



The Cult of LEGO

John Baichtal , Joe Meno

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No, this isn't a book about joining some fringe cult. It's a book by LEGO® fans, for LEGO fans, and you and your kids will love it.

In *The Cult of LEGO*, *Wired*'s GeekDad blogger John Baichtal and *BrickJournal* founder Joe Meno take you on a magnificent, illustrated tour of the LEGO community, its people, and their creations.

The Cult of LEGO introduces us to fans and builders from all walks of life. People like professional LEGO artist Nathan Sawaya; enigmatic Dutch painter Ego Leonard (who maintains that he is, in fact, a LEGO minifig); Angus MacLane, a Pixar animator who builds CubeDudes, instantly recognizable likenesses of fictional characters; Brick Testament creator Brendan Powell Smith, who uses LEGO to illustrate biblical stories; and Henry Lim, whose work includes a series of models recreating M.C. Escher lithographs and a full-scale, functioning LEGO harpsichord.

Marvel at spectacular LEGO creations like:

A life-sized Stegosaurus and an 80,000-brick T. Rex skeleton Detailed microscale versions of landmarks like the Acropolis and Yankee Stadium A 22-foot long, 350-pound re-creation of the World War II battleship Yamato A robotic, giant chess set that can replay historical matches or take on an opponent A three-level, remote-controlled Jawa Sandcrawler, complete with moving conveyor belt

Whether you're a card-carrying LEGO fanatic or just thinking fondly about that dusty box of LEGO in storage, *The Cult of LEGO* will inspire you to take out your bricks and build something amazing.

Praise for *The Cult of LEGO*

"I defy you to read and admire this book and not want to doodle with some bricks by the time you're done."

—**Gareth Branwyn, online editor-in-chief, MAKE Magazine**

"This fascinating look at the world of devoted LEGO fans deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone who's ever played with LEGO bricks."

—**Chris Anderson, editor-in-chief, Wired**

"A crazy fun read, from cover to cover, this book deserves a special spot on the bookshelf of any self-respecting nerd."

—**Jake McKee, former global community manager, the LEGO Group**

"An excellent book and a must have for any LEGO enthusiast out there. The pictures are awesome!"

—**Ulrik Pilegaard, author of Forbidden LEGO**

"We're all members of the Cult of LEGO—the only membership requirement is clicking two pieces of plastic together and wanting to click more. Now we have a book that justifies our obsession."

—James Floyd Kelly, blogger for [GeekDad.com](#) and [TheNXTStep.com](#)

The Cult of LEGO Details

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Author : John Baichtal , Joe Meno

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From Reader Review The Cult of LEGO for online ebook

Jim says

Having built LEGO as a kid, then again as an adult, then again with my own kids, AND having access to the internet, there wasn't really a lot of new content here. Sure, there were some different pictures, and certainly a bit of information topics that had not been on my radar, but none of the content was deep.

Open the book to almost any page and you can read right there without having to worry about the page before or the one after.

Call it a "coffee table book" and you'll be happy with what is inside.

Tyler Kroon says

A cool synopsis of the world of LEGO, with a focus on the adult fan base. Content includes the history of the company, pieces of art made with or influenced by LEGO, massive and tiny creations from all ages, fan groups, gatherings, and publications, as well as how LEGO has affected the fields of architecture, design, and robotics. A fun and inspirational book for any self-labeled "brickhead"!

Sally Hegedus says

Dropped by the library tonight. Saw this waiting to be reshelved. Picked it up on a whim. Cuz who doesn't love Lego? Spent the next three hours totally engrossed in it, devouring it page by page, as it became dark outside and I lost all track of time and wondered why I was getting so hungry (no dinner had been eaten yet). Obviously I absolutely loved this book! It's amazing what folks have the creativity and skill to make from these "bricks" and other "elements" as the Lego lingo calls the building pieces. Great photos, very good explanations of the various building trends and clubs. This is a great fun read for anyone who has any of his or her inner kid left!

Gordon says

I must admit to skimming this book a little, especially as some of the photos had limited impact as a PDF ebook. An interesting, though nothing startlingly new, recap on LEGO. A lot of concentration on AFOLs and the constructions that can be made when you apply adult money to a toy. Somewhat inspiring. This book came out without the Friends controversy, so you won't see it mentioned although there is much genre and purity discussions that basically boil down to the company having three highly successful product lines - LEGO system (blocks, sometimes heavily commercialized), Bionic and Mindstorm. I'm tempted to go buy some Mindstorm, have LEGO aplenty with my kids and NO interest in Bionic.

Jami Sweeney says

I enjoyed the discussion of the history and the impact on Dutch culture. Realizing that there are some in the world who take Lego very seriously and have come up with some creative adaptations to the typical building. Getting to realize the power of a new Lego set through six year old eyes for the third time is a real treat!

