

COMMUNIST' LEGO

2016 REVIEW OF CHINESE CLONE BRANDS



**Blatant
copyright
flouting!
Again!**

**Another
angry
angry
fireman!**

**Fake
minifig
section!**

**More
hideous
tubbyfigs!**

**Rowan
Atkinson!**

COMMUNIST LEGO 2016

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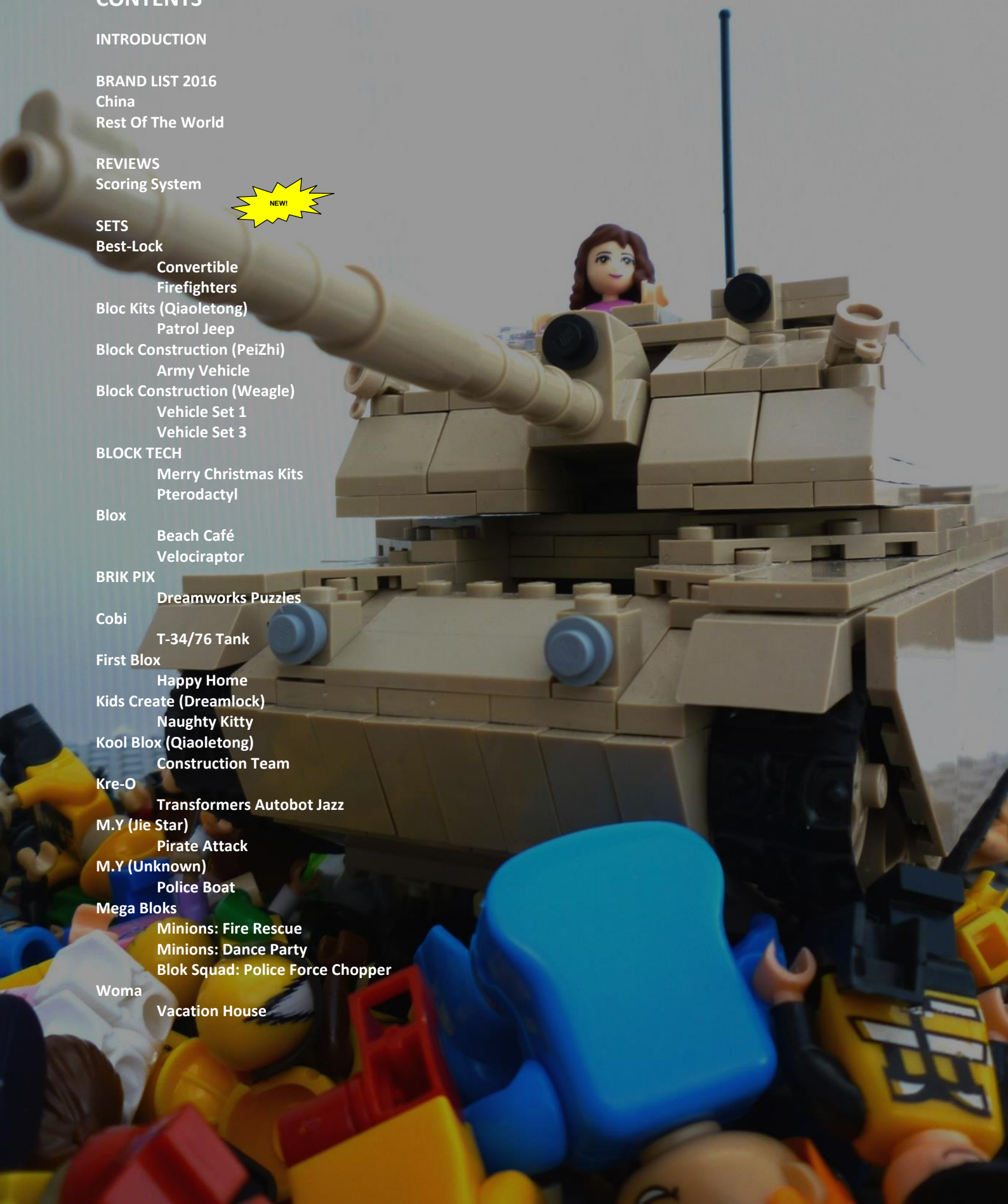
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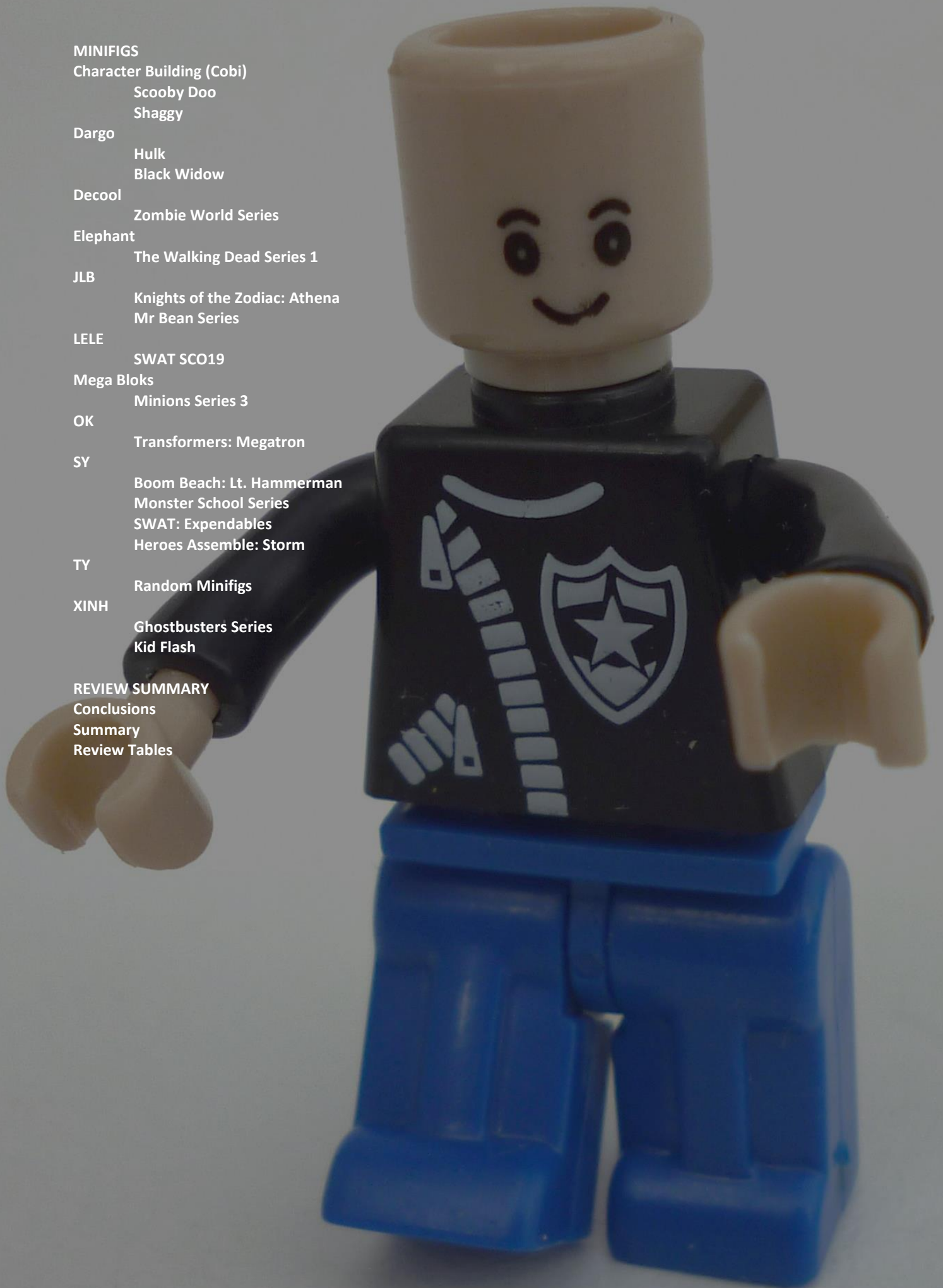
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Change History

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

V1.6 Fifth release, Summer 2016

39 new reviews

Revised introduction and summaries

New scoring system for minifigs and separate minifig section

Absolutely **no** Frozen sets

Growing antipathy towards anything fake LEGO

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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, and it's increasing by the day. What's good? What's bad? Is there a list of brands, and how good are they? How do they get away with it?

'Communist LEGO 2016' is the latest instalment of some glib reviews of a random spread of Chinese-made LEGO-compatible kits and minifigs. The sheer size of this industry, coupled with continuing 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" and "clonebrands_v1.5.pdf" for 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 and some really poor copyright flouting. This version, covering 2015-2016, targets some newer sets and starts to scratch at the massive clone minifig market.

Since 2014 LEGO became the biggest toy manufacturer in the world, and continues to build on this success. 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, for which the patent still has a few years to go, and recent rulings have made the shape a trademark. Copying the minifig shape is thus not entirely legal. However, the more serious issues with the clone brands are intellectual property rights and copyrighting – the effort put into set design and the cost of marketing tie-ups with various brands is where the recent success of LEGO really lies. This is where the Chinese cloners continue to be very naughty. Are us Europeans guilty of being True Barbarians and are now feeling the revenge of The Middle Kingdom? Or is greed a universal failing and it's Communism my arse?

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. There are less new reviews this year, due to both financial aspects, and from a waning interest in putting together shite plastic blocks. Focus shifted towards hooky minifigs, and some were bought from abroad when the opportunity arose. Moral issues on rewarding these companies by buying their products were more than compensated for by sweary damning reports.

Review Style

The Communist LEGO reviews are not always written in a clinical way as I really couldn't be arsed. As mentioned before, this probably totally baffles most unfortunate Chinese who try to actually use the report to choose what to buy from the vast array of crap in their toyshops. Anyone with the merest hint of a proper education will most likely cringe at my woeful attempts to produce amusing prose, but if it raises a smile or two, the rifling through kilos of sub-standard plastic would have been worth it. Kind of. And I suppose the colour-coded tables are useful.



Brand List 2016

LEGO is of course 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.

Quite a few of these companies have sprung up to solely serve the hooky minifig market. Most appear to have produced their own moulds, judging by the subtle differences in the minifig parts.

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. This 2016 list has a few extra additions over 2015 and hopefully serves as a starting point for brand recognition and reference.

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. 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, 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.

Chaug 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 – 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**. Awful quality.

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 – Was 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**.

Jay Star – See **Jie Star**.

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.

Jie Star – Also translated as **Jay Star**, this brand copies various themes including pirates. One of the companies that are imported into the UK and rebranded as **M.Y Toys**.

Jilebao – See **BELA**.

Jinrun – Produces mediocre minifig copies, blatantly ripping off themes such as Star Wars.

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, 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 that was marketed by Asda in the UK.

Kimboli – See **Blocko**.

KSZ – Minifig-copying brand, cloning Pirates of the Caribbean, for example. May be the same as **XSZ**.

LEBQ – 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**.

Lepin – Relatively new brand, copying various lucrative themes such as Star Wars (as "Star Wnrs").

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

Leyi – 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. The company produces a huge number of sculpture kits based around **Diamond Blocks**, and are copied themselves by a few other Chinese companies. 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** a few years ago) 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.

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'. 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 poor-quality minifig clones such as Ghostbusters.

XQL – See **Xing Qi Le**.

XSZ – Brand that copies minifigs, may be the same as **KSZ**.

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 was originally made in Poland, switched some production to China, but now have moved back to Poland. 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 Wilkinson range of clone LEGO. Have used **Best-Lock** and **Jubilux-Woma** in the past, but now source from **BLOCK TECH** and use Woma bricks and the hideous 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 Bloc**.

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 and shocking copyright flouting.

For the 2016 issue, some effort was expended to look the hooky minifig area. Some dodgy kits were also found to satisfy reasons for more venomous prose.

Brief analysis of the progress of the previous editions revealed some more use of 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. Result...

Of course, reviews of clone sets can be found all over the internet, most far better than these ramblings. The 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 to see how post-Brexit Blighty fares in the toy import business.

Older reviews of Communist LEGO are not included in this document. These can be combined from the 2014 and 2015 versions for completeness, especially if you want to use up entire toner cartridges.

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.

Set 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.

Minifig results are new for this edition, and have the following categories, with minifig Compatibility scored twice:

Hair / Headgear	- how well any head covering is made, including aesthetics;
Head	- print quality, colour, fit, size of head;
Torso Assembly	- print quality, arm joints, overall feel;
Hands	- moulding and ability to hold stuff;
Legs Assembly	- fit, movement, foot grab, print quality where applicable;
Quality	- overall feel and manufacturing competence;
Compatibility*	- how much the parts can be exchanged directly with genuine LEGO parts;
Design	- effort and result of any free thinking;
Value	- cost vs. quality factor;
Total	- addition of all the above, with Compatibility scored twice.

The following is recommended as a helpful guide if thinking of purchasing clones. Basically, if it's green it's OK, but otherwise beware...

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.

The **Bare-Faced Cheek (BFC)** mark is 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.



Best-Lock and guilt. The two go hand-in-hand whenever an unopened set is spotted sitting proudly¹ on a car boot sale stand. Older Best-Lock kits have never scored well, and it always seems so unfair to get them purely to destroy. After all, the marketing seems to suggest that the design team (revealed on this box to be Canadian and German) go to lengths² to create eminently playable toys. This small set [Best-Lock never give their sets a title; this one will be described as 'Convertible'] was picked up for an exorbitant £1 one misty Saturday morning in spring. There was no real reason to get it, as many Best-Lock kits had been reviewed before and all found to be awful, but a little spark of hope welled up – maybe this would be a decent Best-Lock kit. It was the season of rebirth. Surely it was time to put down the pre-loaded poisoned pen and start afresh, scoring the small plastic toy on merit and free of prejudice? With hope buoyed by the fresh morning air, Convertible was taken home and started that very day.

Scrunched up inside the box was a bag of parts and an instruction sheet with a huge choking warning. Hope of a trouble-free kit swiftly evaporated as the full visual horror of the shite parts shone brightly from under the examination lamp. A brief inventory check showed there were two spare parts and one missing. The red colour varied from weak to dark; the grey was yellowed in hue; and there was some strange detritus in the bag. In this case, there were no organic marks or severe moulding errors, so the car was mostly completed as directed by the instructions without reverting to a hammer or latex gloves. Of course it was ugly. The wheels did fit, and the almost finished product was capable of being driven around the floor, should any such desire miraculously appear.



Benefit of the doubt. Perhaps this will be the kit that will delight and inspire. Er, no. *Crap design, quality, parts, instructions - and missing a bit.*

The set was not provided with a minifig, so one of the many Best-Lock angry angry firemen bought for previous issues was recruited to test-drive the new motor. Angry angry fireman immediately got angrier when it became evident that no amount of pushing would result in him sitting in the car properly. The legs would not grab onto the car baseplate, leaving the minifig in constant peril of falling out at every minor ruck in the carpet. The rakish windscreen, a unique Best-Lock design, was too near and low for viewing comfort. Having fixed the missing half of the engine with the spare bricks, the aesthetics of the car remained at 'pig-ugly'. The simple addition of a sticker for the grill might have been a cheap solution for this, but as no such fix was provided angry angry fireman got even more angry. After a short journey to the skirting board, angry angry angry fireman went angrily to the Best-Lock tools parts box, retrieved his angry chainsaw, and angrily attempted to modify the car. This would have succeeded if the Best-Lock parts were of decent quality. It did not succeed. Angry angry fireman's anger did not subside.



Arse as ugly as face. Angry Angry Fireman takes it for a completely unbiased Best-Lock test drive. Conclusion? Inevitable anger and chainsaw.

I see Best-Lock as constant temptation for my cynicism and childish evilness to surface, which must be suppressed so that sweetness and light can be expressed to do my bit to bring about a better, happier world. "Convertible" has made this job much, much harder.

Summary: An almost unstoppable catalyst for hate and anger to stalk the entire planet. Although this might be a slight overstatement.

Scores	Convertible
Quality*	0
Value	50
Fit*	30
Compatibility	60
Minifig*	N/A
Design	40
Instructions	100
Total	39

¹ This is definitely the wrong word

² Not **great** lengths, obviously

In the last couple of years or so, Best-Lock changed their supplier. This may have nothing or something to do with the European Court of Justice ruling against them in 2015 upholding the LEGO minifig as a trademark shape. One of the newer Best-Lock kits was reviewed in the 2015 edition, and was found to use surprisingly good quality bricks - and surprisingly bad minifigs. Nevertheless, the abominably awful older sets still turn up in charity shops and car boot sales, mostly unopened. Why unopened? Children aren't stupid.

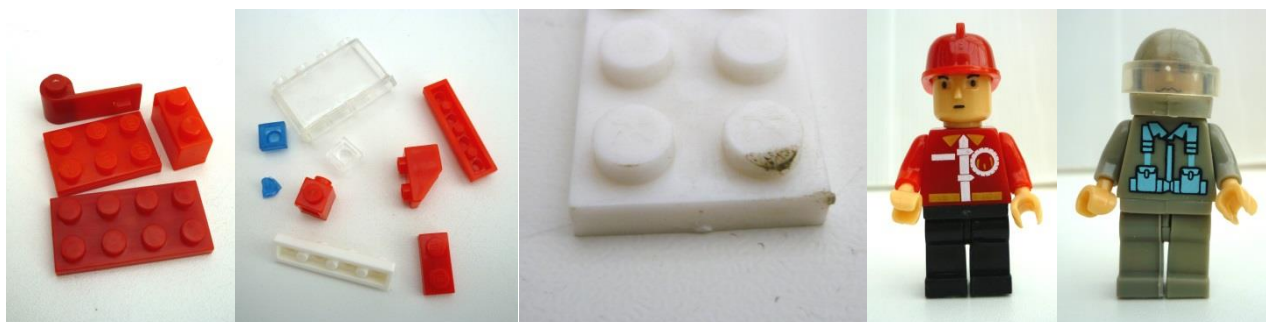
'Firefighters' was found in a local shop in new condition. No scientific purpose existed to buy it as all the vehicles and figures had been reviewed before and would inevitably get another scathing write-up and score badly, but it was purchased anyway ~~for a cheap laugh~~ as a humanitarian gesture to stop the disappointment of a child getting it as a badly-judged present from a clueless relative. It was noted that there were three vehicles and only two minifigs. Maybe Best-Lock were really cutting back on costs. Or perhaps it was done deliberately to remind the recipient of their place on the financial ladder. The spare parts easily had enough plastic to make another minifig. Hmm...

