke and small flakes of black residue. When extinguished the remains were found to be a thin charred plastic film in the shape of a minifig.



Test 2:

Subject SY caught fire upright and stayed standing for about 30s before keeling sideways and then falling forwards in a commendably thespian manner. Figure continued to burn for about 5 minutes with a substantial orange flame, producing significant heat and releasing a large quantity of black pungent smoke and many small flakes of black residue. When extinguished the remains were found to be a charred thin plastic film in the rough shape of a superhero minifig.



Test 3:

Subject LELE was smiling and so got the full force of the blowtorch with extreme prejudice. Figure continued to burn for about 5 minutes with a substantial orange flame, producing significant heat and releasing a lot of smelly black smoke and many small flakes of black stuff. When extinguished the remains were found to be a thin plastic film in the shape of a minifig. The hooky Blacktron logo was artistically printed backwards on the aluminium tray.



Test 4:

Subject Best-Lock was very angry¹⁰, and when lit became very very angry¹¹ and extinguished spontaneously. When re-ignited it remained upright for 1 minute 30s before angrily falling backwards and burning ever hotter, brighter and angrier for another 3 minutes. Fire was observed with an angry orange flame and produced a large amount of angry black noxious smoke and many flakes of angry black smuts. The remains were a very very angry thin plastic film in the vague shape of a very very angry minifig.



¹⁰ As angry as Chester Bennington after finding out how rubbish the Transformers films were

¹¹ More angry than Vinnie Jones after being forced to listen to whale song and do yoga.

Test 5:

Subject Blox was hideous and deserved the full face of Mr Blowtorch. Manic cackling accompanied the significant ignition event. The butt-ugly little plastic critter stood for over 2 minutes converting its revolting corporeal form into a revolting gaseous form of black smoke and floaty bits. After finally toppling backwards the monstrosity continued to be consumed to a satisfying destruction, with the rubbery plastic helmet producing a pool of white-grey goo. Good.



Test 6:

Brave subject LEGO¹² saluted in the name of science and immediately fell backwards, unfortunately igniting in much the same way as all the clones. The flame burned with black smoke but no flakes. A number of yellow-white hotspots were observed amongst the orange flame. The event self-extinguished after approximately 5 minutes. The remains were thin, with one side black and the other showing the minifig colour and shape.



Results

All minifigs burn when subjected to a high temperature blowtorch. ABS plastic produces a lot of heat, fire and noxious smoke.

Setting fire to clone minifigs feels right¹³.

Conclusions

With hindsight, trying to determine the subtle differences of fire resistance of ABS plastic mixes when using a blue-hot flame is a bit daft.

Fire is a really bad idea for minifigs¹⁴, no matter who makes them.

Recommendations

Utilisation of slow heating in a controlled laboratory environment coupled with analysis of the combustion products would allow more demonstrative and determinable differences between the plastics, enabling suitable metrics for scoring each company on a safety axis. This would however be nowhere near as much fun. Maybe acid.

Seriously, don't set fire to any clone LEGO or the genuine article without suitable precautions¹⁵.

¹² Yes, I know, setting fire to real LEGO is not exactly the actions of a sane person, but all tests must have a baseline case from which to compare.

¹³ This isn't really setting a good example, scientifically, socially or morally.

¹⁴ Some might consider this an incentive.

¹⁵ For the sake of the environment more than anything else. Note that setting fire to this stuff indoors would be monumentally stupid, as apart from the obvious fire risk, the smoke would probably reduce the value of any affected property by 50% and the life expectancy of the occupants by a similar amount.