

Issue 1, September 2013

Reviews

Bumblebee, Spider-Man, and Predator!



Toy News, including Glyos System, Masters of the Universe, DC, and more!

Blue Snaggletooth?





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Left: Hasbro's 6-inch scale action figures have renewed interest in the **Star Wars** series for a lot of collectors, but now that the first figures are out there just how good are they? See p. 30 for my own thoughts on the line's first human action figure, **Luke Skywalker**.

Image shown at left one of Hasbro's very first promotional pics for the Black 6-inch line.

BattleGrip Issue 1 by Philip Reed. www.battlegrip.com Follow Philip on Twitter – @philipjreed

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o what's happening here? After a recent hack on **battlegrip.com** I decided to take the opportunity to try something new, dialing back the site updates and instead redirecting efforts to the magazine you're reading now. This is an experiment and may or may not last; the future of the magazine will be decided after a couple of months; please leave comments at the site or send tweets – @philipjreed – with your thoughts on the magazine.

What can you expect from each issue? News and reviews will be the big ones, and I'm hoping that I'll have time to include an article or two in each issue. This time around there are a couple of pieces about Hasbro's **Star Wars** 6-inch action figures and now that I've found the first four you can expect a review or two in the next issue.

If I ever get time I'd like to also take a shot at a comic and some original art in each issue, but that will have to wait until the office load and travel become less demanding; convention season is almost over!

This first issue isn't perfect, but I think it's a decent start and should give all of us some ideas for the next issue. And please, I need your feedback to improve on the magazine and give you an even better magazine.

So please read and enjoy. And be sure to share this with your friends, either by sending them the PDF or directing them to **battlegrip.com**.

Thanks for your support!

– Philip Reed



Resin Rhaal from Gorgoloid

Released at **http://www.gorgoloid.com/products**, these incredible resin toys stand 5-inches tall and cost \$85/each.





Above: Upcoming Glyos System fun.

Onell Design Shares "Glybid" Test

Recently posted at the Glyos Transmission Web Log is this photo showing how the upcoming **Power Lords** action figures blend beautifully with Onell's **Glyos System** action figures.

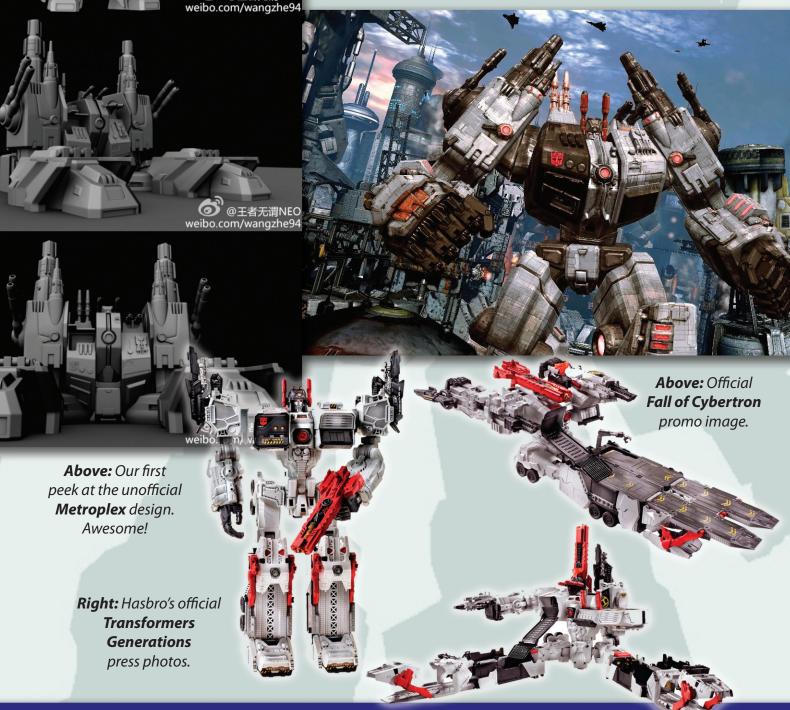
This latest test of the **Elite Power Soldier** – at left, above – is an update of the test shots first shown back at San Diego Comic Con, and after a chat with Matt Doughty of Onell Design I can say I'm even more excited to get a close look at the finished toy; it sounds like the joint system is now 100% and traditional action figure fans can love the **Power Lords** figures without any need to get into the construction side of the **Glyos System** toys.