As with other old Best-Lock products, initial impressions were positive as each vehicle was in its own bag and had a separate instruction manual. This sense of joyful anticipation was, of course, squarely punched in face when the contents were extracted. As seen before on many previous occasions, the set excelled in atrocious feel, randomly loose and tight fit, colour mismatches, numerous sprue marks, comically awful design, and an overall aura of failure. For once there were no missing parts and nothing broke during assembly. It would be highly likely that continuous play would see some pieces breaking, but judging by the awfulness of Firefighters it would be highly unlikely it *would* be subject to continuous play. This is the sort of toy that gets put under the bed for years and ends up covered in dust, old sports gear and smelling of cheesy feet.



Of course it was bought because it was rubbish. Good presentation, separate instructions, but unfortunately utterly shite product in every way.

The minifigs were the old Communist LEGO favourite angry angry fireman, and a strangely amused pilot. This particular angry angry fireman had loose trousers which fell off when picked up. This made him very very angry, but of course this went unnoticed. He did get a yellow chainsaw to channel his anger. I really hope I never have to call the Best-Lock fire brigade. The pilot was made in that slightly brown light grey colour seen in 1970s LEGO that has been left out in the sun for a few years. His visor was vaguely see-through, although combined with the helicopter windscreen visibility would be very low. This would have been OK if his moveable visor stayed in the same place when opened. Guess which part was loose.



All meant to be the same colour. Ooh, spare bits. Best-Lock quality control lacking rigour. Very very angry fireman and oddly happy pilot.

It would be unfair to judge current Best-Lock products on this review, as the quality of the newer plastic and designs far exceed these sets. This is more of a reminder to avoid the older stuff, along with keeping alive the true misery of the past. Under no circumstances forget they exposed our children to this rubbish.

Summary: Shite. Never, EVER produce this crap again.

Scores	Firefighters
Quality*	10
Value	70
Fit*	30
Compatibility	70
Minifig*	20
Design	10
Instructions	100
Total	37



Bloc Kits (Qiaoletong) – Patrol Jeep (Winter 2015)

NEW!

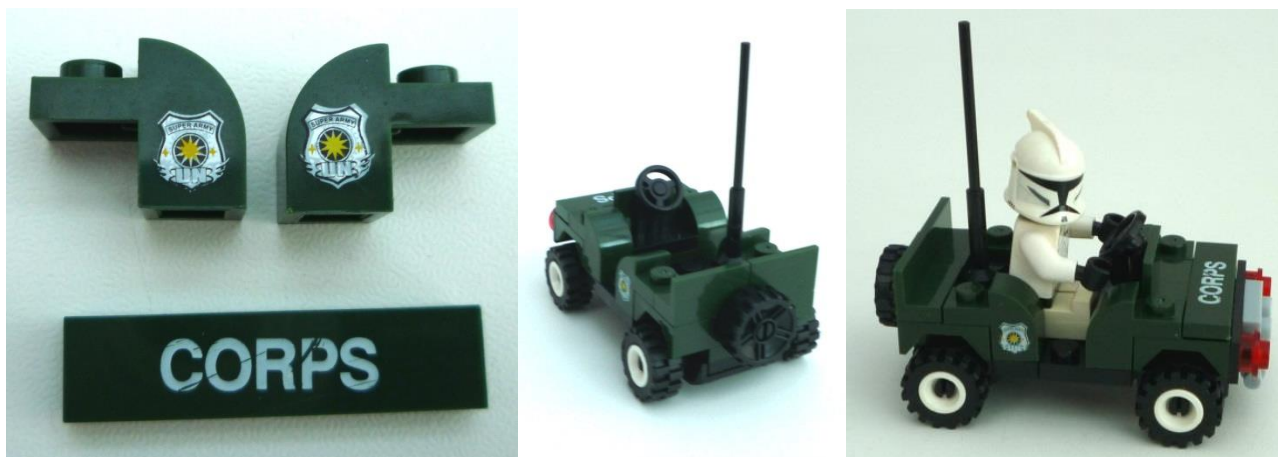
The 99p Stores and Poundland merger was one of the major retail shake-ups of the British high street for decades. Well... OK, perhaps it wasn't, but seeing whether each store continued with its separate hooky LEGO suppliers was of at least marginal interest to this report. Stocks of clone brick sets varied considerably between each 99p Stores, and a chance visit to a large one saw some previously unseen kits under the brand names 'Bloc Kits' and 'Kids Create'. Quite why 99p Stores had two different brands for their brick sets was not obvious to the casual consumer. One Bloc Kits range had very, very small sets without minifigs, probably reflecting the increasing cost of hooky LEGO. These were discounted to 69p each, making them the cheapest yet seen. Most were less than appealing XQL-type mini sets. The exception was Patrol Jeep, which appeared both a competent design and in a dark green colour that was not PeiZhi - so had a chance of not being shite. The box stated suitability for 6+; since Kids Create kits were 5+ it was guessed that the original Chinese manufacturer had used 6+ on their boxes. The supplier was almost certainly Qiaoletong.

Patrol Jeep's box had rip-off tabs to open it which did actually work. The box itself was made of thin cardboard, unlike most other £1-class kits available in the UK which are made of daftly thick and wasteful material. Once opened, the sensibly-sized bag of parts and folded leaflet instruction sheet were revealed. The bag had warning notices about the dangers of choking in many, many languages, starting with Polish. When extracted the unbranded parts were shown to be of reasonable quality, although the printing on the bricks was woefully inadequate. Assembly of the jeep was straightforward enough, but not helped by the instructions which were quite poorly drawn. All parts were present and correct, with no bad moulding or strange brown organic marks.



Tiny kit for a tiny price. Why is it ages 6+ and not 5+? Here are the 37 pieces and tiny instructions. A finished jeep, actually quite good.

When finished the jeep felt very good quality; the wheels especially had proper rubber tyres and were a tight but very useable fit on the axles. The badly printed parts were the only disappointing aspect of the kit. Realistically it could be improved by having clear or yellow front lights and a darker front, but overall it was surprisingly good for 69p. A normal LEGO minifig easily fitted in the driving seat. It would be trivial to make other jeeps with different colour proper LEGO bricks, but a small army of dark green jeeps could be bought cheaply if needed. The keen could use T-cut to remove the prints to make them appear less cheap.



Printing leaves much to be desired. Rear wheel quite clever and gives good proportions. Find a minifig and the set is complete. Good stuff.

Summary: A surprise amongst the myriad of cheap sub-£1 offerings - one small kit that is actually quite good. Except 99p Stores have now gone.

Scores	Patrol Jeep
Quality*	90
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	N/A
Design	90
Instructions	70
Total	93



Block Construction (PeiZhi) – Army Vehicle (Winter 2015)

NEW!

Poundland has been a staple supplier of rubbish Chinese clone sets for a number of years. Recently, inflation has led to smaller and smaller sets appearing, and by 2015 £1 bought considerably less than in 2013. One final gasp was yet another 'new' Poundland brand name – 'Block Construction'. There were various kits under this name; all had been seen before, being PeiZhi kits of the 50-odd piece variety with a minifig. Weirdly the boxes stated the sets were only suitable for ages 8+, rather than the 5+ or 6+ seen with almost every other clone kit. Two boxes of 'Army Vehicle' were chosen, as they were known to be PeiZhi kit 330 and had an army minifig with a helmet. Previous experience with PeiZhi-sourced kits had shown a gradual decline in quality, so there was some anticipation on what would actually be found in the boxes.

The two sets were opened together and a pint of beer poured so as to bring intellect to the level of an 8 year old (down or up?). The newly devised PeiZhi drinking game had thus begun at Age 8+. Block Construction had not skimped on the dose of shrinking rays applied to the instructions, which were small even for the minifigs. They were quite badly drawn but could be followed even when slightly inebriated, the bottom of the empty beer glass providing a useful magnifying effect. Each jeep was made up as much as possible (one steering wheel was missing), and although grab was not quite as good as previous efforts they were both mostly completed without bits falling off too often. Once the kits were finished, the empty beer glass was not required for visual enhancement purposes and so the state of emptiness was undone. That improved matters. Age 7+.



Two Army Vehicles. PeiZhi's finest bags of mystery for set 330, much used. Tiny, tiny instructions with almost childish drawings. Great stuff.

The minifigs were of course annoyingly unassembled. Having poured another pint (age now 6+) to alleviate considerable annoyance they were un-assembled, noting that swapping of arms between torsos gave some degree of non-looseness. The heads were meant to have the same print (PeiZhi's hard man with sunglasses as opposed to their blissfully happy hippy) but one was high and the other low highlighting PeiZhi's questionable quality control. Each minifig had the standard PeiZhi machine gun and a radio. The legs were the later type with chamfered toes, and the torso prints did not have 'PeiZhi' written on them. There were no useful camouflage torso stickers to cover up the mediocre prints. At least the helmets were OK. Glass empty again. Solving emptiness made playing with the kits a viable option. Age 5+. PeiZhi number. Job done.



Finished sets, almost all parts present. Soldiers look unhappy, unsurprisingly. Head printing is hugely random, but does give character.

As expected, PeiZhi's downwards quality slide had not really stopped. Pure luck had probably meant that only one piece was missing. The minifig right arms were loose enough so that posing was not possible with handheld objects. In the end, the flag jeeps were a playable toy, and the soldiers could be used if their right arms were glued on. This was much the same as reviewed before. On the positive side, a new drinking game had been invented.

Summary: Buy Block Construction, have another beer. Can you make it to 3+ with one set?³

Scores	Army Vehicle
Quality*	70
Value	100
Fit*	80
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	40
Design	60
Instructions	60
Total	70

³ Um... it is not recommended that anyone underage should try this...



Block Construction (Weagle) – Vehicle Set 1 (Spring 2016)

NEW!

The Block Construction brand of Poundland's Funtastic range had already been reviewed with the PeiZhi Army Vehicle jeep kit. This had been shown to be a standard terrible PeiZhi set with the minifig helmet and firearm the only redeeming features. One Sunday visit to the shops needed a couple of items to bring the total spend up to a special offer amount, so two Funtastic Vehicle Sets were bought – a fire response car and a construction tractor. These did not have helmets or firearms, but one did promise that classic and inexplicable Weagle Fire Brigade sticker "Rescue Floor". However, the sets showed a reasonably competent minifig on the box, so it was surmised that if Funtastic were not lying through their teeth that a new type of figure could be included. Anticipation declined to non-existent on the journey home, and it was several days before enough boredom was accumulated to attempt the kits. Hint. Both were so bad that they are covered in separate reviews.

The Block Construction box was refreshingly lightweight. Inside the Rescue Floor set was a bag of parts (covered liberally with choking warning signs in many languages, with an extra one in English for good measure), a tool sprue, and a small re-sealable bag with minifig parts inside. The instructions were reasonably large and reasonably screwed up. Once everything was extracted construction was annoyingly begun. Weagle was indeed the maker, and it became apparent very quickly that they had not attended any seminars on quality control since last year. All pieces were present and none had any organic contamination, but building the car required a visit to the tool shed to get a hammer, file and pliers. Fit could mostly be described as robust, with the windscreens requiring more force than was deemed safe to attach to the plates below. The wheels were daftly loose with at least one unable to stay on at all. The car itself was large but basic. It did stay together, but the design was like one of those your mad uncle Barry would make over Christmas and you'd break up when he'd finally gone home with the parts still smelling of tobacco and gin.



Wow! What an awful lot of bricks for £1! Oh. What a lot of awful bricks for £1. Our old nemesis Weagle and a newly-designed legal minifig.

Funtastic's box was, of course, lying with its minifig depiction. Sure, the Weagle minifig had undergone a change. It looked roughly the same as the old one (a major disadvantage), but the method of construction was different. The legs assembly now featured an internal chassis to provide a locator for the internal arm pins. This was rather clever as it would enable the torso arm holes to have far worse tolerances and still be functional. The minifig needed to be made by simultaneously putting in the legs assembly whilst holding the two arms in place. Although annoying this could be done with a bit of practice and once a satisfying 'click' was heard, everything was nicely held in place. If only it was nice. This only left the poorly-moulded hands to be partially rammed up the arms in a futile attempt to make them fit, the Woma-type badly-printed head to be hammered into place, and the terrible helmet to be half-sunk on to the too-big lug poking out the top. Voila! One legal and astoundingly shite minifig.



Not fully inspired to collect all 3. Mr Happy as shown is not in the box. New design of minifig quite clever. Reality is both shoddy and disturbing.

Weagle have consistently been near the bottom of the Hooky LEGO manufacturer's league, and this example effortlessly continues that trend.

Summary: What a complete load of poo.

Scores	Vehicle Set 1
Quality*	20
Value	100
Fit*	30
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	10
Design	40
Instructions	50
Total	39



Block Construction (Weagle) – Vehicle Set 3 (Spring 2016)

NEW!

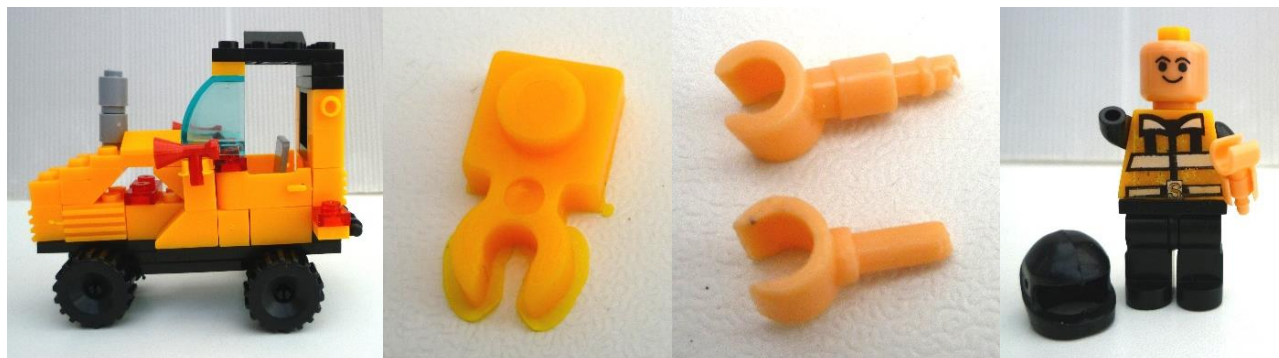
The Poundland Block Construction Vehicle Set had three to collect. The second in the series had sold out, as it was the Weagle convertible police car (reviewed in a past Communist LEGO edition) with a huge firearms sprue. The third in the series was a butt-ugly construction tractor thingy that had been unsurprisingly shunned by most punters as someone in marketing decided unwisely to put a photo of it on the front. As with the others in the set, it promised a half-decent minifig, but after the soul-crushing disappointment of the Rescue Floor fire car, all hope had evaporated and rubbishness of both vehicle and figure was deemed inevitable. Set 3 was opened with expectations of futility and more wasted life.

The hideous tractor kit came up trumps in a number of areas to cement the inevitable realisation of an ever-accelerating unfulfilled rush towards oblivion. The tepid yellow-orange bricks, poorly formed black plates, extra supplied 1x4 plates outside the bag, tiny instructions, and utterly shite minifig were all present. Making the dreadful tractor was a dreadful experience. A hammer was already present from the Rescue Floor fire car construction debacle, which was handy. The use of the Weagle seat made it apparent why the figure on the box was leaning out of the cab – it was impossible for any minifig to sit down in the cab if built as per the instructions. This was particularly amusing as two extra plates were included to raise the height of the roof to allow the minifig to sit in the cab... totally pointless, of course. There were no missing or soiled parts, but many were mis-formed making the finished lump of a tractor both stupidly solid and fragile at the same time. The design was a failure aesthetically and technically; not exactly a unique feat for Weagle, but this was one of their more accomplished disasters. Being picky, the horn things were supplied in red as opposed to the grey on the box, not that there was any reason to complain or care. A Weagle grey traffic cone was also in the bag, not shown anywhere on the packaging or instructions. The sticker sheet, seen before in other Weagle construction kits, had been recut so that the sticker for the cone actually fitted. This was a bonus, as all the other stickers were too big to fit anywhere sensible on the vehicle. Then again, covering it up with oversize warning signs appeared perfectly justifiable. All four wheels were very loose, making play without collapse challenging.



Vehicle 3 surely can't be THAT bad? Yes. Bag of parts, extra bits forgotten, tiny instructions. Minifig looks OK on box. Reality is much more shite.

The supplied minifig was the same new design as the fire guy seen before, but although the construction bloke had a smiley face he also had two different hands. It was guessed that one was from a Weagle tubbyfig lookalike; despite considerable force it would not fit into the arms. Construction bloke's torso print was also badly done and wonky, and his helmet didn't fit well either. At least his flesh colour was healthy.



3D hieroglyph for 'disappointment'. Moulding crapness at all-time high. Two different hands – which will fit? Happy despite the accident.

I could try to say something positive about this kit, but its mere existence has made me lose any will to care.

Summary: Pants.

Scores	Vehicle Set 3
Quality*	10
Value	50
Fit*	0
Compatibility	50
Minifig*	0
Design	0
Instructions	40
Total	17



BLOCK TECH – Merry Christmas Kits (Spring 2016)

The 2015 festive season had seen BLOCK TECH bring out a number of new kits. None had any modicum of temptation to make me part with money. By the end of February the vast number of unsold Christmas kits had approached a price where a test was viable. Two “£2” sets were found discounted to 50p each, but even then it took a number of shop visits to eventually decide to buy. They were under the ‘Merry Christmas’ range, and were modifications of the ‘tree’ (read ‘small bush’) and ‘snowman’ (read ‘terrifying ice demon from the 8th plane of hell’) found in the disastrous BLOCK TECH 2014 advent calendar (see Communist LEGO v1.5). The ‘tree’ came with a minifig described as an elf; the snowman had a pole. The box bar codes were identical and showed there were only two in the range. The elf pictured on the front was computer generated and used the same artwork as the BLOCK TECH tubbyfigs. Both kits were bought and taken home for ~~deserved derision~~ a fair and independent review.

