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Interview with Jonathan Markiewitz  
Posted by Daniel

Today, GeekBrick.com interviews LEGO hobbyist and film maker Jonathan Markiewitz. He is the creator of the LEGO Batman film "Batman: Revenge"

Read on for the interview!

**GeekBrick:** To start off, what first inspired you to make a LEGO film?

**Jonathan Markiewitz:** The inspiration was to make a Batman film, and this was before any thought of LEGO entered into the mix. Placing the movie in a LEGO environment was a decision based on a few important factors that I had to include in the film, not only from the standpoint of the director, but from the standpoint of a Batman fan. First, I had to have the batmobile and the batwing in the film. Those two models, based on the vehicles seen in Tim Burton's "Batman", would be instrumental elements in the story. I also wanted viewers to see several Gotham City locations, ranging from alleyways to street corners to skyscrapers, with other locations like Arkham Asylum and the Riddler's lair. My budget at the time wouldn't have allowed for such a large scale production, so the idea of using LEGOs quickly came to mind when I started to think how I could construct the vehicles, build the locations, and do so to my own specifications. So, the inspiration for making "Batman: Revenge" a LEGO film was from the fact that it was my only option at the time to make the film I wanted viewers to see. Also, at the time "Batman: Revenge" was in production, there were no Batman LEGO fan films, so I felt this was my opportunity to bring something new to the fan film community.

**GB:** How did you go about making the custom mini-figs for the film?

**JM:** The Batman mini-fig is a composition of several elements. First, the mask originated from the Kenner Batman Returns "Quick Change Bruce Wayne" action figure, specially cut and designed to best fit a LEGO head. However, that particular mask did not cover the entire face, so the bottom portion of Batman's mask was drawn onto the LEGO head. The cape also originates from a Batman action figure, but was shortened to fit the length of a LEGO mini-fig. The chest plate emblem is a computer print-out of the Batman logo, modified to match the one seen in Batman Returns. The Riddler mini-fig is composed of a black top hat and a green body suit with question marks drawn on it. I decided to go with that design of multiple question marks because the Riddler's henchmen each had one, centralized question mark drawn onto their shirts, so I had to differentiate the two villain costumes.

**GB:** When making the figures, what references did you use?

**JM:** The Batman mini-fig is modeled after the look of the Batsuit in "Batman Returns", and the Riddler mini-fig is a composition of my own design along with other versions of the Riddler seen in comic books and films.

**GB:** If you could, please explain the process of making the movie.

**JM:** It began with the desire to make a Batman film. Pre-production, principle photography, and post production were filled with challenges and fun. Once it was decided that LEGOs were to be used for the movie, construction on the sets commenced, and Gotham City was built brick by brick. The batmobile was made long before pre-production, but everything else had to be constructed for the film, built very much like Hollywood sets in the sense that they were often "two-wall" or "three-wall" sets that were not enclosed, but built for a specific camera shot that didn't need a complete location. Lighting was very important in every scene, not only because of the simple fact it's a necessity for viewers to see what was happening, but because the look of Gotham City relies heavily on its specific lighting and shadows to create the desired dark, mysterious environment. Filming in stop-motion animation was new to me when making "Batman: Revenge", but I learned that it required very steady sets, no room for error, and hundreds of hours to complete a finished production. After dealing with slight camera bumps, re-shoots, and lighting challenges, "Batman: Revenge", though it required intense dedication and long hours, was a labor of love with which I'm proud to be associated.

**GB:** Now that the movie is done, do you think it was well received?

**JM:** Absolutely. The first screening of the film in December of 2003 was met with great acclaim, and since its premiere on the Internet in October of 2004, it's been given praise by fans, directors, and film reviewers (reviewers such as Troy Anderson from LivingCorpse.Com and Will from Fanboy Theatre). I remember getting an e-mail from Clark Bartram ("Batman" from Sandy Collora's "Batman: Dead End") and in it told me that he and his son loved the film. I've received a lot of positive comments about "Batman: Revenge" and I'm really proud to have contributed something to the Batman universe. I'm happy with how the film turned out, I'm proud to say that I have a film adults enjoy and mothers let their children watch without caution, and I'm grateful that D.C. Comics and Warner Brothers allow for these non-profit, non-commercial fan films to reach audiences across the world.

**GB:** Now that LEGO has made the announcement of a future Batman line, what do you think about this compared to your custom mini-figs?

**JM:** I hope that the future LEGO Batman line will be, like the "Batman: Revenge" batmobile and batwing, based on Tim Burton's "Batman" and "Batman Returns". As for comparison, I'm partial to the batsuit seen

in Burton's films, so I hope one of their LEGO mini-figs resembles that design.

I appreciate GeekBrick for their promotion of "Batman: Revenge" and I want to say thank you for having me as your guest!