

Fabuland Housewives



BrickJournal: Tell us about yourself.

Mark Larson: I live in Indiana with my partner and three large dogs. Large dogs. Rottweiler, Yellow lab, German Shepard, all girls, 80, 70 & 60 lbs. respectively. I am a graphic & web designer an artist and an actor. Which means I make no money. My artwork & design portfolio can be seen at scorpioart.com and my ankle can occasionally be seen on the TV series Prison Break.

BJ: When did you start building?

ML: I started building before I started walking. I can't remember life without LEGO. I've always been a complete slob as a person but I always had my LEGO separated by size, shape & color: Matchstick Men style.

BJ: When did you start BrickZone.net?

ML: I started BrickZone.net in January of 2006. I had a site for a little while called BrickSolutions that was just an extension of my professional website. It had tips on how to sort and clean and how to solve geometric conundrums in LEGO. I never promoted it and I never updated it. There was a set of the week box that stayed 6383 Public Works the entire time the site was up. I wanted to eventually have enough articles to publish a book but then *The Unofficial LEGO Guide* by Allan Bedford came out and it was better than what I was putting together, I gave up on it.

BJ: What's your favorite theme?

ML: Galidor. What if I was serious? Would you still think I was worth interviewing? I wouldn't. What theme don't I like lately? I was annoyed for a while with juniorization and the bley fiasco, but what's to complain about now? The LEGO company has really been producing great lines lately. I love the Vikings and the Creator sets, Star Wars of course. I'm obsessed

Mark Larson: LEGO Storyteller

Earlier this year, the online series "Fabuland Housewives" launched on www.Brickzone.net.

BrickJournal chatted with the creator about his site and his series, and got a little more...

Article by Joe Meno

Photos by Mark Larson



Officer Brody Bulldog encounter Fenix Fox and Peyton Pig



Betsy Bunny, Doctor Dalton Dog, and Randy Rabbit look over a fallen stranger



Mayor Langston Lion and Marcus Mouse discuss the front page of *The Fabuland Gazette*...and why the mayor is not on it

with *Exo-Force* for no good reason. It's like there's subliminal advertising for it or an addictive substance lining the manual of each set. I don't know, maybe it's the fact that there's a story line or maybe I like blue hairpieces. Who knows? *Exo-Force*=cool!

BJ: You started a storyline on your website called *Fabuland Housewives* – what inspired you to do this?

ML: What didn't inspire me to do this? I promise not to answer every question with an opposing question. I won't pretend this is going to be a short story. When I was little my sister and I watched *Days of our Lives* with our baby sitter. I had a card table set up in my room that had my *Fabuland* town on it along with the 6392 Airport and the 6375 Exxon station, of course. So, I decided that the town was *Days of our Fabuland* and I would tell my sister the stories that were going on in *Fabuland* and she would of course say, "All right so the rabbit is Bo Brady, right?" and I'd get all defensive like I'd thought of it all by myself. The town was quite brilliant, I have a picture of it somewhere I'll put up on BrickZone eventually.

There's a very convenient multi-colored house built in the middle of the road to save space. Anyway, to make a long story longer, the same still holds true today. I've completely ripped off *Desperate Housewives* and the entire story is the exact same. No, that's not true. I don't even watch *Desperate Housewives* so I wouldn't know what to rip off. But over the years of sorting and storing I never wanted to get rid of the *Fabuland* pieces and they took up too much room in my sorting system, so I've kept them out on display shelves. When my sister came over to my first apartment she went straight to them and asked "Is this *Fabuland*?" and I said, "yes." And then she asked "Which one was the prostitute?" Yes, as a child I watched Soap Operas and then played with LEGOs, playing that a little plastic lamb was a prostitute. Who needed football? I was quite well adjusted.

Chapter 2: Modern day. At some point in time I decided that there were still stories to be told in *Fabuland* that didn't find their origins in Salem. Every time we'd move and I'd set them back up or build something new, I'd find a new part of the story. It just happened. Anyway, the stories were more complex and mature than what I was ripping off of *Days of Our Lives* at the age of nine. And then the sick part: I started buying bulk lots of *Fabuland* on eBay to create more *Fabuland* creations. I'm pushing thirty here. I've come to terms with this adult obsession with a short-lived spin-off of regular LEGO that was meant to introduce girls to the market, but I don't exactly bring it up at dinner parties. So, I've got this story in my head, and it kept building and I always knew I would put it online. I'm a huge fan of the Brick Testament and the Adventures of the Unlikely Society which unfortunately disappeared because that was one of the funniest things I've ever seen. I knew people enjoyed reading stories people had put together with LEGO, so I hoped people would enjoy mine.