Each set had an astonishingly high box-to-piece ratio. Parts were in a small bag with warning messages in 35 languages, and instructions were a screwed up piece of paper with snowman and tree on opposite sides. First up for review was the tree set. The minifig-tubbyfig chimera (tubbyfig head and arms, and clone torso and legs) was supplied fully assembled except for the hair. The “elf’s” badge revealed he was in fact a member of ski patrol, although further information was cunningly disguised by terrible printing. The “tree” itself was relatively easy to put together despite confusing instructions. Compared to the “elf” it was more of a pot plant than a tree. There were no spare parts, and overall the set seemed poor value for money even for 50p, let alone the optimistic £2 that had resulted in the less than stellar sales.



Can BLOCK TECH spoil Christmas again? These parts are OK but sparse. Shirtsleeves in the Arctic is brave. Snowman nightmare and Pole of Doom.

The snowman set boasted 38 pieces, although this was bolstered by the use of 1x1 bricks instead of a 1x4. The white was a disappointing milky hue and had mediocre fit and finishing. There was one unexplained and suspiciously organic mark on one of the white inverted slopes. Assembly of Frosty from Cania was tempered by the alternative loose and tight fit of parts, although once finished both snowman and pole stayed together. The supplied stickers were very sticky and proved almost impossible to take off once applied. As with the calendar version, the snowman was nose-heavy and fell over on a flat surface, requiring the help of Blu Tac to stay upright. The pole looked ideal for use in a graveyard.



Merry Christmas from BLOCK TECH. Elf has a day job. Some parts vaguely interchangeable with LEGO. Initial idea was to copy minifig outright.

BLOCK TECH did not spoil Christmas with these sets, as at £2 RRP they were too expensive for anyone to actually want to buy them. The 2014 advent calendar had the tree as one day, which even at full price was about 70p. Tubbyfigs tend to be sold at 25p each, so the RRP of the ‘tree’ kit should have been about £1. A cursory glance around BLOCK TECH’s newer sets shows a more typical pricing strategy.

Summary: Mediocre kits sold at roughly 400% of the price anyone would sensibly buy them. Willing commercial suicide for the good of the nation. Or ineptness. The minifig is still wrong.

Scores	Tree and Elf	Snowman and Post
Quality*	70	60
Value	20	50
Fit*	70	70
Compatibility	90	90
Minifig*	40	N/A
Design	50	40
Instructions	50	60
Total	54	63



BLOCK TECH (Woma) – Pterodactyl (Spring 2016)

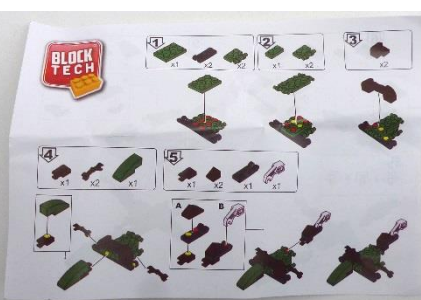
The 'Dino Park' theme has been marketed by BLOCK TECH for a couple of years, crudely bypassing a thorny copyright issue with the word Jurassic. The sets range from small to large, with most featuring the utterly hideous tubbyfigs as rangers or park visitors. The dinosaurs themselves are made of bricks and have a similar feel to the LEGO Creator kits. A previous Communist LEGO edition reviewed a raptor and warden set, with lacklustre grab and a missing piece. Pterodactyl was a small set found in Poundland next to a much larger raptor. This made the kit look fairly poor value when compared with the raptor, although the similar Blox sets found in Wilko were even better value as they were generally had a much larger parts-Pound ratio. Pterodactyl was bought as it was unlikely to be a big seller but seemed a relatively good design.

The guy who had put the instructions into the box was still in the early stages of his treatment for heavy-duty hatred of humanity, as they were bent and screwed up as usual. The parts bag was OK if rather small, reflecting the small numbers and sizes of the bricks. Pterodactyl was a clever design with various small clips and movable parts that would have spelt disaster for earlier hooky Chinese LEGO, where poor quality plastic and tolerances would have inevitably led to loose fit and breakages. The new Woma parts sourced by BLOCK TECH were however perfectly suited to this model, being slightly tougher in grab than real LEGO, and creation of Pterodactyl proceeded easily. Several parts, such as the robot arms and clips, had not been seen before in BLOCK TECH kits. The green colour was slightly brighter and marginally washed out when compared to LEGO, but the reddish brown was OK. When finished the flying reptile actually made a competent and playable model.



Dino Park... maybe that'd make a good film franchise... Screwed up instructions and some bits. Finished pterodactyl is OK, actually. No, really.

Comparison with the similarly themed Blox velociraptor showed complete compatibility as Blox source off BLOCK TECH for their parts, although the kit designs are different. All of the dinosaurs in both themes are made from parts and not specially moulded dino pieces. This allows different dinosaurs to be made out of parts to happily chase around hapless tubbyfig park guests and be happily chased after by tubbyfig wardens. Although the tubbyfig design itself cannot be said to be a major selling point of the Dino Park theme, the overall design does actually promote creativity. Whether this is the result of a conscious decision by BLOCK TECH based around an in-depth study of worldwide children learning patterns or an inevitability from Woma's limited parts bin I'll let the reader decide...



31 blocks do not compare well to other kits. Instructions easy to follow once ironed flat. Goes perfectly with Blox stuff, of course.

BLOCH TECH have been a stalwart source of mediocre reviews for Communist LEGO due to their scattergun approach to sourcing parts and the strange tubbyfig. Their recent deals with Woma appear to have been reasonably successful as some of the non-tubbyfig kits are genuinely desirable and quite well manufactured. Pterodactyl is one of them. Good show, chaps.

Summary: A BLOCK TECH kit found in Poundland that is quite good. Keep it up.

Scores	Pterodactyl
Quality*	90
Value	80
Fit*	100
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	N/A
Design	80
Instructions	60
Total	86

blox Blox (Woma) – Beach Cafe (Winter 2015)

NEW!

You've got to hand it to Wilko's for being brave. Their new revamped Blox sets ditched the old Best-Lock and BLOCK TECH sets and instead turned to BLOCK TECH's new supplier, now found to be Jubilux Woma. The new Blox range started off by copying the old BLOCK TECH stuff such as the PeiZhi helicopter and the Ausini ice cream van, and then branched off into their own designs using the Woma bricks. This would have all gone swimmingly except for the decision to use the legal but astoundingly ugly BLOCK TECH tubbyfigs. Presumably the sets sold well enough to merit a new round of designs which appeared in the second half of 2015. I admire the effort and proficiency that have gone into the new Blox graphic design, and would like to say that I wanted to try one the new sets because of improved quality, aesthetic appeal and excellent value. Unfortunately, this would be lying. Beach Café was chosen because it was obviously dreadful and a sure-fire reason to write a bad review.

Beach Cafe was only bought after it was heavily discounted to £2.50, having initially been up for sale for £6. The set itself looked amazingly good value, with a café, car and two figures. The box art was well designed and featured professionally-shot photos of the set. It was unfortunate that the tubbyfigs were present, but to be fair the flesh tones of the seaside guy and gal were OK. Pieces were in three bags, the windscreen and window pane were inside their own bags to stop them getting scratched, and the instructions were of a decent size and were clear and easy to read.

And yet... The tubbyfigs were supplied completely unassembled and required considerable strength and patience to make up their vile selves. Assembly of the café revealed variation in grab with some pieces being so loose it was a wonder how they ever got past the testing stage. The car was a terrible design with undersized wheels. When finished the set appeared good value as long as it was not touched, as parts would start to fall off. Building anything else would be frustrating as the random grab made permanent structures a matter of luck. Yet again, potential Blox fun was cruelly dashed.



Tempting Blox Beach Café also includes a car. Tempting bags of parts. Reality of a badly-made fade-prone ugly set with hideous tubbyfigs.

The hideousness of the tubbyfigs were, of course, a main buying point for the model for this edition, although this is probably not what Wilko's product creation team had in mind. The beach versions had been seen previously and probably the most incredulous of the entire tubbyfig range. These examples had even stiffer heads than before and the hairpieces had to be hammered on. To balance this, the arms were comically loose and fell off with alarming speed when any attempt at play was tried. This was a shame, as tubbygal's genuinely evil smirk, spare tyre and malformed legs could form the beginning of many an absorbing and gritty working class story not possible with the more banal leafy suburb LEGO equivalents.



Annoyingly unmade tubbyfigs. Lifering sized for elephant or tubbyfig. Monumentally ugly car. Some parts can fit, but please don't ever, ever try.

Summary: Undeniably awful, but strangely attractive. Much like a SyFy disaster movie.

Scores	Beach Cafe
Quality*	70
Value	70
Fit*	60
Compatibility	80
Minifig*	20
Design	70
Instructions	100
Total	62

blox Blox (Woma) – Velociraptor (Spring 2016)

NEW!

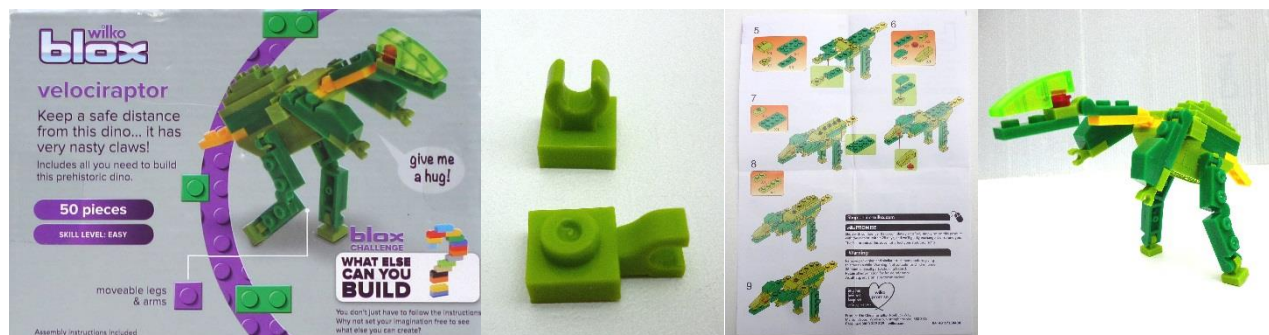
Wilko's pseudo-LEGO Blox range covers a range of themes in their link-up with BLOCK TECH, and one consistent genre is the dinosaur park. This was covered in previous Communist LEGO editions. Although there are various action sets with vehicles, building and hideous tubbyfigs, there are a few smaller sets where the dinosaurs can be built on their own. These are analogous to LEGO Creator kits, with the Blox (and BLOCK TECH) sets priced at around £1-2 each. One such set turned up at a car boot sale unopened for a significantly lower price. This was purchased not because it was awful, but because the lack of tubbyfig and use of the strong-grab Woma pieces might result in a kit that wasn't rubbish. Could this be a decent Blox set?

The Blox design team had done a good job with the box art and had photographed the velociraptor for a striking if somewhat muddled action diorama on the front. The rear photo indicated the dinosaur spoke out of its chest. The Blox range was stated 'compatible with leading brand' (singular), presumably dismissing Mega Bloks and others out of hand. Interestingly, the age range was set at '3+', which given the number of small parts and the relatively complex shape was keen to say the least. The skill level was also stated to be easy.



Small Blox kit with surprisingly low recommended age. Contents cheap looking but not screwed up. Finished 'dino' can balance and decent size.

The rather strong and thick box revealed a neatly folded instruction sheet and bag of parts. The Woma parts were fairly well made, but with unfortunate colour mixes giving a washed-out green and an awful orangey-yellow hue reeking of cheapness. Unlike 'Beach Café', assembly of Velociraptor was quite enjoyable, as the grab was good and the steps easy enough to follow. It'd be debateable whether it could be classed as '3+' and 'easy', but credit should be given to Blox for assuming that all children are not idiots. Once finished, standing the dinosaur on its very small feet required a flat surface, but whoever had designed it had done an excellent job getting the balance just right. The limited number of hinge parts still allowed a wide variety of poses to be achieved.



Rear design actually tempting. Woma vertical clip different design to LEGO but works very well. Instructions OK, dino needs bigger feet really.

Was the kit perfect? No. The colours were cheap-looking, there were a few minor sprue tags, the fit wasn't 100% true, the feet and tail could have been a bit bigger, and Woma pieces have been shown to fade in the sun. Was the kit worthwhile? Yes. The design was good, the grab would give many hours of play, and it would fit in with other dinosaurs in the range. More importantly, this was one of the sets where rebuilding and imagination was possible.

Not all Blox reviews have to be damning.

Summary: Well done Blox, an excellent effort.

Scores	Velociraptor
Quality*	60
Value	100
Fit*	90
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	N/A
Design	90
Instructions	90
Total	87



BRIK Pix (unknown) – DreamWorks Puzzles (Spring 2016)

NEW!

The Spring of 2016 in Poundland gave the debut of yet another unknown brand. “BRIK Pix” were marketed by Ultimate Source, a company based in Hong Kong and Frankfurt. The BRIK Pix range was a set of 6 licensed brick-based puzzles featuring DreamWorks films – Madagascar, Shrek, Dragons, Kung Fu Panda, Penguins, and Home. Each was packed assembled in a clear plastic bubble attached to a display card. Ultimate Source and Poundland were making the most of their licencing coup as there were many different toys on sale using the same movies.

There were statements written on the back of the card, including that ‘Contents may vary in style, colour, shape and decoration from images shown on pack or in advertising’. This was a bit pointless as the only proper indication of what was in the pack was through the clear plastic - looking at the contents. It also appeared to give the manufacturer complete liberty to supply anything at all compared to what the product was shown to be. Surely no-one would trust any company that considered *that* would be a good idea. Perhaps even the Germans want to commit commercial suicide. Even more odd was the ‘ATTENTION: Remove packaging material before use’. I really want to watch someone who needed telling that trying to make the puzzle up, with or without the packaging material.

The set itself was in the form of eight 2x2 and eight 2x4 bricks with a picture printed on the front. On the face of it, the puzzle was trivial as international-standard lazy types could just take it out of the pack and not break it up. Putting together the disassembled bricks had the chance to be a mild distraction as there were only 16 pieces, although there was only a small black and white picture of the assembled puzzle on the back card for reference and it would be quite challenging for the recommended lower age range of 3+. The really keen could of course buy all six sets, break them up, mix all the pieces together and throw away the packaging.



A couple of genuinely licensed legal Brick products. It's probably more effort to break the set apart than to make it up again. Are we there yet?

The bricks had the tell-tale lug sprue mark typical of many Chinese brick manufacturers, but quite which company made the parts was not obvious. The underside showed multiple strengthening crossbeams. Grab was however quite poor – not enough to make the bricks fall apart, but certainly not good enough to build much else apart from the puzzle. The printing on each brick appeared to have no problems. The white colour was a bit washed out with more than a hint of cheapness. This was surprising as the cost of each puzzle - £1 for 16 bricks – was quite high. It would put the rough cost of each 2x4 brick at about 8p and the 2x2 bricks at 4-5p each, on a par with LEGO itself.

Summary: Just about useful, but not exactly good value for money.

Scores	Shrek Puzzle
Quality*	70
Value	50
Fit*	60
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	N/A
Design	80
Instructions	N/A
Total	78



Cobi – T34/76 Tank (Winter 2015)

NEW!

Cobi are a Polish-based company that have produced LEGO-type kits for many years. They have several franchises and have had tie-ups with Ben 10, Scooby Doo, Doctor Who, McLaren, Boeing, Jeep, Winx Club, and the UK Armed Forces among others. Cobi have invested in new European manufacturing facilities and until recently only sourced their minifigs from China. This makes Cobi only marginally 'Communist LEGO', although their merger with Best-Lock has seen the latter source from Loongon. Cobi do mimic some LEGO themes, and tend to market rival franchises (such as the slightly disturbing Italian fairy-themed Winx Club as an alternative to Friends) more than outright copies. However, Cobi are most famous for their military kits, which of course LEGO do not do. 2015 had seen an expansion of their WWII sets, especially armour. Some shops in the UK do sell Cobi, and the T-34/76 was found and bought (for an eye-wateringly high price) as it was a good comparison with other sets reviewed earlier.

The T-34/76 is an iconic tank and the box gave some details about the history. The only photo of a real T-34 on the box showed it on fire, which was a bit odd. No... very odd... Erm, anyway, the box contents were a very large comprehensive instruction manual and two numbered bags to be used in succession. There were no 'Made In China' labels anywhere, so it was possible the entire kit was European sourced and not Communist at all. It was obvious that the new Cobi factory was supplying top quality ABS, and the parts were all but identical in feel to genuine LEGO. Construction was thus a pleasure and the tank was completed with no real issues, although a side tube was missing. The real revelation was the track elements: although all 64 had to be joined together, they fitted and worked superbly, allowing the tank to be driven over all manner of objects (by hand). Of other interest were at least three unique SNOT elements that would be exceptionally useful if made in real LEGO, and new slope pieces.



Box art gives tank details and bizarrely a photo of a real T-34 on fire. Parts in bags and huge instruction sheet. Finished cartoon tank and figures.

The minifigs were developments of the type seen with the Character Building sets. The heads were moulded and were a non-scary skin tone. However, they felt quite poor quality compared to the rest of the kit and were not best sized for the job. Comparison with LEGO figures showed that the heads and headgear were compatible, along with handheld objects.

The tank itself was in essence a caricature of itself with oversized wheels and tracks. A real T-34 is quite small (for a tank), but the Cobi model was larger than their Challenger II marketed a couple of years back. Scale-wise, it was approximately 1:24 as opposed to the 1:35 of most of the other tank examples.



Reinforced baseplate, great SNOT pieces and very clever track elements. Un-great minifigs, with only head and headgear compatible with LEGO.

Summary: Cartoon tank, not dimensionally accurate but very well engineered and superb to play with. Rubbish minifigs spoil the whole effect. And it's far too expensive.

Scores	T-34/76
Quality*	95
Value	60
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	50
Design	80
Instructions	100
Total	83



First Blox – Happy Home (Spring 2016)

NEW!

Good old Wilko have not stood still with their switch to Woma-manufactured parts. The brand “First Blox” is relatively new and the equivalent of Duplo. As with the standard Blox LEGO clones there were various sizes of kits for sale, with the smallest and cheapest priced at £2.50. There were a number of these kits kicking around the local store, which included ‘Happy Home’, a set with two figures, a house and a car. The major selling point of First Blox were the use of custom Duplo-sized figures that, unlike the appalling tubbyfig, did not induce revulsion in sane humans. This seemingly amazing value kit was bought in a fit of blazon licentiousness and was opened the next day when time permitted. Could the curse of Woma finally have lifted for Wilko?