Also shown in the above photo is the Ivorinium DSG, one of the new action figures scheduled for release at **onelldesign.com** in early September. Keep an eye on **http://onelldesign. blogspot.com/** the first week of September for launch details.

@王者无谓NEO weibo.com/wangzhe94

Unofficial Transformers Metroplex?

The third party **Transformers** scene continues to amaze us all as pics surfaced recently of a **Fall of Cybertron**-inspired **Metroplex** that looks set to rival Hasbro's own **Transformers Generations Metroplex** action figure. So far the manufacturer is unknown, and nothing has been seen beyond these initial images, but what's clear is that someone out there feels they can outdo Hasbro at their own game . . . and I'm confident when I say this unofficial **Metroplex** is sure to cost more than Hasbro's toy.





DC Club Infinite Earths Cancelled

Mattel failed to collect enough subscribers to continue their **DC Club Infinite Earths** into 2013 . . . so now the line is officially over. Sad news for fans of Mattel's 6-inch scale DC action figures.

The unreleased figures that have already been shown – like **Doomsday** – may exist as convention exclusives, but right now everything is up in the air. Mattel says they are working on decisions.



Club Infinite Earths Doomsday Was Too Big

The death of **DC Club Infinite Earths** trigged an article by Ron at Action Figure Pics – **http://www.actionfigurepics.com/2013/08/soap-box-sunday-sour-grapes-club-infinite-earths-doomsday-was-too-big** – that discusses the size of the previewed **Doomsday** action figure vs. regular 6-inch action figures in the line.

So, what does this all mean to us? I guess not a heck of a lot, with the Club Infinite Earths sub in the toilet. But maybe, just maybe, you're feeling a little bit better that you're not getting a ridiculously over-sized Doomsday... in a ridiculous green Spanx jail suit.

Check the article and weigh in!



TELLOOS!



Who Killed the Line?

And more on the death of **DC Club Infinite Earths** can be found at The Fwoosh – http://thefwoosh.com/2013/08/who-killed-the-line-the-dcu-club-infinite-earths-subscription – where Hagop reviews the line and offers thoughts on why things failed.





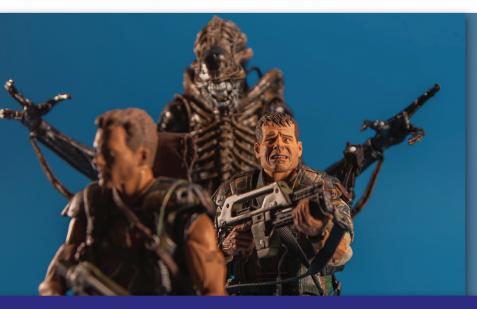


Unofficial Hoist and Trailcutter Add-On Kits

Third party **Transformers** manufacturer X2 Toys has released photos for upgrade kits to expand Hasbro's official **Generations Hoist** and **Trailcutter** toys. Looking awesome; I'm in!

The add-ons are available for pre-order now at http://www.bigbadtoystore.com/bbts/product.aspx?product=XT10000&mode=retail and are scheduled for release this month. Maybe I'll get lucky and actually find a Trailcutter before the set reaches me; Hoist will no doubt follow much later.





Aliens Photo Archive at Cool Toy Review

Cool Toy Review has posted several photos of NECA's first wave of **Aliens** action figures – **http://www.cooltoyreview.com/ Aliens-NECA.asp** – and if you haven't yet scanned the series of shots then you really need to; fantastic photos!

Looking at these reminds me that I've got all three figures here waiting to be opened; the challenge is finding the time to enjoy the toys.