Claire says

This is an absolutely fascinating book. There are so many things I did not know about LEGO. I will be honest though, I mainly skimmed from chapter 9 onwards... Digital bricks and robotics hold no interest for me but I am sure those sections are just as interesting as the rest of the book.

I am a total amateur (maybe *novice* is a better word) when it comes to Lego but I love it all the same; mainly collecting minifigures and Harry Potter and Pirates of the Caribbean sets (or will be, once I start working again).

The book is inspiring as well - I was quite taken with the Vignettes, which are small pieces that depict a specific moment e.g.

or even this two storey version [image error]

While you are working within a small space, there is no limit to the height that you can use. I think this is something I would work on in the future.

The LEGO comics used in the book are hilarious! The ApocaLEGO is just brilliant and the Zombie Apocafest (pages 176 and 177) is so detailed. These people have real talent.

The only thing I didn't like was the constant reference that LEGO is a toy. While technically that is true, I think most people (well, me really) think LEGO is LEGO. So I don't understand that great debate of child's toy vs. adult plaything. It's LEGO - everybody plays with it.

Melki says

Though I can frequently be found cursing the sharp, pointy little bricks as I extract them from the soles of my feet, I'm actually a pretty big LEGO fan. But I am NOTHING like the AFOLs (Adult Fan Of LEGO) who populate this book.

These people are INSANE! And their amazing creations are making their way into art galleries and museums.

This book does a fairly good job of exploring all things LEGO - from minifig mania to gigantic recreations of Yankee Stadium and the Acropolis. There is a history of brickmaking, a trip to a convention, and a look at LEGO's uses in autism therapy. Personally, I would have preferred less text, and more pictures of incredible AFOL creations.

The book does not shy away from controversy and has an article on Zbigniew Libera, a Polish artist who creates fake LEGO kits featuring Nazi concentration camps. [http://raster.art.pl/gallery/artists/...](http://raster.art.pl/gallery/artists/) His use of a toy to make such ghastly dioramas is a sobering reminder of all that can go wrong with the world.

I'm left with a new respect for this venerable building toy. I'll try to remember this as I'm negotiating the obstacle course of castles, forts, and pirate ships crowding my family room floor.

Lee Battersby says

For such a large book, written by authors with such credibility within the Lego community, this ends up feeling somewhat slight, without a great deal of depth in each separate subject and with too many areas of the hobby barely touched upon or skimmed across with no real engagement. Granted, this is a coffee-style book, but even so, it feels like a lot more work has been done on the graphic design than really creating content that you can get your teeth into. It's beautifully visual, but I also felt that many of the pictures did not capture the works from their best angle, and too many felt like stock images rather than bearing a cogent, consistent look right throughout. In the end, the book felt a little too much like a quickie put together to cash in on the popularity of its topic, rather than something designed to show off the best aspects of its subject matter.

John says

This book is a combination history of LEGO, history of adult fans of LEGO (AFOL), and photo-book of amazing LEGO creations. It presents itself as something of an introduction to LEGO to people who either never played with the bricks, or else gave them up as kids and never returned to them before now. I think it's more likely to appeal to AFOL like me who already collect and use the bricks as adults, but I suppose it might be something others would find at least worth flipping through.

I do have to note that despite being published in 2011 there are already some minor bits that are out of date. There is some discussion of the LEGO massively multiplayer online computer game. Unfortunately, that game was not as successful as LEGO hoped it would be, and has already been shut down. This just emphasizes one of the points the book brings up, which is that while the company adheres to certain core principles of quality, it is also constantly embracing change. Two things that have helped keep it successful despite the patents on its core elements being long expired.

Melanie says

Read Lego:A love story first, then this one. Amazing.

Bruce Gargoyle says

3.5 stars

Ten Second Synopsos:

A coffee-table sized exploration of the social impact of LEGO from its earliest inception through to new developments and applications.

When I checked this one out of the library I expected that it would be the kind of book that I would idly flick through during points of boredom, but I actually ended up reading it cover to cover. This was no mean feat given that the book is a hefty, coffee-table sized tome, but I like to think that holding it up for long periods counted as exercise. Beginning at the beginning, the book takes a look at the fascinating history of the toy company that would eventually become the home of the ubiquitous and iconic Lego brick. The company's commitment to quality, amongst other things, is clearly one of the reasons why Lego has been around for so long, and has made such an impact on popular culture.