The well printed box was opened and revealed a relatively sensible parts-to-box ratio. All parts were in a single bag. The car needed to be assembled but this only needed semi-immensely strong hands, proving that the training of 100 million superhuman Chinese children is scheduled to begin at the ages of 3 years or more. The figures themselves were supplied all made up, with some pattern missing on face and jacket. The male’s hair was found to be removable which probably wasn’t on the design spec as the female’s was firmly attached.



Good box design back and front. Everyone looks happy. Bag of parts holds everything. Finished set just like on the box. Seems good value...

The pieces were well made, colourful, and fitted together nicely. Unfortunately, several had been embellished by some mysterious marks, which did appear vaguely organic in origin. Bearing in mind the entire set has only 19 pieces the hit rate for staining was quite high. This was... unsettling... Perhaps the early training of the 100 million was for immunity to major bacterial and viral infections. Also present was the strange numbered brick 150430. This may have been a secret code to bore into the subconscious and generate obedience for the long march ahead... or perhaps it was the house number not shown in the pictures. Anyway, once the pieces were washed and dried the house went together and fitted fairly well.



Ewww... just one example of gunk. Happy Home is designated 150430. Make sure you have your papers ready. Figures are quite a good design.

Once built Happy Home was a remarkably well-costed kit, with the potential to give many hours of happy cheap playtime. The figures were very good with friendly faces and separately moving legs allowing poses just not possible with standard Duplo. But but but... the quality bugbear was very large and hairy. Organic stains, dodgy printing and removable hair all in 19 pieces was just poor.

Summary: No tubbyfigs = good. No quality control = bad. Try harder. No, try. Then try harder.

Scores	Happy Home
Quality*	70
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	100
Design	90
Instructions	N/A
Total	92



Kids Create (Dreamlock) – Naughty Kitty (Winter 2015)

NEW!

'Create and Build' branded kits were sold in UK 99p Stores shops and were reviewed in 2015. In that instance they were found to be rebranded PeiZhi kits. Post-Christmas shopping found a new range of 'Kids Create', this time with the pink sets themed 'Dream World'. The slightly oddly-named 'Naughty Kitty' was on sale for a daftly low price of 69p. The colours and style resembled small Friends kits with animals, and it seemed that 99p Stores was trying to cash in on this market - albeit a very small amount of cash. A brief internet search revealed that the real manufacturer was Dreamlock, a hitherto unknown Chinese company making various themed sets including Friends under 'Rainbow Town'. The Kids Create set appeared to be a mirror image of the Dreamlock 6203 set.

The box-to-bag ratio for Naughty Kitty was vast. Once extracted the unbranded pieces were found to be of OK quality with good enough grab, but with that washed-out hue and feel of disappointment so typical of Mega Bloks. The supplied mushroom dish had noticeably less well-defined white spots when compared to a genuine LEGO item. The instructions were awful to follow, trying to show lines indicating where parts should go and failing. The instructions showed the tree and shelter the mirror image of that picture on the Kids Create box and instead mimicked the original Dreamlock version. The reason for the change for the Kids Create version was soon apparent – Naughty Kitty had been made with its head turned to its left, as opposed to the right as shown in the Dreamlock set. The UK version was thus a half-arsed attempt to fix the problem. Bothering to spend half an hour reversing the instructions as was done with the box might have been a good idea, but for 69p, probably not worth it.



Dream World aimed at girls on a tight budget. Big box, tiny contents. Naughty Kitty is another invader from the mirror dimension of nightmares.

Naughty Kitty was very similar to the LEGO Friends-type small pet. Printing was OK, but the tail was left with an obvious sprue addition (subsequently easily removed). Eyebrow design did indeed give the impression that kitty was naughty. The tree design allowed said evil feline to escape arboreally with several perching places available. As a small play set the kit was not that bad, especially for imagining what the round tan splodge was by the shelter and why kitty was designated naughty.



Original Dreamlock kitty hails from Rainbow Town. As supplied, animal is a Scorpion-Cat. Mushroom printing a bit lacklustre, but nice touch.

As a basic hooky Friends-type pet kit, Naughty Kitty was OK. The price of 69p made it the joint-cheapest new kit found in the UK to date. Quality was not first class and instructions dire, but value meant these sold out very fast, whereas similarly-priced Bloc Kits did not. Looking at other Dreamlock sets and 99p Stores selling stuff other than at 99p, the Dream World range may well be expanded. Assuming Poundland allows it.

Summary: Not as bad as it could be. Kitty will stalk you from every reflective surface and sting you with a mis-moulded mediocre tail. Ooh. Scary.

Scores	Naughty Kitty
Quality*	80
Value	100
Fit*	100
Compatibility	100
Minifig*	N/A
Design	80
Instructions	50
Total	81



Kool Blox (Qiaoletong) – Construction Team (Spring 2016)

NEW!

Poundland kept bringing surprises in the Spring. This time it was a twin pack of tiny construction sets under the previously unseen brand Kool Blox. They had been imported by Add Trading, based in Manchester. There was more than a passing resemblance to the Bloc Kits patrol jeep set from The 99p Store in design and look, but at 50p per set Poundland seemed to have got an even cheaper deal. The rear of the packet promised three builds per set for both the Cement Mixer and Digger. Careful internet searching eventually revealed the manufacturer as Qiaoletong; this company had not been reviewed and so a huge investment was made to mitigate this deficit.

Effort was made to find an ideal opportunity to test out these small kits in their natural environment. This proved fruitless, as a drive down the M20 was not met with a 5-hour traffic jam, that flight across The Pond wasn't delayed by randomly drunk pilots, the train had seating fit for a politician, and us Brits actually wanted to watch the Olympics. Eventually Construction Team was opened when I had something better to do.

Each box was made of thin cardboard, and inside was a sizeable bag of parts, a small sticker sheet, and a screwed up instruction page too big to fit in the box. The stickers had the Qiaoletong set number and the instructions the original translations of the kit – Digger was a Grab, whereas Cement Mixer was a Blender. The bag had warnings on the dangers of the bag in about every conceivable language known. When cut open, the parts were shown to be good quality but rather orange in hue. The yellow was the horrible Loongon and Weagle shade, whereas the orange was probably best described as ORANGE. The black, grey and clear parts were much closer to real LEGO. The clear red was disappointingly vague.



Kool Blox's cardboard offering. Contents are Qiaoletong, 2 sets out of 4. Tiny Cement Mixer and Digger, a bit too orange to be passable as LEGO.

Construction of each set was straightforward, with consistent grab verging on robust. This was an advantage for the little digger as the 4-part arm had just the correct tolerances to make it perfect for playing with. The stickers were one application only – well printed, but VERY sticky. As with the Bloc Kits patrol jeep, the tyres had some moulding bits left on them, but the wheels fitted well so that the tiny construction team could be driven all over the carpet without anything falling off.



This is the on-site catering truck. Parts OK quality, but not without moulding remnants. Finished models tough to dismantle but competent.

These two kits were typical of the myriad of small sets available from any number of Chinese suppliers. Qiaoletong seem to be relatively competent on this front, especially with the wheels that actually allow playing. If you want a small cheap kit, these aren't the worst choice.

Summary: Alright, I suppose. But a bit too orange.

Scores	Construction Team
Quality*	80
Value	100
Fit*	80
Compatibility	70
Minifig*	N/A
Design	80
Instructions	90
Total	83



Kre-O – Transformers Autobot Jazz (Winter 2015)

NEW!

The South Korean firm Kre-O are owned by Hasbro and make block sets of the hugely popular Transformers range. Optimus Prime was reviewed beforehand, and a chance find at a charity shop found another in the series from the first film. Jazz is the stylish Autobot who doesn't come off best in the film after a slight disagreement with Megatron. Early versions of Jazz in the 1980s had him as a white racing Porsche 935 (noting that some toys misspelt Martini to get around copyright issues); the film of 2007 had Jazz take on the form of a silver Pontiac Solstice. This was the version the Kre-O set tried to reproduce.

The Kre-O box was quite small and packed extremely efficiently with parts, stickers, and instructions. The box lid opened, allowing all parts to be placed inside for construction which was very useful indeed. The instruction booklet was well laid out and had sensible steps. The finished models were either the car or the robot – they did not transform into each other and the car didn't use quite a few parts. The stickers again mimicked the Martini sponsorship colours of the original Porsche back in the 1980s, but again got around having to pay royalties by not having the name or logo. Also included were two 'Kreon' minifigs – one driver and one miniature Jazz figure.



Kre-O box, useful opening lid and crammed full with parts. Finished ugly car with opening roof. Finished tall robot with half-immobile limbs.

Jazz as a car was a... car, not exactly looking much like a Pontiac Solstice at all, being far too high to be stylish. and having opening doors topped with plates which was a bit weird as it made the opening doors pointless. The roof opened to allow placing of the red Kreon (or the Mini-Me Jazz) in the driving seat. At least the pearl grey colour was well executed. There were various Kre-O parts not made by LEGO. The wheel arches were joined by a 6x2 plate, which of course made them only useable for a 6-stud width vehicle (why?).

Jazz as a robot was adequate; as with all the characters in this Kre-O series the legs had no knees and the head seemed a bit small. Good points were the ball and socket joints, which had been very well engineered to give just the correct amount of drag to allow posing. The car was so ugly that it would be almost guaranteed that Jazz would spend much of his life in robot form on the bedroom windowsill.

The Kreons were excellent alternatives to LEGO-style minifigs, having tiny ball and socket joints for the arms and legs. This gave them far more leeway to move about, although this came with a undeniable 1970s look with flared legs, and a dab of the early 1980s with daftly large shoulder pads. Mini-Me Jazz was presumably included to be a collectable minifig; he had a pair of wings attached via the neck and a natty helmet. The 1970s look actually suited the Autobot minifig very well, far more than the various Chinese clone minifigs available. The heads, headgear and weapon were compatible with LEGO minifigs.



Happy (or worried?) driver and tiny Jazz. These bits are spare for transforming. Wheel arches are different and less useful. Poseable Kreon.

Given the gigantic potential of the Transformers genre to generate cash (approximately \$5 billion and counting), the Kre-O range seems a bit underwhelming. Jazz is meant to be stylish; the car supplied just isn't. And OK, it's a small set, but a Transformers kit that doesn't transform is not really a perfect solution. Could try harder.

Summary: Great quality, OK design. Nothing really wrong, just not inspiring.

Scores	Transformers Jazz
Quality*	100
Value	70
Fit*	100
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	80
Design	60
Instructions	100
Total	89



M.Y (Jie Star) – Pirate Attack (Spring 2016)

NEW!

A return visit to a known coastal M.Y stockist turned up a new range of small pirate-based kits. These were all priced at £1.99, and were next to a number of the M.Y branded Star Diamond tractors (reviewed last year). The medium price of the pirate sets suggested a reasonable chance that these were a new supplier for M.Y – not as good as Star Diamond, but vastly better than the appalling Hui Mei. Searching for the original kit itself did not produce a match, but comparison with other hooky LEGO manufacturers showed the maker was almost certainly Jie Star, not reviewed before. Two of the sets appeared to have firing cannons, so the most promising was bought. Such was the excitement that the kit was opened soon after returning home from the seasonal cold wind and horizontal drizzle that inevitably defines the British seaside spring getaway.

Pirate Attack came in a relatively thin square box with a rip-open tab. Contents were a neatly folded and well-sized instruction sheet, and a bag with 37 warning notices on it. The cannon was indeed a firing type, but was supplied in four separate parts including the spring. All pieces were unbranded and although not LEGO quality were decent enough. Assembly was quick, with adequate grab and no extra sprue marks. The cannon was good quality and fitted together very well. Along with the minifig the set seemed to be a bargain... except that there was no dedicated ammunition for the cannon to fire. Unlike some LEGO versions, the cannon did not have a central spike and so would allow anything 1x1 round to fit in and fired. The flagpole was an obvious candidate and experimentation showed it could be punted happily across the carpet. The cannon also had a couple of twin lines around its barrel for aesthetic effect.



Another M.Y. lottery. Price indicates mediocre. Some parts and some very presented instructions. Finished kit has firing cannon... but no ammo.

The minifig came with head attached and with hands in arms, but otherwise had to be assembled using strong hands (not immensely so). Torso printing was certainly adequate for the price, and the overall quality was relatively good. The legs assembly had a solid connection between the two lugs for a snug fit in the torso, giving no compatibility between itself and genuine LEGO, although the overall finished figure was almost identical in shape to a real minifig. The face print was decidedly oriental, which in this case almost worked in the pirate's favour giving the guy a pirate but strangely effeminate look. Jie Star pirate guy also got a light bluish grey flintlock.



Parts are unbranded but not crap. Printing on flag is OK. Minifig surprisingly competent but weirdly effeminate.

For once, a small cheap kit turned out to be a great plaything, with many opportunities to fire a flagpole at a hapless minifig. The supplied cannon and cannon base had more detailing than the LEGO equivalent, as well as good quality and the ability to fire a wider variety of pieces, thus appearing more desirable than the genuine LEGO example. The minifig was also well made enough to allow movement without limb loss and could at a stretch be mistaken for a LEGO figure. Of course, the extremely similar shape meant that it was technically illegal, but for the casual shopper this particular M.Y kit would be a sensible buy. For the supply of a LEGO cannon upgrade, this set would also be an excellent choice.

Summary: Great source for the Jie Star cannon. The other bits are OK.

Scores	Pirate Attack
Quality*	80
Value	100
Fit*	80
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	80
Design	80
Instructions	100
Total	85



M.Y (unknown) – Police Boat (Winter 2015)



M.Y is a brand of KandyToys, a UK-based import company who source from a wide range of Chinese suppliers, from the excellent Star Diamond to the atrocious XQL. Unless the set is known it is thus quite hard to determine whether any M.Y kit is crap or not. 'Police Boat' was found in a charity shop, and as the most likely maker was guessed at first to be appalling Weagle or dire Loongon it would normally have been ignored. But this M.Y set was different. This M.Y set had Captain Sensible.

Now, I'm not sure whether many Chinese listen to late 1970s UK punk. It would be nice to think that somewhere in one of the many toy manufacturing plants in Chenghai there is a small but defiant underground appreciation society, fighting against The State with raw energy, raucous shouting and random swearwords, but I doubt it. It is thus unlikely that the designers really understood what they had done giving the minifig a red beret. Whatever the truth, I suspect a few of these sets were not bought for children in Britain. The real Captain is not that likely to police waters in a speedboat with a 10 foot-long machine gun, but for the cost the figure (or just the beret and head) was worth it in itself.

The set itself was not new, and had been made once and put back in the box with a couple of parts missing. Everything was dismantled and then reassembled using the infuriatingly tiny instructions. The parts went together well enough, with the usual gripes of poor plastic quality, dodgy moulding, suspicious colour variations and mediocre design. A spare LEGO bottom hinge brick was added to replace a missing part, and showed unexpectedly good compatibility. Many months of exposure to uncharacteristic seasonal sunshine revealed the red beret did not fade. Amazing.



Loongon? Jublux? Who cares, it's got Captain Sensible in it. Tiny instructions marginally useful. Finished Sensible boat with 10 foot long gun.

The Captain himself was made of mediocre plastic. He had flash moulding on almost every part, a slightly wonky and basic torso print, and quite poor fit if made to sit on the hooky bricks. He could, however, actually hold his gun and any other minifig tool, and the head and cap were of decent enough quality. Unfortunately his skin tone was eminently suitable for The Zombie Horde, sentencing him to a future of appearing in marginally amusing dioramas and photos created by some tubby middle-aged bloke trying in vain to blank out a mid-life crisis. At least *he* wasn't a tubbyfig.



Parts indicate this is more an unassembled model kit. Craft knife and sandpaper recommended. You wot? Do the Chinese like The Damned?

Captain aside, the overall effect was of a cheap product – not necessarily nasty, but reminiscent of one of those wet mid-Sunday realisations that the entire day has been a waste of time and that perhaps firmly saying “NO” to your aunt's offer to go to the shops to find you a present during your visit to Wolverhampton would have been the better option. Realistically, faced with watching golf on TV or playing the boat you'd pick the boat, but once back home it would be quietly put into that box reserved for toys you drop bricks on after school by that path near the industrial units with the wire fences and the nettles. Crushed ABS can be found in many provincial towns across the UK.

Summary: Cheap mediocre kit about as inspiring as a third helping of sprouts, but massively enhanced by a punk Legend, however accidental.

Scores	Police Boat
Quality*	70
Value	90
Fit*	80
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	60
Design	70
Instructions	70
Total	74



Mega Bloks – Minions Fire Rescue and Dance Party (Summer 2015)

2015 was the year of the Minions, and a vast number of themed products appeared in every toyshop across the world trying to squeeze into tiny spaces between myriad rows of Frozen merchandise. Mega Bloks managed to get the manufacturing rights for the Despicable Me franchise from the second film onwards, which allowed them to market the little critters in block form. In fact, all the sets for Despicable Me II were exclusively Minion-based, highlighting which particular aspect of the theme was deemed profitable before the Minions movie itself was released. Fire Rescue and Dance Party were based on short scenes from the Despicable Me II movie. These two sets were bought in a big brand toy shop.

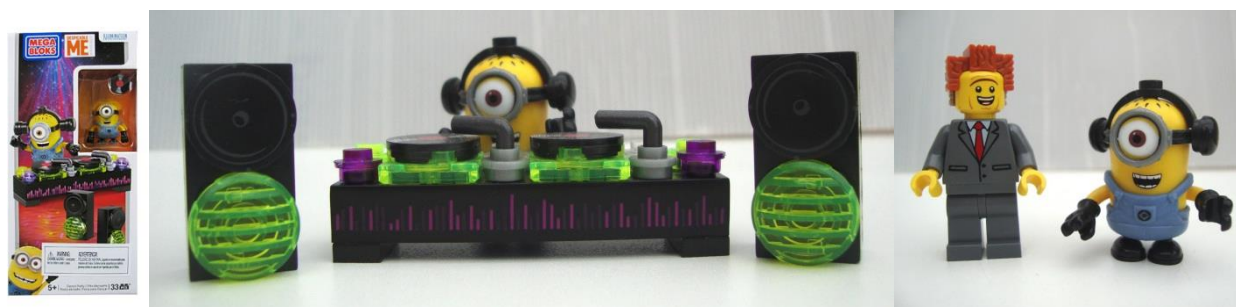
Fire Rescue was very well designed, and although the typical Mega translucent feel was still present, the finished product was not too embarrassing. The fire alarm was particularly good. As a play thing, the kit had limited opportunity to rebuild as there were only a few parts. Having Gru in his chair would have made the set much more interactive. Presumably Mega Bloks had decided that this would have detracted from the three lucrative Minion characters that were included. These were the mad axe-wielding guy, the hose-aimer, and the one-eyed megaphone figure with lights headband. Unfortunately, only Axe Minion was assembled, leaving the other two to have arms and legs attached manually which required super-human strength and a variety of metal tools, profanities, and stress pills. Once finished the Minion figures were of very good quality, being marginally rubber in feel. Anyone who has seen the trailers or film will of course know that the entire set would quickly be consigned to a far corner of the lounge except for the megaphone Minion, who would be constantly paraded through the house yelling "BEEDOR!" This would be funny for the first 10 minutes. The next 6 months would be utter hell.