BJ: What kind of planning does it take to do a series?

ML: Some would be nice. I need to budget my time a little better, but it goes a little like this. I have the arc of the first "season" written loosely in a word doc. Then I separate the action into episodes. Once I have the episodes written I try to come up with a shot list. Also, I make a list of what sets need to be built in order to tell the next portion of the story. Then I photograph each shot, watermark and airbrush them. Then I put them in an html template and add the dialogue.

BJ: How long does it take to build and photograph the 'episodes'?

ML: The first episode took me about 2 weeks of eight hour days. Now obviously I didn't do that all in a row. It was spread out over a couple of months. What's nice about the work I put into the episode is that most of the busy work is done. The major sets are built, the story arc is finished and I have a great HTML template for each episode.

BJ: What's the most enjoyable aspect of this?

ML: The best part about this is how much of the story fleshes out while I'm filming because I don't think of it until I have the situation physically in front of me. For example, the first episode of *Housewives* ends with a character being murdered. The victim is holding something when the murder happens and I didn't think of what happened to that object after the murder until I saw the scene in front of me. I thought, "What would happen if we couldn't find that for a while? Hmm." Then I scratched my chin and made a very pensive face. I find it's a great way to flesh out stories. I do a lot of creative writing and having the situation in front of you physically, changes the way you see it in your head and takes you in directions you wouldn't have thought of otherwise.

Also, *Fabuland* has always had a special place in my heart, but the "simple" aspect of building the sets with the large pieces is actually challenging because the pieces are pretty limiting. I really enjoy putting together a cool-looking set with those limiting pieces. I spend a good amount of time surfing my own web site looking at the creations. I enjoy that almost as much as I enjoy looking at a mirror...

BJ: What else do you build? And what's on the horizon?

IML: build whatever pops into my head. Then, of course it turns out completely different, but to me that's the fun of it. I've done some custom star wars ships, which can be seen in the *fbtb* customs section or my brickshelf gallery. I built a big star destroyer before the official one came out. I used to sit there with the *Star Wars Guide to Vehicles* book and try to build things straight from the schematics. Cool book. I have always loved Town building. It's not unlike an addiction in that there's always another building to create. Different and better than the last one. I love my little town and can wait to share it's growth with the AFOL community. Recently, I've started building castles. I have another story that I've been writing since I was in college, *The Kingdom of the Lakes*. When I moved to Chicago it was a huge transition in my life for many reasons, but it was also my re-introduction to LEGO. I didn't bring my LEGOs with me to college because I didn't want them to get lost or stolen or God forbid played with. No one plays with my LEGOs. Seriously. I've dated guys who think it's the coolest thing that I still "play" with LEGO (we know it's not play, but art, of which ABS is our medium, right?) and they ask if they can come over and play with LEGOs, how fun blah blah blah. I never liked those guys. Jerks. Anyway, where was I? Oh right! In college when I moved into an apartment I lived with a bunch of frat guys and would come in with LEGO sets hidden in my bag. It was really hard to sneak in the bigger sets, especially since all I had was a backpack. So, when I move to Chicago I worked as a bouncer at a bar, so I worked four hours a day between 10pm and 2am. So, I had plenty of time to catch up on my LEGO work. I had my entire collection with me. The bar was really slow after 9/11 and I ended up going home early a lot. Literally, some weeks I worked 10 hours. So, I took my story and made every character out of LEGO minifigs. Luckily for me the Harry Potter line had just come out and I had plenty to work with. Anyway, this story is an epic and I hope to begin publishing the chapters beginning in the fall. I just recently began building the settings and *Fabuland Housewives* has kind of taken over. But *Housewives* is more of practice for my brain-child: *The Kingdom of the Lakes*. It will probably come out slowly. It's a six-part story that involves a lot of "Oh, I should have seen that coming, but I didn't!" I hope anyway.

BJ: What do you like to do outside the hobby?

ML: Play with my dogs, work out, socialize. My partner and I live right outside Chicago in Indiana. It's a small beach community and only has about 700 people. I get into the city a lot for auditions and hanging out with friends. I miss the city, but I love the country. We go to the beach a lot. I'm writing a musical. I paint. I do medical research. No, I don't do medical research. That's a joke. I write jokes. **b**



Gavin Gorilla is paranoid about the furniture attacking him...or is there more to it?



Randy Rabbit, Betsy Bunny, Doctor Paco Panda, and Doctor Dalton Dog, check over the fallen stranger,,but who is he?



Marcus Mouse and Lily Lamb share a quiet moment...or do they?