From Lego's early incarnations, the book moves on to explore the extensive world of AFOLs (Adult Fans of Lego, to the uninitiated) and the "cult" that has built up around the humble toy brick. You may not be aware of this, but adult Lego fans are everywhere, with their own webcomics, literature, conventions, language, online forums and competitions and if you ever wanted to be part of a hardcore hobbyist community based around a children's toy, Lego could certainly provide your entry ticket into such a world. As well as the world of competitive building by adult Lego fans, the book takes a look at Lego as art, Lego as architecture and the ways in which adult builders have taken Lego to whole new levels that could not have been imagined by the company's founders. No book on Lego could be complete without a close look at the Minifig phenomenon, and these little guys play a big role in the cult of Lego, influencing everything from the scale of creations to the builders' choice of avatar in the online and business worlds.

There is a section of the book devoted to Lego and robotics and this was a whole new world for me as I have never particularly dabbled in the Technic sets, let alone the Mindstorms system, which allows users to program robots for all sorts of purposes, from the aforementioned vending machines, to robots designed to solve Rubik's Cubes.

The point of difference for this book is that it takes a focused look at how a simple interconnected building toy has made such an incredible impact on wider society. At the same time, it uncovers the vast and complex subculture of adult fans of Lego and the many ways in which the brick has evolved beyond "toy" status, in the hands of grown ups with innovative ambitions. If you are a fan of Lego, and indeed of social history, I can recommend this book as one to lose yourself in.

Bill Ward says

A few months ago I was sent a review copy of the book "The Cult of LEGO" by John Baichtal and Joe Meno. Although the book was published last November by No Starch Press, and it's taken me a while to finish reading it... but I finally did, and here are my thoughts on it.

I've known Joe for years; he's a regular at many of the major fan conventions on the east coast, and the editor of BrickJournal. He also ran the 2006 BrickFest in Washington, D.C., and when I was starting up the Bricks by the Bay planning process for our first convention in 2010, he provided a lot of great advice. I don't know the other author, however.

This is a great coffee table book covering pretty comprehensively all aspects of the LEGO adult hobby. It's not a single narrative though, from cover to cover, but rather each page pretty well stands on its own (in

some cases the story might span 2-3 pages). This is perfect for picking it up, opening it to a random page, reading a page or two, then putting it back down again, but if you do try to read it continuously it comes off a bit jarring. I suppose as a coffee table book this is ideal, but it's not how I like to read. The chapters or stories in the book seem like blog posts more than anything else, which is understandable as John Baichtal is a prominent blogger.

Most of No Starch Press's LEGO books are squarely aimed at the LEGO hobbyist, but this one is not. It's for the person who finds LEGO interesting, but isn't a builder themselves, or maybe someone new to LEGO as a hobby. It's perfect for someone who loves to come to the public day of a LEGO convention but would never attend the whole weekend.

The book is full of great pictures featuring a wide variety of creations and events from all over the world, spanning the last ten years and more. I like the fact that they don't just highlight the latest and greatest, but creations that were featured on LUGNET 10 years ago are given equal billing with something from last year, showing the timelessness of LEGO as a medium. If you have a friend or family member who doesn't understand your fascination with LEGO, sharing this book with them would go a long way toward redressing that disconnect. Combining Meno's encyclopedic knowledge of the LEGO hobby and AFOL scene with Baichtal's outsider point of view was a master stroke by the publishers, as it ensures accuracy and comprehensiveness while keeping it accessible and understandable by a non-AFOL.

It was out of date almost immediately after publication though, with the closure of DesignByMe and LEGO Universe and consequent changes to LDD, and the introduction of the new LEGO Friends line (and its attendant controversies in the media) being topics that were completely missed by the authors. In a rapidly evolving scene such as ours, that's pretty much inevitable, however.

On a personal note, two of my photos were used (thanks to the Creative Commons license I use in all my Flickr photos) and both BayLUG and Bricks by the Bay got a mention. None of my models were featured though.

(Taken from my blog entry for this review)

Cheryl Gatling says

I bought this book because my nine-year-old daughter has gotten into Lego. I thought she would like it, and she did, especially the chapter on the minifig (whose appeal is so universally powerful that it graces the cover). But this is not really a book for or about kids. This book could be subtitled, "Everything that Adults Do with Lego." Reproducing works of art, making movies, building vignettes and dioramas, online resources, conventions-- if adult fans of Lego (AFOLs) are doing it, it gets a mention here. The survey is thorough in its breadth, not so much in its depth, with about two pages per topic, and most pages loaded with far more photo than text. But if any of these topics sparks your interest, there are usually websites listed where you can look up more information. If you like Lego, this will be a fun book.

Jordan Stowell says

Very immodest. Offensive.

Noah Kellstedt says

I loved it!

I loved it because it taught me more than just how to build legos it was the story of lego. Lego started in Denmark created by a man called Ole Kirk Christiansen. He started the company around 1950. I learn how it grew over the year from a family company to what is is now.

I liked this book because I like legos but I like reading about its history.

I would recommend this book to anyone even my sister. I think it is interesting to learn about the history behind my favorite thing to do.