Fire Rescue is a great excuse to get three minions. Piece count thankfully low as quality mediocre at best, but BEEDOR minion alone worth it.

The Dance Party kit was very small and had only one Minion, thankfully assembled. The set had a twin record deck and speakers, which were well designed but made the kit poor value for money at RRP when compared to the Fire Rescue kit. Cost aside, the set was not a disappointment and offered many hours of bass-thumping imagination. Or something like that.

The Minions themselves were great quality, although a bit large when scaled to LEGO minifigs (apparently the average Minion is 105cm tall). The goggles and headwear were interchangeable with other Minion figures but too big for minifigs.



Dance Party set is overpriced but good design. DJ minion is great; headphones are head accessory. Not compatible with LEGO minifigs at all.

Summary: Small kits, obviously designed just to sell Minions, which are bloody annoying to assemble. But still strangely endearing...

Scores	Fire Rescue	Dance Party
Quality*	80	90
Value	70	40
Fit*	90	100
Compatibility	100	100
Minifig*	100	100
Design	70	90
Instructions	100	100
Total	88	89



Mega Bloks – Police Force Chopper (Autumn 2015)

NEW!

One gloriously sunny Autumn Sunday morning was less wasted with the discovery of an almost pristine 'Blok Squad' Mega Bloks kit at a local car boot sale. The Blok Squad theme uses a new design of minifig very similar in appearance to the Click Brick figure reviewed in 2014. The helicopter itself was a decent enough size and so the slightly battered box and contents were bought for a small amount of cash and promptly forgotten about when offloaded at home. Some time later it was rediscovered and made up during one of the many, many weekends of rain late in 2015.

Standard Mega Bloks parts tend to have a cheap feel to them, but this kit was made out of decent quality plastic. Assembly of the chopper was straightforward enough, if a little basic, with excellent instructions. Specialist parts were the single-strut landing gear, the canopy, and the rotor blades. When finished it looked OK, although there was still that slight Mega Blok washed out look that gave the impression of failure. Also, there were no control sticks or panel, which was a bit disappointing – especially as there appeared to be 14 spare parts.



Blok Squad have their own police. Finished chopper is OK, but has no controls which is a bit lazy. Police Blok Squad minifig is exuding cool.

The Blok Squad minifig was extremely similar in shape to the Click Brick minifig but made in a different way. The design of the head and headgear was far superior and overall the figure was a good effort. The head had moulded ears and nose, with hair and face printing. The police pilot's expression was probably one of the most stylish reviewed of any non-LEGO figure and was definitely not for the Zombie Horde.



Loads of spare parts for no apparent reason. Similarities between Click Brick and Blok Squad minifigs is only external – they do not fit each other.

The Blok Squad set turned out to be reasonably good, with the proviso of that legacy Mega Blok plastic quality bypass that still blights their products. Annoyingly, Mega Bloks have demonstrated that they *can* source LEGO-quality ABS with their camouflage bricks used in Call Of Duty and Halo sets. When they can be arsed to do the same for all their products they may become a worthy rival to LEGO. Still waiting...

Summary: Mega Bloks kit that is competent but not quite there yet. Blok Squad figure legal and not awful.

Scores	Police Force Chopper
Quality*	80
Value	80
Fit*	90
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	70
Design	70
Instructions	100
Total	82



Woma – Vacation House (Winter 2015)

NEW!

Jubilux Woma are two names of the same company, and much like Loongon and COGO market different lines. Woma generally cover the simpler kits, although which brand does what theme is not always clear cut. Woma are almost certainly the source of the new BLOCK TECH and Blox sets that appeared from 2014, although the BLOCK TECH tubbyfig appears to be an export special. 'Vacation House' was found heavily discounted in a bloke-orientated chain store; quite why a pink set was ever considered for the shop must be one of those marketing decisions that will forever remain elusive. The set was bought as it was obvious that finding fault with it would like shooting fish in a barrel, whereas the rather more worthwhile opportunity to test out the theory that BLOCK TECH and Blox were made of Woma bits was considered of minor importance. 118 pieces of guaranteed mediocrity was hidden away underneath less mundane wares and thrown in a corner until a day was found so tedious that the set was opened and construction could commence.

Inside the oversized box were two bags of parts and a large instruction sheet. The bags held small and large parts and had to be both opened from the start. It was apparent that the box promise of 2 in 1 referred to the apparently astonishing idea that the parts could be *used to make different models*, and the photo on the back of 'Vacation House' and the optimistically named 'Summer Palace' placed together did not reflect the contents – it was one or the other. Construction of Vacation House was started; the pieces, although feeling a bit cheap, were found to be of reasonable enough quality and had good grab. Close inspection showed them to be indeed identical to the newer Blox and BLOCK TECH parts. The flowers were a close copy of the excellent Ausini versions, but as with Blox these types had appalling fit and were useless without glue. The pink window had a sprue still attached across the opening which I (and the box photographer) couldn't be bothered to remove. The car was 100% ugly, had exceptionally cheap wheels, and was even worse than the similarly stupidly pink vehicle found in the BLOCK TECH 'Girls Go Shopping' set reviewed last year. Disappointingly the windmill blades were not really long enough to decapitate any minifig entering or exiting the house.



Pink and ugly: perfect combination for more spleen-relieving. Contents pink and uninspiring. Finished product pink, ugly and uninspiring.

The minifigs did not resemble the BLOCK TECH tubbyfig, but were still awful. The torsos and legs assembly most closely resembled the Click Brick gorillafigs that superficially copied Mega Bloks Block Squad figures. The Woma minifig plastic felt very cheap, and the male head print was not complete. The heads were very weird, being mostly cuboid than round. The traditional Jubilux-Woma hole in the head was carried over from their earlier incarnations giving thankfully no compatibility between their creations and every other LEGO-type minifig. Flesh tone was a bit greyer than the standard hue, but suitability for the Zombie Horde was not ideal as the expressions were less evil than earlier minifigs. At least the torsos came assembled with arms and hands attached. Leaving the guy out in the sun for a few months made him turn pink. Woma parts fade. A lot.



Spare pieces. Woeful flowers. Minifigs different to others and feel cheap and rubbish. Not compatible with anything LEGO which is a good thing.

Most Chinese clone companies have moved on in the past few years, investing in new moulding machines and some degree of innovative product design as they compete with each other and LEGO's expansion into China. This progress seems to have mostly bypassed Woma who are still churning out crap sets.

Summary: Shite is still available for export. Avoid.

Scores	Vacation House
Quality*	70
Value	70
Fit*	80
Compatibility	90
Minifig*	50
Design	40
Instructions	80
Total	68



Character Building (Cobi) – Scooby Doo Minifigs (Spring 2015)

The Character Building company are based in the UK, and have used the Polish manufacturer Cobi for some years to supply a variety of themed sets. Although CB market sets, their big sellers are figure blind bags or sets, much like the LEGO Collectable minifigs. One of the themes CB covered until recently was Scooby Doo. The blind bag series consisted of the main characters and also many of the monsters. Some of these also turned up in CB's Zombies vs Monsters theme, vaguely similar to the LEGO Monster Hunters. One of the CB 'blind bag' selling methods for Scooby Doo was packs of five display cases, sold in printed cellophane so that the contents could not be seen. The packs were discovered being sold off cheaply, and a number were bought for the display cases. The surplus CB minifigs were extracted and sold on, but some were kept for comparison with LEGO's recent Scooby Doo interpretations.

All the characters were based around the style of the cartoons. Scooby and Shaggy were of course the most interesting. Shaggy was made with the standard CB / Cobi legal minifig parts, with the flared trousers and wide chest typical of the range and for once suiting the character. As with all CB figures, the heads were moulded specially, and Shaggy was no exception with his own face and hairstyle. Scooby was made of four parts – front and rear body each with two moveable legs, and head and tail. Oddly, the tail and head were of a more yellow hue than the body, giving the impression they had faded in the sun. A number of Scoobies were found in the blind box sets, and all seemed to have the same problem. This was annoying, as the design of Scooby was very good, allowing all kinds of poses. The CB Scoob was a very Great Dane, about as tall as a LEGO minifig. The female figures, such as Velma, had thinner-shouldered torsos and skirts where applicable. Quality overall of the plastic was mediocre – the parts fitted together well enough and felt OK, but the look was rather washed out and disappointing.



Various examples of Scooby-themed minifigs. Scooby and Shaggy are very charismatic. Tail and head are more yellow for no apparent reason.

The recent LEGO Scooby Doo sets have their own interpretation of Shaggy and Scooby. Comparison between the two showed a number of similarities and differences. LEGO Scooby was supplied as one piece; much like all LEGO dogs, he had no moving legs or tail. LEGO Scooby was also smaller than CB Scooby, reflecting the smaller height of the minifig. LEGO Shaggy had the same outfit as CB Shaggy, but with a looser and half-sleeveless top with those weird 'shirtsleeve' arms also seen with some of the Simpsons minifigs. Shaggy's trousers were dark red as opposed to the CB reddish-purple; his hair was a more realistic ginger-brown than the bright orange.



CB Scoob comes in 4 parts. LEGO Shaggy has looser shirt and a bigger quiff; Scooby is not fully poseable. Rook – roo Roobies rand roo Raggies.

Of the two Scoobies, the CB version seems closer to the cartoon and would be my choice over LEGO... if it wasn't made of such mediocre plastic and didn't look like it has been left in the garden for 2 years. This problem with minifig quality seems to be an issue with Cobi, as their newer armoured vehicle range has even worse quality figures – and they are meant to be made in Poland. It seems odd that the reliance on the Cobifigs is not matched by apparent investment in upping the quality of other parts, but maybe they are just the way the company wants them.

Summary: I don't want to collect Character Building or Cobi collectable minifigs.

Scores	Scooby Doo	Shaggy
Hair / Headgear	N/A	N/A
Head	90	70
Torso Assembly	90	70
Hands	N/A	80
Legs Assembly	90	60
Quality	50	50
Compatibility*	50	20
Design	100	90
Value	70	70
Total	74	59



Dargo – Hulk and Black Widow Minifigs (Winter 2015)

NEW!

Dargo is yet another of the army of Chinese companies cloning LEGO minifigs. Some try to tiptoe around copyright issues by subtly changing names. Dargo have no such qualms and just shamelessly rip off various franchises, Marvel and DC Superheroes a favourite. Hulk was found as a 'tempting' prize in a seaside amusement arcade 2p slot machine, and some of a typically exceptionally wet and miserable littoral afternoon was expended extracting Perthy from his copper-floored prison. Usually it is difficult to source the original boxes for hooky minifigs in the UK as their low value makes it much less likely they are shipped halfway across the world, but Hulk was fully boxed.

Black Widow was found at a car boot sale, and was bought (albeit very cheaply) as she was initially mistaken for a real LEGO minifig. This particular scenario is certain to vastly increase as the number of hooky minifigs circulating in the UK skyrockets. It took some time to identify Dargo as the manufacturer.

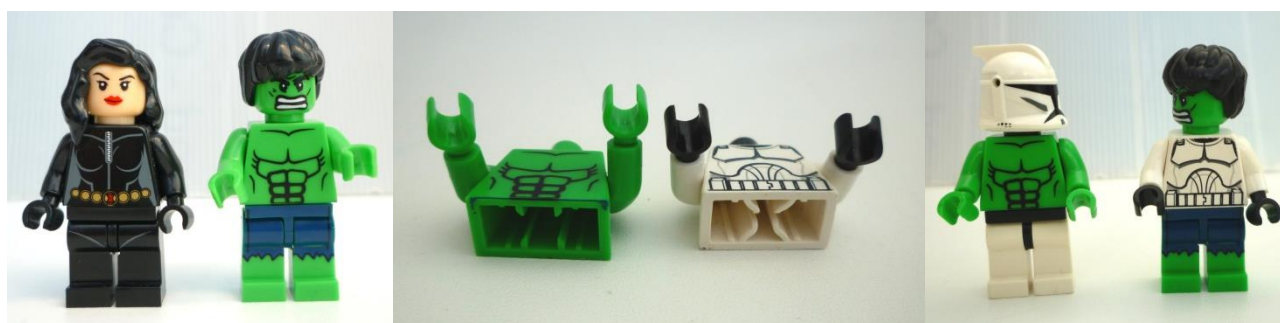
The contents of Hulk were extracted from the box and a stand, rifle, and three trump cards found along with Hulk himself. Quite what Hulk was meant to do with a Star Wars gun was not clear. Maybe it was a snack. The cards had different illustrations but the same values. Since this Superhero series had 8 sets, a total of 24 cards would presumably make up a playable pack. The 6x4 stand was a bit washed out in colour but thankfully did not have a pointless diorama.



Box is a bit optimistic on contents, which include obligatory trump cards and gun. Hulk is surprisingly well made with tolerable printing.

Hulk was of reasonable quality, with good printing and no looseness on the arms and legs. The hairpiece was noticeably less well defined than LEGO. Torso design was slightly different to LEGO and would form as a discriminator from the real minifig. Hand shank diameter was also different and thus would not fit a LEGO arm. Printing of the blue trousers did not extend to the rear, so this Hulk was baring his arse to the world.

The Dargo Black Widow had a different torso print to LEGO (and other clone) versions. The head colour was slightly brighter than the standard flesh hue. Printing quality was quite good, legs and arms were a tight fit and the ABS was decent, which was why the minifig was not immediately recognised as a fake. Close inspection did show the poorer hair moulding, but again it was only really obvious when compared to a LEGO piece.



Black Widow was originally mistaken for a real LEGO figure. Torso similar to newer SY, but hands not swappable with LEGO. Other fits are OK.

Summary: Not too bad quality. Company has no idea what 'infringement' means.

Scores	Hulk	Black Widow
Hair / Headgear	80	80
Head	100	70
Torso Assembly	90	100
Hands	90	90
Legs Assembly	80	100
Quality	80	90
Compatibility*	90	80
Design	90	90
Value	90	90
Total	88	87



Decool – Zombie World Minifigs (Winter 2015)

NEW!

One of the main reasons for all this Communist Lego nonsense was to get crap minifigs to replace massively valuable LEGO zombies in various dioramas occasionally displayed at shows. Revenge of the Middle Kingdom was long overdue, and a perusal of the hooky minifig series on sale in 2015 revealed quite a few attempts to produce genuine zombie minifigs. This was, of course, not related to my second-rate ramblings, but more a reaction to the rise in popularity of zombie culture worldwide.

The Decool brand in particular seem to have used their prowess honed in knocking off custom superhero figures and applied some actual creativity in making their own series. 'Zombie World' used 6 characters from the LEGO collectable minifig blind bags and zombified 5 of them (the other being a yellow-shirted be-haired version of the zombie from Series 1). As with most of the newer clone minifig sets, the clone figures can be quite easily sourced off the internet, and the set duly arrived, without boxes, within two weeks.

This time, each minifig was surprisingly supplied fully assembled and had their own implement. Zombification had been done very well, with 6 different grey head expressions, grey hands, and modified torso and leg prints from the originals. "Sleepyhead" zombie had, for example, lost his teddy bear and gained a saw with probably the remains of his toy still attached. Close inspection showed that each torso print had been drawn from new, using the original as an inspiration but not as a rigorous template. The printing quality was quite good and had been done when the torso and legs had been attached together, although for once it really wouldn't have mattered too much as zombies tend not to care about sartorial elegance. Overall quality of the minifigs was fairly good, although they felt a bit cheap and lightweight. Decool use a different leg assembly-torso attachment joint which used less plastic and was occasionally a bit loose, but it worked with genuine LEGO parts. The hand shanks were slightly thinner than real LEGO, so were not compatible with LEGO arms and vica-versa. Decool are, however, one of the brands that fade in the sun, so any diorama should only be displayed at night.



Full set of 6 Zombie World figures, parodying various LEGO collectible minifigs. Quality quite good, not that it matters much – they're zombies.

There is an interesting copyright issue here. Leaving aside the almost exact physical similarity with the trademarked LEGO minifig, 5 of the print designs use the originals as a starting point for interpretation as opposed to slavish copying, thus not making it clear cut whether this is a breach. What is also becoming apparent is that some of the Chinese cloners are now applying a bit of inventiveness to their ranges. Although LEGO themselves did a few zombie versions in their Series 14, they didn't do this idea to the full. Was it a missed opportunity? Maybe.



Each has accessories, most relevant. Printing on tiles is just about OK. Comparison between Emmet and 'Bennet'. Even the neck is grey.

Summary: Feel cheap, but good enough to throw the rest of the clone zombie army away and just use these for the dioramas. Even when they fade.

Scores	Zombie World
Hair / Headgear	100
Head	100
Torso Assembly	90
Hands	90
Legs Assembly	80
Quality	90
Compatibility*	90
Design	90
Value	100
Total	92



Elephant – The Walking Dead Minifigs Series 1 (Winter 2015)

NEW!

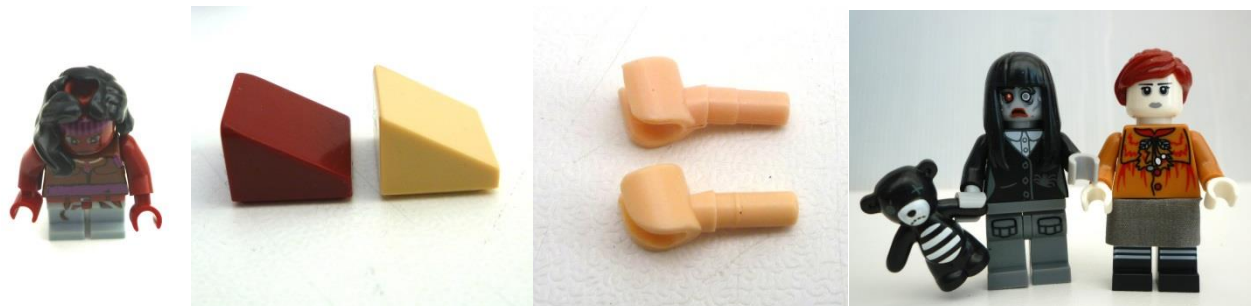
Zombiemanias stalks the Earth like a slow, shambling rancid undead thing. The popularity of the genre has led to many TV channels producing their own shows with various takes on the post-zombie apocalypse. One such drama is The Walking Dead, a successful and acclaimed US cable TV programme first launched in 2010 and now into its 7th series. The show attracted the attention of the Chinese clone minifig manufacturer Elephant. They produced at least three series of 8 Walking Dead characters. For a supply of zombie minifigs the sets seemed ideal, so the whole of Series 1 JX1003 was ordered directly from China for a cost of about 80p per set. These arrived without boxes or trump cards.

Series 1 consisted of four zombie packs (one with two armless figures) and four characters – Rick, Michonne, Glenn and Daryl. Each was contained in a bag and was half assembled but with loose arms and hands. Included were a 6x4 stand, some bricks and slopes for a pointless diorama, and an extra zombie head (grey for characters, flesh colour for zombies). Rick got a handgun, Michonne a katana, Glenn a sub-machinegun, and Daryl a rather impressive crossbow that had to be assembled off a sprue. The zombies did not get any utensils. Each set had some 2x1 modified bricks and a tan slope for the almost pointless diorama.



Set of all 8 minifigs – 4 humans, 5 zombies. Printing and plastic quite good. Each set has a spare zombie head, remarkably useful.

Quality of most of the minifigs and pieces was unexpectedly high, with excellent levels of printing on the heads, torsos and legs. Human flesh colour was almost identical to LEGO. The plastic was also almost indistinguishable from real LEGO, and the hair pieces were also extremely similar... except for Michonne's, which had a significant moulding error with a big hole in the top. Very close inspection found that the Elephant hands were of a marginally different design to LEGO – the angle of the hand was slightly less and it had two different diameters along its shank. Apart from this, it would be all but impossible to tell the Elephant figures apart from real LEGO. Tests showed full compatibility between all parts. The 1x1 cheese slopes could be distinguished by having a marginally higher vertical rise at the front, but again you'd need a very keen eye to tell them apart.



Hair has big moulding error. Cheeses are different to real LEGO. Hands slightly different too, but everything is compatible with the real thing.

The Walking Dead series was remarkably good value for sourcing hooky zombies, as not only did some of the sets contain actual zombies, there were a total of 8 spare heads and some spare hands allowing zombification of existing LEGO minifigs. Leaving aside the copyright issues (and having a moral bypass operation), the high quality, low cost and good variety makes choosing whether to buy more of these or not a no-brainer. Brains...

Summary: When properly moulded, these are very good zombies indeed. And Daryl's crossbow is awesome.

Scores	The Walking Dead
Hair / Headgear	95
Head	100
Torso Assembly	100
Hands	100
Legs Assembly	100
Quality	95
Compatibility*	100
Design	100
Value	100
Total	99



Jinrun – Star Wars Minifigs (Spring 2016)

NEW!

An ill-advised revisit to some amusement arcade 2p coin machines allowed the “winning” of a couple of new clone minifig sets in boxes. Usually these are not easily found in the UK as shipping costs result in the boxes being dumped before posting from any east Asian suppliers. The Jinrun brand was another of the low value Chinese minifig cloners that seem to be able to flout copyright law with apparent impunity. The boxes and numbers were very similar in look to the Dargo sets, but were slightly larger. Observation of the photos indicated that the Anakin figure was actually Han Solo; the clone trooper looked real enough. Jinrun appeared to have created CGI versions of their minifigs, although it was suspected that they’d ripped off even these pictures from somewhere else.

When the contents of both boxes were examined, it became apparent that these were among the most rubbish of all the minifig cloners. As with many of the genre, some trump cards were included. There were the same three from each box; two had some form of comparative data presented as bars, and the third was marked ‘STAR WARS LTEM’ for an as yet unknown reason. It was difficult to guess whether all eight sets had the same cards or whether they were randomly put in each box. Whatever the answer, any sane Chinese child would probably wonder what wrong they had committed if bought these as a gift.



Just copy Star Wars™ and LEGO™. They won't mind. Crappy cards and minifig. Not the advertised minifig. Four limbs, but not the correct ones.

Minifig contents were inside a polythene bag. These were mostly unassembled and required strong hands (not immensely so) to put together. Plastic quality was quite low – about the same as XINH – with printing quality mediocre. The actual minifigs were a character meant to be Han Solo but not, and a clone trooper with three legs and one arm. Flesh colour was lighter than real LEGO and was slightly translucent. Surprisingly, the white plastic used for the clone trooper was of reasonable quality. The hairpiece of “Han Solo” was made of white plastic but had then been coloured on the outside. Spare sprue marks were on almost every minifig component.



Someone has no idea about Star Wars. Or morals. Torso different internals to LEGO. Hair is painted and sprue still attached. Hand roughly OK.

It was suspected that Jinrun was probably set up by some half-baked economics graduates who were motivated by a quick Yuan more than bothering to make a competent product. As if blatant flouting of the LEGO and Star Wars copyright wasn't bad enough, the lack of research or knowledge of the actual subject they were ripping off and pisspoor quality control had led to a rather short-term chance of making money before any customers got wise to their incompetence. There's a reasonable chance that Jinrun might survive their initial rubbishness and advance to the heady heights of mediocrity. If there is any semblance of decency left in Chenghai, production will cease until they've replied to all the angry letters sent to their customer complaints department. Somehow, I doubt this'll happen.

Summary: Really shite.

Scores	Hans Solo	Clone Trooper
Hair / Headgear	40	80
Head	70	80
Torso Assembly	70	70
Hands	80	80
Legs Assembly	70	70
Quality	30	0
Compatibility*	80	80
Design	50	90
Value	70	70
Total	64	72



JLB – Knights of the Zodiac Athena Minifig (Winter 2015)

NEW!

JLB, or Jia Li Bo, are one of the myriad of Chinese manufacturers copying LEGO minifigs. They have been the boldest in ripping off Disney themes, which seems a tad foolhardy. However, they also make other series popular in the Far East and Russia as collector sets. Examples include Japanese Manga cartoon sets such as Naruto, Doraemon and Dragon Ball Z, the Chinese novel (and film) Journey To The West, and the Russian folktale Masha and the Bear. These are of only marginal interest to a UK audience at best, so instead it was decided to buy a Knights of the Zodiac minifig. Who?

Knights of the Zodiac, or Saint Seiya, is typical of the Manga action genre and follows 5 Knights with Cosmo energy and Cloth armour, each themed from a constellation, who defend Athena in a battle against Olympian gods... well, you get the idea. The story originally ran in both Manga form and an Anime TV series in the mid-late 1980s, spawning four films. It was revived in 2002 and had two more films made in 2004 and 2014.

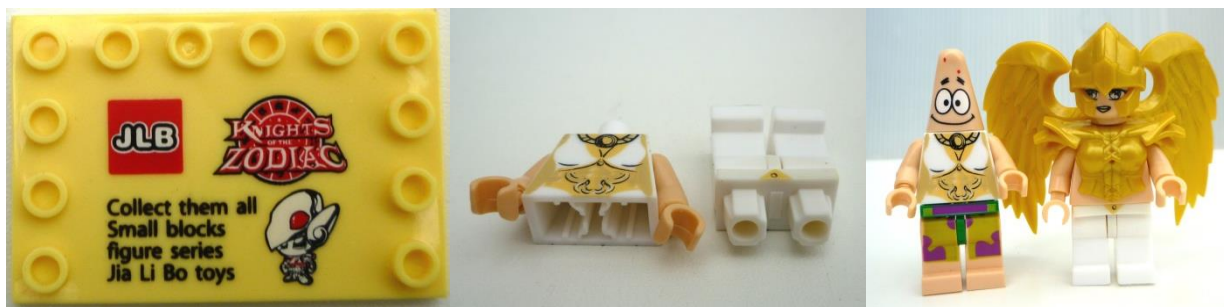
JLB released a set of 6 of the characters – these were the 5 main protagonists (Seiya, Shiryu, Hyoga, Shun and Ikki), and Athena. Athena was chosen to uphold JLB's honour, being a goddess and useable outside of the Seiya theme. Not many goddesses are available as minifigs.

Athena arrived in a bag along with lots of pearl gold accessories and a pointless diorama. Head and legs were attached, and the standard very annoying unattached arms and hands were present and required immense strength to put on. Once extracted, by far the most impressive parts of the minifig were the huge poseable gold angel wings. These fitted to the rear of the breastplate and were fairly well detailed. The torso and legs were a little translucent in look and felt tacky. Fit wasn't actually too bad, and as the printing had been done on the front and back when the legs were attached to the torso, everything lined up. The hands were reasonably well made and could hold stuff.



A very goldful bag. Athena fully assembled with pointless diorama. Huge angel wings poseable from torso cover. Might be gold: still feels cheap.

Swapping parts with genuine LEGO showed quite good fit between makes, although the hands did not swap into the arms. The flesh colour was a very close match for the LEGO hue. The tacky feel of the JLB figure did not really detract from the playability, which was OK as no arms, legs or wings would fall off. Most of these minifigs would be used for display only anyway, so the cheap feel of the plastic would not matter. This particular Athena would be ideal as a painted statue or figurehead.



Stand has passable English but rubbish quality. Torso and leg designs much like OK and XINH. Some parts worryingly interchangeable.

JLB are far down the scale on quality compared to other hooky minifig cloners, but presumably survive by creating targeted series that sell well in their local area. They seem the only company foolhardy enough to copy Mickey Mouse characters directly. This particular minifig seems to have had some effort put in to it. This could have been applauded, except for that little LEGO minifig trademark copyright issue thingy. And the likelihood that the Knights of the Zodiac copyright was broken too.

Summary: passable goddess, but only from a distance. For the UK, JLB should have done Battle of the Planets (remember that?).

Scores	Athena
Hair / Headgear	80
Head	70
Torso Assembly	60
Hands	90
Legs Assembly	70
Quality	60
Compatibility*	80
Design	100
Value	90
Total	78



JLB – Mr Bean Minifigs (Winter 2015)

NEW!

Amongst the subjects for hooky minifig series, the award for the most unlikely has to go to JLB's Mr Bean set.

Yes, JLB, who have blatantly ripped off all kinds of Disney minifigs including Mickey Mouse himself, must have had a meeting where they seriously decided a good way to make more money was not to copy more Star Wars Stormtroopers or Frozen sets like all their rivals, but instead to do a series based around a cartoon of some middle-aged British comic.

Bizarre.

Then again, it will probably come as some surprise for most UK residents on how popular Mr Bean is abroad. Maybe it is because he represents the world's expectations on Britishness, but from Iran to Japan Mr Bean is apparently a firm favourite. The cartoon series is the focus of the 6-set JLB series, with face prints trying to mimic the animated characters. The series consists of two Beans (in pyjamas and clothes), Irma Gobb, the two burglars, and Mrs Wicket the landlady; accessories include Teddy and Scrapper the cat. The full set was ordered from China and arrived in about a week, described as a 'home essential', apparently having a value of \$2 and weighing 1g.

As with quite a few of the more recent minifig clones, each figure was supplied with the head and legs attached to the torso, but with arms and hands loose which was really annoying. The printing was done with the legs attached so everything lined up. Extraction from the plastic bag showed the minifig, arms, hands with some spares, accessories, and pointless diorama. The stands had the standard JLB 'Collect them all' writing with a Mr Bean picture. Assembly did not require immensely strong hands, but a craft knife and sandpaper. Irma's hands did not fit fully into the badly-formed arms, and the large robber's right arm had an embarrassingly large flash moulding on it. The finished figures didn't feel too bad, but were certainly nowhere near LEGO quality. Comparison with the JLB Athena minifig (qv) showed a definite slide in manufacturing competency.



The world's most unlikely minifig series, potentially incurring the wrath of Rowan. Custom display tile. Bean and Bean, with Teddy.

Inspection of the printing showed reasonable definition. Irma's shoes were wonky, and rather worryingly there was no printing on the rear of the flesh-coloured legs. Accessories had random flash moulding still attached, although Teddy for both Beans was quite good. Scrapper the cat had both eyes. The robbers had pearl-grey double-barrelled handguns and pearl-gold chains that looked very cheap. Hair also looked shiny and cheap, even if the pieces were meant to mimic the cartoon. The oversized robber caps were OK and looked exactly like the Mario Bros type (also done by JLB).



Mrs Wicket and Scrapper, Gobb, and robbers. Mediocre but OK if modelling equipment used. Spare hands galore. Why? Useless crap parts to bin.

Summary: Just about OK if sanded down and dioramas immediately thrown away. The UK is now expecting Blackadder, Danger Mouse and Bagpuss minifigs to appear. LEGO ought to jump to it.

Scores	Mr Bean Minifigs
Hair / Headgear	70
Head	70
Torso Assembly	60
Hands	90
Legs Assembly	50
Quality	60
Compatibility*	80
Design	90
Value	100
Total	75



LELE – SWAT SCO19 Minifig (Winter 2015)

NEW!

Although there are many, many examples of blatant copyright breaches from lots and lots of Chinese clone manufacturers, there are also a number of quite interesting series made by them that will never be available from LEGO. LELE are one such company, shamelessly ripping off the LEGO Movie with their own logo, but also making a police SWAT series with each minifig representing a different country. The UK's Metropolitan Police armed response unit are known as the Specialist Crime and Operations Specialist Firearms Command SCO19, and the UK minifig was the focus of this review. A UK supplier was found selling the minifigs separately, and 4 were bought to liven up various possible dioramas. These were supplied in the original plastic bags which had no warning notices on them whatsoever. Perhaps this meant LELE was OK to eat. I didn't try.

LELE minifigs had been reviewed before and were found to be of reasonable plastic quality but with poor printing. The SCO19 figure had good printing (albeit not really of a UK police officer) but the plastic felt very cheap and had flash moulding on almost all parts. Fit was mediocre, and it was obvious that these minifigs were for display more than play. The supplied equipment – waist belt, bulletproof vest, helmet, gas mask and head torch – were competent enough, although an extra cap might have been useful. The stand was essentially a black version of the green part supplied with the LEGO Toy Story soldiers, and seemed an odd choice. Skin colour was quite good, and the face print was well defined. Interestingly, photos of the series showed a mixture of yellow and flesh minifigs; the SCO19 guy was flesh. The LELE hands were swappable with LEGO versions. In this case, the figure was supplied assembled except for the arms – it seems almost no Chinese firm has invested in an arm-attachment machine. Why? It can't be that hard – LEGO have been doing it since 1978.



The supplied bag, and contents with armless figure. Happy policeman can be fully toolled up to deal with that playful kitten up a tree. Yes, officer.

The weaponry and accessories were not fully representative of SCO19. The Heckler & Koch MP5 is standard issue for the UK; the supplied gun looked more like a modified M-41 pulse rifle than anything else, but was probably meant to be some sort of specialist close-range submachine gun and seems standard issue from a number of Chinese clone minifig companies. Various grenades, knives and pistols were also included on a separate sprue to give the nice police officer a variety of methods to suggest more orderly behaviour from any troublesome citizens.



Printing not too bad but not really UK. Extra utensils not exactly the staple of Inspector Morse. Feels cheap, but all parts fully LEGO compatible.

The usefulness of this minifig was not really the figure itself but the accessories supplied. The plastic was surprisingly bad quality, even for LELE, but as the figures were bought for static display (as most probably will be) this is of secondary importance. Of course, this moves the minifig from a re-constructible plaything into more of a single-build model; recent years has shown this trend anyway. The knock-on effect is thus not on LEGO itself, but on the many bespoke Western LEGO-type weapon companies who have traditionally fulfilled this role.

Summary: Good enough for purpose, but quality not exactly inspiring. On the plus side, law and order will be less of an issue. I wonder if LELE asked permission of each police force? If not, and they get cross, can I watch?

Scores	SCO19 Minifig
Hair / Headgear	90
Head	80
Torso Assembly	60
Hands	90
Legs Assembly	60
Quality	60
Compatibility*	100
Design	90
Value	100
Total	83



Mega Bloks – Minions Series 3 Minifigs (Autumn 2015)

NEW!

Banana. Yeah. You're probably Minioned out by now. Universal were originally caught out by their popularity, but since Despicable Me 2 they've been everywhere, making children happily speak gibberish and invading the minds of parents who wake in the middle of the night in a cold sweat wondering if they can ever escape from the yellow goggled domed ones and realising that putting up with yet another rendition of 'Let It Go' might be the only way out. Weirdly, the Chinese brick cloners have almost ignored the franchise and as of the end of 2015 only SL Toys have had a half-arsed attempt to produce a Minions series. The Minion Movie of 2015 took \$1.1b and allowed Mega Bloks to cash in on one of their more astute licencing agreements and release Series 3 of the Minions blind bags. These mimic LEGO collectable minifigs in style, with a set of 12 random figures in small pocket-money packets. Since the Minions Movie only starred three actual named Minions – Kevin, Stuart, Bob – the other 9 were based on the historical roles seen early on. To make the bags more frustratingly swappable, the Napoleon guy was rarer than the others and there was a 'mystery' Minion (ooh, could it be Bob, who was not one of the 11 shown? Yeah. Of course it was), making them more valuable - or just less common, depending on your point of view. Three bags were bought as a test.

Opened packets revealed annoying unmade Minions, thankfully all different, along with accessories and a yellow 2x4 Mega Blok with "A04055ES CHINA" printed on one side. The brick looked and felt tacky. The unmade Minions were well engineered with just about the correct amount of rubberyness to give play. Unfortunately, to change them from unmade to made required more than immensely strong hands, and eventually metal tools were used to get the arms in. Oh yes, once made they were great, but quite why Mega Bloks were so lazy as to just dump the unmade bits in a bag when their larger Minion-themed sets proved that they can supply fully assembled figure is open to question.



Series 3 is taken from the Minions Movie. Blind bags revealed Cro-minion, Stuart, and Transylvanian minion. Bricks are rubbish quality.

The three Minions turned out to be Stuart, a Transylvanian, and Cro-Minion. The figures were made by having an upper body, legs assembly, arms, goggles, and any headgear fitted into a '+' hole at the top of the head. The standard blue Minion denim overalls were cleverly done. Hands were moulded asymmetrically, and the goggles were a rubbery plastic to give ease of fitting. The bricks were helpful in as much as it was fairly difficult to get the figures to stand up on their own, especially with any extras they had, although the plastic quality was far below that of the figures.



Figures are great quality but require super-immensely strong hands to assemble. Some items can be used by proper LEGO figures.

Summary: Very good quality, but getting to a made state is a challenge, both physically and mentally. They could have been supplied with arms attached. They weren't. Presumably Mega Bloks just hate all their customers. And the Minions were too expensive. I did not buy any more.

Scores	Minions Series 3
Hair / Headgear	70
Head	N/A
Torso Assembly	90
Hands	80
Legs Assembly	80
Quality	80
Compatibility*	10
Design	90
Value	40
Total	63



OK – Megatron Minifig (Winter 2015)

NEW!

Transformers Age Of Extinction is the fourth film in the hugely lucrative Hasbro-owned franchise. The movie took \$1.1b at the box office and only got 7 Golden Raspberry nominations (the previous Dark of the Moon got 8). Interest in Transformers has shifted back from the US to the world in general and especially China and the Far East. Hasbro own Kre-O and as such market brick-based sets around the Kreon minifig. This has not stopped some of the Chinese cloners making their own LEGO-style minifig copies for the collector market.

The Wisdom Park company, under the OK brand, recently released a set of 8 Transformers figures, although these were not based on any movie and were more related to the animated Transformers universe. The sets were Blackarachnia, Bumblebee and Stealth Bumblebee, Optimus Prime and Optimus Prime Cybertron, Kickback, Megatron, and Runamuck. OK had not been reviewed before and some of the series were found for sale separately in the UK. Megatron was chosen to be the guinea pig for OK. He duly arrived without box and trump cards.

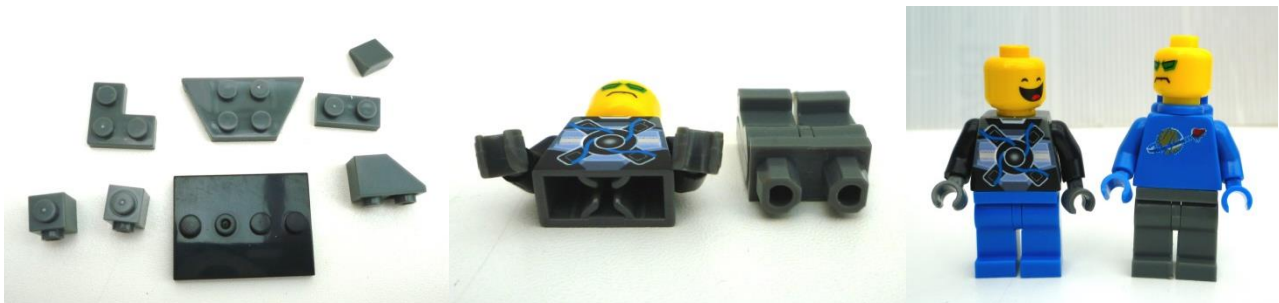
The Megatron bag contained an annoyingly unmade minifig, some pointless diorama pieces, and two guns. After assembly using immensely strong hands, his full.. er.. glory was revealed. Far from being a 35ft-high 5.7 tonne dark matter-powered fusion cannon-armed evil super robot, Megatron was found to be a yellow-headed slightly cross minifig with a couple of small assault rifles and a knobbly helmet. Because the box was missing, the pointless diorama was not even attempted as without visual references it was doubly pointless. The pieces were of, well, OK quality. Couldn't be anything else, really.



Supplied Transformer in a bag. Tiny Megatron trying to look mean. Supplied weapons are a Heckler & Koch MP5 and the SCO19 gun.

The supplied weaponry was basically identical to most of the other clone figure guns: these appeared to be a Heckler & Koch MP5 type with grenade launcher, and the mysterious mean-looking sub-machinegun also found with the LELE SCO19 minifigs. All 8 of the OK Transformers sets had this type of equipment, making them look like somewhat angry blokes dressing up as robots more than alien super-machines.

Of course, minifigs do not take up much space and are cheap, so as a lucrative series for young (and middle aged?) collectors they make a lot of sense. Supplied with the obligatory trump cards each series makes a collectable and easily storable toy. Megatron himself was found to be reasonable enough quality. His torso was almost indistinguishable from LEGO by sight. The hand shanks were of a marginally different diameter and so not interchangeable with LEGO. However, on its own, it would take a very trained eye to tell this was a fake.



Pointless diorama pieces, best thrown away. Torso and legs almost direct copy of LEGO, worse quality. Parts are interchangeable.

Summary: OK, I suppose.

Scores	Megatron
Hair / Headgear	90
Head	80
Torso Assembly	90
Hands	100
Legs Assembly	100
Quality	80
Compatibility*	90
Design	100
Value	100
Total	92



SY – Boom Beach Lt. Hammerman Minifig (Winter 2015)

NEW!

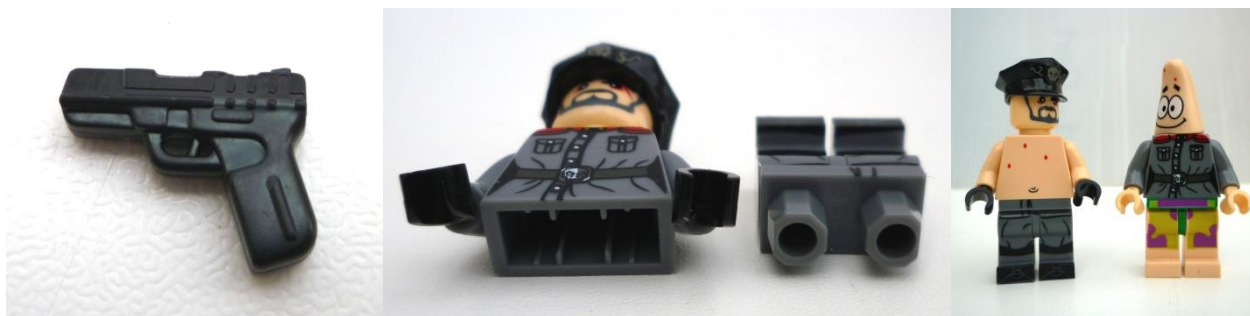
A sign of the times is how the popularity of App games has manifested itself into the production of clone minifig series. Two examples are Boom Beach and Clash of Clans, both relatively basic but undeniably addictive strategy games written for IOS and Android. Having lost interest in gaming since Doom I can't profess to be an expert in such things, but the various characters make excellent subjects for minifig series. SY produce collectable figures for both games: 6 minifigs in Clash of Clans, and 8 for Boom Beach (4 for each side). Previous reviews of SY minifigs showed a wide variety of quality ranging from quite good to quite shite. Out of all the minifigs of Boom Beach and Clash of Clans, the bad guy Lt Hammerman looked to be the most useable, having a well-defined military uniform and a cap and head that could double as a member of The Village People. Hammerman was found for sale individually in the UK online and was duly ordered with a number of other un-reviewed makes.

As with most hooky minifigs, Hammerman was packaged in a plastic bag with a pointless diorama and display plate. Unlike most hooky minifigs he had his head and legs attached, but true to form the arms were separate to provide maximum annoyance. Once extracted and obligatory immensely strong hands flexed for assembly, a reasonably competent minifig emerged. The pointless diorama consisted of a tropical tree (with a copy of that tree bit that keeps getting washed ashore on British beaches), fitting with Boom Beach's setting. The display plate was a standard SY World 4x4 tile. Hammerman was supplied with a well-detailed handgun.



Another dodgy minifig series, this time ripping off a computer game. Pointless but tolerably made diorama. Minifig is actually quite good.

This particular SY minifig was way better than earlier efforts, suggesting that recent investment (or the grey plastic mix) has allowed quality copyright-breaking products to be attempted, as opposed to crap ones. Boom Beach was only released in bulk in March 2014, so when reviewed this SY range was less than 18 months old. Torso and head printing was decent enough to pass as genuine LEGO, and flesh colour all but identical. Very close inspection of the torso revealed straight as opposed to diagonal stiffeners which would probably be the only discriminator between it and the genuine article. The torso and legs assembly had been printed when joined, so there was an exact match. The hands were only very slightly different to LEGO hands and both were interchangeable with each other. Overall, the Lt. was a surprisingly good example of niche-product hooky minifigs previously only available through custom-made companies. If you like Boom Beach, that is.



Very well detailed handgun. Torso subtly different from real LEGO, legs are almost identical. Parts fully interchangeable, including hands.

Summary: Competent clone minifig for niche market. Perhaps any copyright infringement may be offset by extra interest in the App. The minifig is still illegal.

Scores	Lt. Hammerman
Hair / Headgear	100
Head	90
Torso Assembly	100
Hands	100
Legs Assembly	100
Quality	100
Compatibility*	100
Design	100
Value	100
Total	99



SY – Monster School Friendfigs (Autumn 2015)

The success of the LEGO Friends theme has not gone unnoticed in China clone world. 'Girl' kits generally range from the blatant copy to the hideously pink. Most could be said to pander to stereotypical themes such as princesses and riding stables. Quite a few copy the actual Friendfigs and sets. A few Chinese companies have decided to use their copyright flouting to cash in on other popular franchises. One of these is Monster High, a Mattel doll theme revolving around a supernatural school in Salem, Oregon with various girly pupils having character traits children can relate to emotionally (and financially...). This series has been running since 2010, and was recently taken up by Mega Bloks with kits and unique poseable doll-type figures about twice the height of standard minifigs. Both SY and JLB decided to use LEGO Friends-type minifigs instead as the basis for their own rip-offs. SY called their series 'Monster School' (with a suspiciously similar logo) and had 8 figures; JLB had 6 and just copied 'Monster High' outright, then had another go with a set of 8. Although both were based around Friendfig copies, each company had very different interpretations of the main characters. The JLB ones looked utterly hideous, but against standard Communist LEGO procedure, the SY ones were ordered instead.

The complete SY series consisted of the 6 main characters - I'm sure you all know them, but just in case you've forgotten they are Clawdeen Wolf, Cleo de Nile, Draculaura, Frankie Stein, Ghoulia Yelps, and Lagoona Blue - and two others (Abbey Bominable and Venus McFlytrap), mimicking the 8 Mega Bloks characters in colours and design. As with most clone minifig series, the figures came with a stand, pointless diorama, and accessories.



The full line up of Friends from hell. Can't imagine this lot running a pet salon. Standard SY baseplate. Parts interchangeable, some a bit loose.

SY MonsterFriendfigs were supplied unmade and required monstrously strong hands to assemble. The SY Friendfig heads had no noses and a section out the rear top hollow stud. Quality was OK – the plastic was almost the same as LEGO; the hair moulding was noticeably poorer; and torso and head printing was tolerably good, although the shoes and feet seemed rather out of focus. Some effort had gone into the custom torso prints. Experimentation showed a reasonably good fit with genuine LEGO Friendfigs, although some parts were a bit loose or tight. Supplied accessories were guitars, handbags and cups, or (weirdly) carrots. Each set also had some pointless foliage. Most of the figures seemed quite ugly. Result.



Ghoulia Yelps is genuine zombie. SY head has notch in top stud. Odd foliage accessories OK quality. Two characters get carrots instead of guitars.

The MonsterFriendfigs are a rather offbeat addition to any collection. Searching does not reveal any actual SY clone kits for the franchise (although they have begun to do their own blatant Friends kits copies), so the supernatural-mad girl demographic would have to supply their own buildings. It's entirely possible the well-designed Mega Bloks sets could be used and the differently styled minifigs replaced with these, although they would feel rather tiny as the kits were scaled for 8-brick high figures. Alternatively, maybe the characters would make any Heartlake City set-up far more diverse. (Emo-Friends. There's an idea). As a foray into using existing forms to create a new theme the MonsterFriends are quite interesting. As a foray into infringing the copyright of as many Western companies as possible they are quite amusing.

Summary: A spirited use of new ideas to create a niche product - coupled with a total disrespect of copyright. Of course.

Scores	Monster School Minifigs
Hair / Headgear	80
Head	80
Torso Assembly	90
Hands	90
Legs Assembly	80
Quality	80
Compatibility*	90
Design	100
Value	100
Total	88



SY – SWAT: Expendables Minifigs (Winter 2015)



The burgeoning South East Asian clone minifig market naturally encompasses military themes, as LEGO do not cover them and boys will be boys. Various soldier minifig sets are covered by a variety of Chinese manufacturers. One of more eccentric is the SY set of the main characters from The Expendables, the tongue-in-cheek action movie franchise written by Sylvester Stallone and starring about every 1980s Hollywood action hero there is. The SY Expendables set is marketed under their SWAT theme, and makes use of the weaponry and accessories already made for that range. The three Expendables films were released in 2010, 2012 and 2014, and the SY set coincided with the release of the third as it included the character Luna. The opportunity to get Sylvester Stallone, Mel Gibson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Dolph Lundgren (and the young upstarts Jet Li, Terry Crews, Jason Statham and Ronda Rousey) – however potentially poorly made – was too tempting. The full set was ordered (without boxes) which including postage worked out to be about 80p per minifig.

When opened, the 'Gift Item' from China had the eight minifig bags and eight weapons sprues (two each of four different types). The figures were partially assembled – all had legs attached, four had heads attached – but the two arms and three hands per minifig were annoyingly separate. Assembly showed quite good fit, with no loose arms or legs, and did not require immensely strong hands. Each minifig came with a standard SY stand, two handguns, and a rubber holster that fitted around a leg. Although the holster looked as if it would snap straight away, it was actually easy to fit and very well designed so that the minifig could be posed ready to draw. All eight characters had unique torso and head prints of which considerable effort had gone into the design, and Sly was recognisable as himself. Dolph and Arnold weren't too bad either. I suppose that's Mel in the blue. Or is it Jason? At least someone in the SY art department had done their homework. Perhaps I should watch the movie and do mine. Nah.



8 figures + armoury. Full set of mercenary actors with average age of 55 in 2016. So many Oscars to choose from between them (2. Both Mel's).

The minifigs were fairly close to real LEGO in quality, especially the feel of the plastic which was a huge improvement on earlier SY tat. However, the black was still a little duller than LEGO, whereas the flesh tone was noticeably shinier and brighter – perhaps an overreaction to changing the terrifying zombie pallor typical of many Chinese manufacturers a few years ago. The hair pieces were less sharp. Close inspection of the torso and head printing showed very good definition, and there was only very slight wonkiness spotted on a couple of the figures. The heads were of the recessed stud type. Hands were interchangeable with LEGO arms, were marginally different in shape, and had an extra ridge on the shank. The internal torso stiffeners were straight as opposed to angled, allowing a method of spotting the difference between the clone and LEGO.



8 spare hands. Printing is well detailed and mostly square. Rubber holster is excellent. Flesh noticeably lighter and shinier. LEGO hand at top.

Overall this was an unexpectedly good set, with non-crap minifigs, 32 firearms, 8 knives, 2 grenade drums, and 8 magazines all for less than the price of seeing the film at the cinema. If SY change their black and flesh colour mix slightly, these minifigs would be all but indistinguishable from genuine LEGO minifigs. And still illegal.

Summary: Not unhappy with these. But it was a brave choice for SY to produce this stuff without Sly's permission. Just imagine if they had done a hooky Chuck Norris.

Scores	Expendables Minifigs
Hair / Headgear	80
Head	80
Torso Assembly	100
Hands	90
Legs Assembly	100
Quality	90
Compatibility*	100
Design	100
Value	100
Total	94

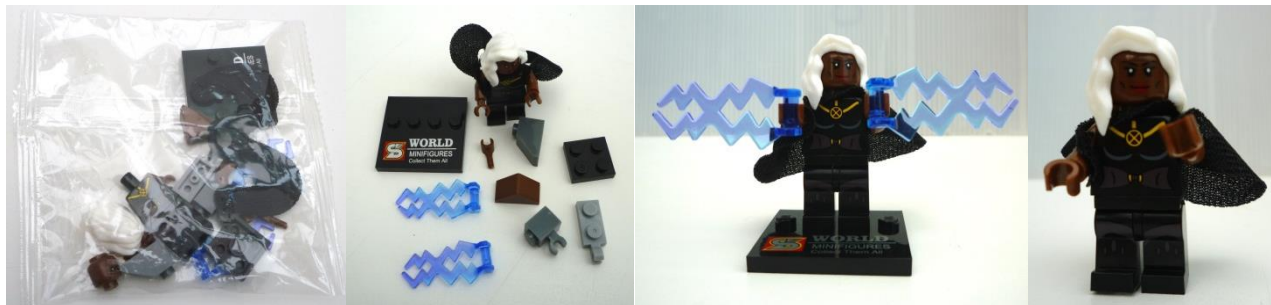


SY – X-Men ‘Heroes Assemble’ Storm Minifig (Winter 2015)

NEW!

The X-Men movies have been one of the successes of the Marvel franchise, spawning various timeframes and tie-ups. Old people like me watched the films to see Patrick and Ian act the pants off everyone else, but all the characters were engaging enough. Most would agree that Wolverine is the star superhero, but the prize for the most visually stunning probably goes to Storm. Naturally, many of the Chinese minifig cloner companies make X-Men copies. SY's Wolverine was reviewed last year and was so awful it was burnt. Storm was a later addition to the range appearing in the ‘Heroes Assemble’ series ST266, and was found for sale individually.

The SY bag has no warning signs at all on it, meaning either it was edible or that SY really couldn't care less about choking hazards. Or the warning signs were on the box. Anyway, once ripped apart in glee, the half-assembled minifig, pointless diorama parts, and stand fell out, whereas the arms and hands rolled gently on to the table and then continued to roll on to the floor requiring specialist detection equipment and what seemed like hours of searching to retrieve. After being finally assembled, Storm was revealed in her full glory. Surprisingly the SY minifig was quite good – the plastic felt decent, the printing was OK, the lightning bolts were passable, and the cape was excellent. Comparison with genuine LEGO showed the SY figure was a genuine attempt at shameful copying, mimicking the real minifig very closely.



Bag not put in teacup to save world from dire pun. Minifig supplied with two lightning bolts, stand, and pointless diorama. Nice cape.

SY266 had five Marvel characters – Thor, Doctor Strange, Storm, The Collector, and Taskmaster – and three DC characters – Martian Manhunter, Batzarro, and Wonder Woman. Most were not available as LEGO, but Batzarro and Storm were exact copies, and Wonder Woman was a mixture of the first two LEGO minifigs. Quite why these particular eight were put in this series is not immediately obvious. Yes, five of them are new and are thus desirable, and the other three are hard to find in real LEGO, but the mixture of different ‘universes’ would probably annoy some obsessive collectors. Or The Collector. It would seem to make more sense to have released two sets, all with bespoke characters, one for Marvel and one for DC. Perhaps these were the next eight the SY design department had finished, and marketing decided to get the quickest return. As with Dargo, SY have invested in computer-generated minifigs to allow them to depict their wares on the boxes.



Yet another supreme example of SY copyright infringement. SY266 is an eclectic group of superheroes and villains, three DC and five Marvel.

If these were easily available in the UK, I suspect they would sell well due to their rarity and the fact that SY are getting somewhat close to LEGO quality. This doesn't detract from the fact that this series infringes LEGO, DC and Marvel copyright. SY seems to have taken an upwards leap in desirability and a downwards plunge in despicability.

Summary: SY are starting to get close to LEGO quality, and producing genuinely desirable minifigs. And it's all illegal.

Scores	Storm
Hair / Headgear	90
Head	100
Torso Assembly	100
Hands	100
Legs Assembly	100
Quality	90
Compatibility*	100
Design	100
Value	100
Total	98

TY – Random Minifigs (Spring 2016)

NEW!

The monotony of commuting. A constant battle to convince yourself that success has not passed you by. I wished to express this by packing some MOC trains with minifigs. This was a problem – my spare minifigs were measured in 10s, not 100s, so there was no way the 7:32 from Woking could even be attempted. Until, that is, when it was noticed that hooky Chinese minifigs were being sold in bulk for stupidly low prices. Various morals surrounding buying and imprisoning non-LEGO characters inside a LEGO train were considered, but having previously experienced the sodding 7:32 for several years all caring had long since ebbed away and a total of 160 figures were ordered. How bad could they be?

Uh-oh. The two packages arrived after about 3 weeks via airmail (dirigible presumably), described as ‘household TY03001’ worth \$0.40 and \$0.30. ‘TY’ gave some clue to the maker (TY, I guess). Each minifig was in its own unmarked plastic bag, completely unassembled. Arse. 160 minifigs, all in pieces. Arsey arse. Never was anything so tedious. It was after making about 40 of them I realised that my life was worthless. Every single one of the next 120 hammered this home. A sticky syrup of hopelessness descended as rubbish figure after rubbish figure was created. Just end. End now.

Um, anyway, there were 20 types of figure with some headgear colour variation, vaguely based around actual LEGO types. Quality was mediocre to poor. Plastic was reasonable. Many legs had flash moulding on the tops and when attached were very tight. The torsos were ropey, wonkily printed only on one side with some sort of clear transfer which had not always been cut properly. Some arms and hands had flash moulding. Arm fit varied from comically loose (red right) to stupidly tight (white left). Hand fit was surprisingly good. The heads and headgear were well done. Out of the whole batch, there was one missing head, one missing hat, three spare hands, two missing left legs and a spare right leg. Red was slightly translucent like old Best-Lock parts, although the TY fireman was not angry. Several arms had strange moulding lines in them. Everything felt cheap.

The finished minifigs looked like LEGO, but were shite play objects as most did not have easily moving legs and some arms would come off if even looked at. Of a little interest was the different colours of the hats and helmets. Examples included beige wizard and campaign hats, white berets and top hats, and black and beige ski beanies. These were of sufficient quality to be potentially mistaken for non-standard colour LEGO, although they all had a small hole in the top for the observant to spot they were fake.



Well over a hundred dodgy minifigs. Penance is exacted through assembly. Random minifigs = random quality. Static display only recommended.

TY’s colour of choice was beige. Officially dark tan, but truthfully? Beige. Many of the minifigs had beige. Beige is not a colour I like. Beige means lift muzac, weekday afternoon golf, one working headlight, front gardens with pampas grass, emphatic caravanning, small smelly dogs, drizzle, commemorative plate collections, nylon shirts with BO, Morris Marinas, the bleakness of that third rendition of Let It Go, but most of all: weary, weary failure. These guys were more than resigned commuters from Woking. They were that suffocating mediocrity that gnaws relentlessly at the frankly mistaken belief that you have succeeded in life. These minifigs are the reason you buy a motorbike when you’re 47.



Award for the wonkiest print goes to... Ringmaster! Curse of the beige beanie. Which is Tracy Jacks and Ernold Same?

Summary. Crap. Perfect for the Train from Hell, which I know I am on, too scared to get off lest my forgotten soul fades away into the mist.

Scores	Random Minifigs
Hair / Headgear	70
Head	70
Torso Assembly	10
Hands	20
Legs Assembly	10
Quality	5
Compatibility*	80
Design	50
Value	70
Total	46.5



XINH – Ghostbusters Minifigs (Winter 2015)

NEW!

The LEGO Ghostbusters minifigs came about almost by accident as they were originally in the fan-created CUUSOO/Ideas range. LEGO noted the popularity and went away and got permission to make the characters from Columbia and Sony. The excellent and very popular Ecto-1 set 21108 has remained more or less continually in production (unlike most of the other Ideas sets), and includes all four minifig characters. As of Winter 2015 the Firehouse Headquarters was released under the separate Ghostbusters range (as opposed to Ideas) and includes more of the cast of the first movie.

The film is of course heavily copyrighted, but unsurprisingly this has not stopped the cloner company XINH making their own “Ghots Bustesr” set of 4 to collect (according to the boxes, ‘Raymond Si Tanzi’, ‘Peter Venkman’, ‘Egan Spengler’ and ‘Winston Zeddemore’). The misspelt English probably reflects limited checking of translation from English to Chinese and back again more than a direct attempt at bypassing prosecution as two names are randomly correct. Normally rubbish clones like these would not be considered for review, but post-Christmas some unwanted presents appeared on eBay and the full set (without complete proton packs) were bought for a refreshingly small outlay.

A XINH minifig had already been reviewed (Kid Flash, qv), so expectations were not exactly high on the quality of the hooky anti-supernatural foursome. This proved more than correct. The tan colour had forced XINH to put some investment in a mediocre quality plastic, but the effect was still slightly translucent and felt loose and cheap. The torso printing was not too bad on the front, generally ripping off the original designs, but the rears had been changed. The Ghostbusters logo was a rather simple looking round ghost figure with a half-arsed horizontal red line and looked terrible. The four minifigs were now called ‘Rap’, ‘Petey’, ‘Egox’ and ‘Winsted’. This may have been a limited effort to get around copyright issues, but since the boxes had quite a good copy of the Ghostbusters logo it all seemed a bit pointless and so ineptness was probably the real answer.



CCTV will spot Westerners sniggering before buying these sets. XINH may not understand why at first. Aura of incompetence continues inside.

The double head prints were quite good, but the hair pieces were a bit ill-defined, had sprue marks, and were not as strong in colour as real LEGO. Arms and legs were tolerably tight, allowing some prospect of play before inevitable limb loss. The XINH minifigs were thus just about OK for static display. From the front. At a distance. In low light. They felt and looked what was paid for them – not much – and their actual effect was to increase yearning for the real items. The best thing about these minifigs were the CGI box pictures. Everything inside was pants.



Rap, Winsted, Petey and Egox horrified at their piss-poor clone manifestations. Arse-ends can be covered by the proton packs. Recommended.

XINH are the only minifig cloner copying Ghostbusters. With hindsight, given the choice of these minifigs or nothing, I'd pick nothing every time.

Summary: Terrible. Save up and buy the LEGO sets.

Scores	Ghostbusters
Hair / Headgear	50
Head	80
Torso Assembly	50
Hands	70
Legs Assembly	50
Quality	40
Compatibility*	70
Design	40
Value	50
Total	57



XINH – Kid Flash Minifig (Winter 2015)



Most Chinese minifig cloners do at least some sets featuring Superheroes, not really caring whether they rip off Marvel or DC. Usually these either mimic the LEGO versions, or more lucratively make entire series based around one character and change colours or prints. XINH decided to market The Flash, with 8 minifigs in total. One of these is Kid Flash, also seen in the SY Teen Titan set. The Kid was available as a single figure from various UK internet suppliers, and as at the time XINH had not been reviewed, little Flash was ordered along with a load of other semi-rubbish morally-bankrupt minifig rip-offs. He came without box, in a standard see-through plastic bag with various warning notices printed all over it.

The figure had the head and legs attached to the torso, suspected to be for ease of printing and not for the customer. Two arms and three hands were supplied separately so as to really annoy middle-aged Europeans (this worked). Also in the packet was a cheap-looking unbranded 4x4 tile stand, Kid's hair, and his single bolt of lightning or whatever. After immensely strong assembly, Kid Flash was found to have a very cheap feel to him, slightly too loose arms and legs, and a washed out red colour reminiscent of that old favourite, the Best-Lock angry angry fireman. His printing was passable, but wonkiness was visible on the legs and shoes. The head and torso were printed on both sides; the hair did not cover up all of the reverse expression, but this is seen in LEGO too.



Kid Flash in a bag, and out of it. Arms and hands not attached – why? Torso printing just about OK, but shoes are a bit wonky.

Let loose with a LEGO Patrick from SpongeBob, it was found that most of Kid Flash was interchangeable with the real thing, with the usual exception of the hands. The torso internal stiffener design was a direct copy of LEGO. The hairpiece was different, but seemed not to fit quite snugly, always showing the join between hair and head. The arms also felt a bit loose.



Figure OK for display, but not playing. Torso and legs shape very LEGO indeed but feel cheap. Most parts interchangeable, but not the hands.

XINH are relative newcomers to the minifig cloning party, having only The Flash and Ghostbusters series to their portfolio. Since almost all are not done by other manufacturers XINH were probably banking on the fact that some punters would buy them. Having experienced their wares, it'd be fairly unlikely they'd do it again.

I won't.

Summary: A bit rubbish.

Scores	Kid Flash
Hair / Headgear	70
Head	70
Torso Assembly	60
Hands	70
Legs Assembly	60
Quality	50
Compatibility*	80
Design	90
Value	70
Total	70

Review Summary

LEGO

[2015] 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

[2014] 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

[2015] 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

[2014] Incompatible brick height, rubbish quality, daft legal minifigs and lamentably poor illegal minifigs. Never ever buy it.

BELA

[2015] Mediocre quality cloner with no morals whatsoever. Shamelessly copies LEGO kits directly.

Best-Lock

[2015] 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

[2015] BLOCK Tech's answer to DUPLO. Most pointless LEGO clone in the UK. Epic fail.

BLOCK TECH

[2016] UK importer of many clone kits. Have recently sourced new hideous Tubbyfig, amusingly bad. Take 'contents may vary' to staggeringly new depths. Spoiled Christmas. Twice.

BRIK Pix

[2016] Banal picture puzzles made by milky-white 2x4 bricks with poor grab. How hard can it be?

Character Building Sports Stars

[2015] Quite good quality football-based kits, mostly about collecting figures more than construction.

Click Brick

[2015] 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

[2015] 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

[2016] 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. Great brick quality, awful figures.

Dargo

[2016] Minifig clones of reasonable quality and no shame.

Decool

[2016] Surprisingly good quality minifig cloner, with unsurprisingly few morals. Fades in the sun.

Donglin

[2015] Mediocre incompatible ¾-sized Duplo-ish building blocks. Amusing packaging. If you see it, walk away.

Dreamlock

[2016] Mediocre quality cloner, exports a lot to Russia.

Elephant

[2016] Minifig cloner, almost indistinguishable from LEGO and with interesting subjects. Copyright infringement overload.

Enlighten

[2014] 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.

First Blox

[2016] Wilco's answer to Duplo using Woma / BLOCK TECH sourced bricks. Would be good if it wasn't dirty and loose.

Gudi

[2015] Unexpectedly good quality newish clone brand, made by the company that produces SY. Rare in the UK.

HuiMei

[2015] Abhorrent clone brand with patchy design and truly disastrous minifig quality. Importing these kits seems like retail suicide. Tragic.

IQ Blook

[2014] 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.

Jia Li Bo

[2016] Mediocre quality minifigs suitable for static display from a distance in candlelight. Has oddball subjects not covered by any other company. Still not convinced of their business plan.

Jie Star

[2016] Reasonable quality brand with effeminate pirates and excellent cannons. What a strange world it is.

Jinrun

[2016] Terrible minifig cloner, disappointment guaranteed.

Jubilux Woma

[2016] 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. Woma fades in the sun.

Kazi

[2014] 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

[2016] Mediocre quality minifig cloner, with utterly shameful copying ethic and bizarre and pointless dioramas.

Leyi

[2015] Website promises quality and high morals. Utter lies. Copies LEGO and Chinese clones badly. Never buy it.

Ligao

[2014] Mediocre quality building bricks, unearthly malformed figures, not cheap enough by a long, long way. A bit like Woking.

Liteup Blocks

[2015] Useful niche supplier of compatible LED lighting.

Little White Dragon

[2015] 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

[2015] 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

[2016] 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.

OK

[2016] Perfect name.

Oxford Toys / Kre-O

[2016] OK quality, densely packaged, rather basic and expensive. New Kreon minifig quite good. Niche marketing by Hasbro patchy, much like franchise film quality.

PeiZhi

[2016] 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

[2015] This company should stick to what it knows best. Importing rubbish clone bricks is not part of it.

Qiaoletong

[2016] OK quality cloner producing small OK kits. Yellow is too orange for good taste - except in Essex.

Quick Bricks

[2015] 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

[2014] 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

[2015] 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

[2016] Poor to excellent clone brand, blatantly ripping off copyright. Epitome of the darker side of the hooky brands.

TY

[2016] Worst minifigs available, terrible fit, likes beige a lot. Constant reminder of failure.

Weagle

[2016] 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

[2015] DUPLO cloner, OK quality but staggeringly scary figures.

XINH

[2016] Minifigs worth a punt only if you're desperate.

XQL

[2015] 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>

Very good list of hooky minifigs, and how to tell them apart
<http://mybrickstore.blogspot.co.uk/p/minifigures.html>

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.fiattoys.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.kaiivutoys.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

Levi (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.lhtoys.com/en/aboutus.asp>



Review Tables 2015-16

Company	Best Lock	Best Lock	Bloc Kits (Qiaole tong)	Block Constr-uction (PeiZhi)	Block Constr-uction (Weagle)	Block Constr-uction (Weagle)	BLOCK TECH	BLOCK TECH	BLOCK TECH	Blox	Blox	BRIK PIX	Cobi	First Blox	Kids Create (Dream-lock)	Kool Blox (Qiaole-tong)	Kre-O	M.Y (Jie Star)	M.Y	Mega Bloks	Mega Bloks	Mega Bloks	Woma
Model	Convertible	Firefighters	Patrol Jeep	Army Vehicle	Vehicle Set 1	Vehicle Set 3	Tree and Elf	Snowman and Post	Pterodactyl	Beach Cafe	Velociraptor	Dreamworks Puzzles	T-34/76	Happy Home	Naughty Kitty	Construction Team	Autobot Jazz	Pirate Attack	Police Boat	Minions Fire Rescue	Minions Dance Party	Police Force Chopper	Vacation House
Quality*	0	10	90	70	20	10	70	60	90	70	60	70	95	70	80	80	100	80	70	80	90	80	70
Value	50	70	100	100	100	50	20	50	80	70	100	50	60	100	100	100	70	100	90	70	40	80	70
Fit*	30	30	100	80	30	0	70	70	100	60	90	60	100	100	100	80	100	80	80	90	100	90	80
Compatibility	60	70	100	90	80	50	90	90	90	80	90	90	100	100	100	70	90	90	90	100	100	90	90
Minifig*	N/A	20	N/A	40	10	0	40	N/A	N/A	20	N/A	N/A	50	100	N/A	N/A	80	80	60	100	100	70	50
Design	40	10	90	60	40	0	50	40	80	70	90	80	80	90	80	80	60	80	70	70	90	70	40
Instructions	100	100	70	60	50	40	50	60	60	100	90	N/A	100	N/A	50	90	100	100	70	100	100	100	80
Total	39	37	93	70	39	17	54	63	86	62	87	78	83	92	81	83	89	85	74	88	89	82	68

Company	Cobi	Cobi	Dargo	Dargo	Decool	Elephant	Jinrun	Jinrun	JLB	JLB	LELE	Mega Bloks	OK	SY	SY	SY	SY	TY	XINH	XINH
Model	Scooby Doo	Shaggy	Hulk	Black Widow	Zombie World	The Walking Dead Series 1	Han Solo	Clone Trooper	Athena	Mr Bean	SCO19	Minions Series 3	Megatron	Lt Hammerman	Monster School	Expendables	Storm	Random Minifigs	Ghost Busters	Kid Flash
Hair/Headgear	N/A	N/A	80	80	100	95	40	80	80	70	90	70	90	100	80	80	90	70	50	70
Head	90	70	100	70	100	100	70	80	70	70	80	N/A	80	90	80	80	100	70	80	70
Torso Assembly	90	70	90	100	90	100	70	70	60	60	60	90	90	100	90	100	100	10	50	60
Hands	N/A	80	90	90	90	100	80	80	90	90	90	80	100	100	90	90	100	20	70	70
Legs Assembly	90	60	80	100	80	100	70	70	70	50	60	80	100	100	80	100	100	10	50	60
Quality	50	50	80	90	90	95	30	0	60	60	60	80	80	100	80	90	90	5	40	50
Compatibility*	50	20	90	80	90	100	80	80	80	80	100	10	90	100	90	100	100	80	70	80
Design	100	90	90	90	90	100	50	90	100	90	90	90	100	100	100	100	100	50	40	90
Value	70	70	90	90	100	100	70	70	90	100	100	40	100	100	100	100	100	70	50	70
Total	74	59	88	87	92	99	64	72	78	75	83	63	92	99	88	94	98	46.5	57	70

Review Tables 2014-15

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 Cantina	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	Erm...	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