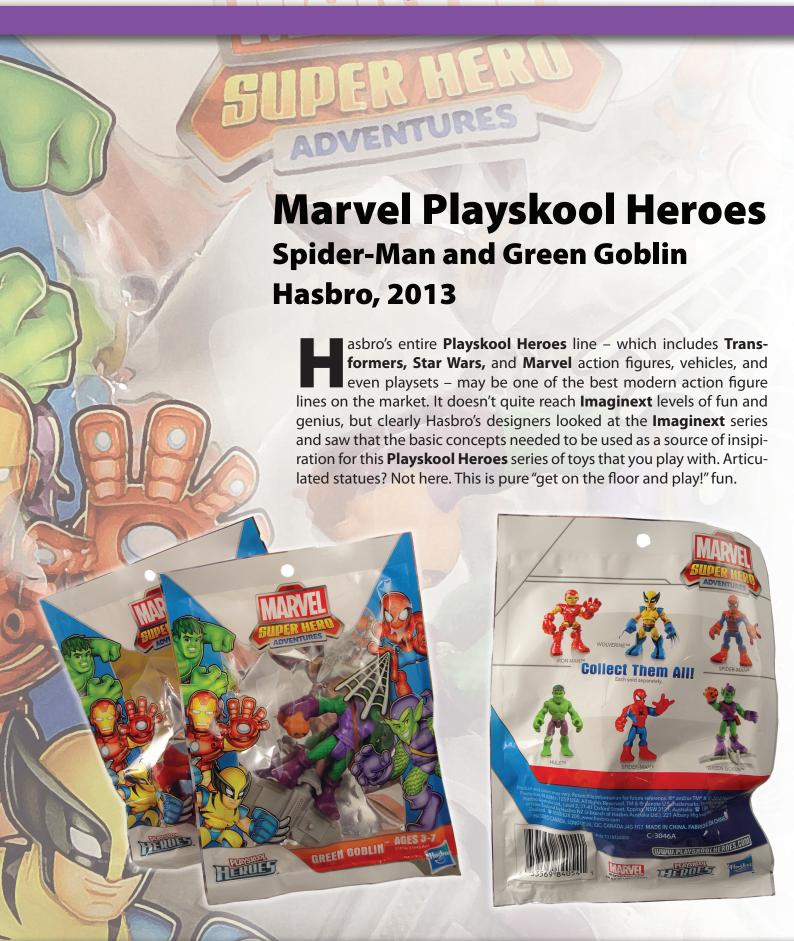
Pop Culture Shock's Lifesize Skeletor Pre-Orders Now Open

Visit the Pop Culture Shock website – http://www.popcultureshocktoys.com/ – to pre-order their lifesize **Masters of the Universe Skeletor** bust. \$675, limited to 125 pieces, and LED eyes all make this one remarkable collectible.

For even more photos visit:

http://www.popcultureshocktoys.com/ masters-of-the-universe-skeletor-lifesize-bust/









Above: Two quick shots of the Playskool Heroes
Spider-Man action figure.
There are a few rough spots on the plastic – especially under the left arm, which has jagged plastic at the shoulder joint – but the toy's mostly clean and fantastic.

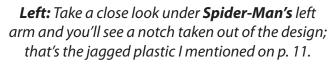
And very fun for it's size and design.

Spider-Man!

With swivel-hinge shoulders, hip swivels – the two legs move as one – swivel wrists, and a swivel head, **Spider-Man** follows the same articulation format we see in the entire **Playskool Heroes** line. It's enough to be playable without causing younger kids any problems.

And at 2.5-inches tall **Spider-Man** is one of the earlier **Playskool Heroes** action figures; I've started seeing taller ones – either 5 or 6-inches tall – instores and I'm going to have to buy one of those to see how they compare to these shorter toys.

The sculpt and paint are both perfectly suitable for the style of figure that it is. Nothing revolutionary of exceptional, but just right for the target audience . . . and for anyone who wants a cute little **Spider-Man** action figure in their collection.



But that rough plastic is really the only flaw with the action figure, and at \$3 it's a flaw I can easily overlook.

Green Goblin

The thing about these **Playskool Heroes** action figures is that once you've played with one of them then you have a very good idea of what the others in the line are like; the level of consistency I've seen throughout the entire series are far more even and reliable than in action figures that are designed for an older audience.

The **Green Goblin** features the same articulation as **Spider-Man** and, as I feel the photos show, the toy is wonderfully-sculpted and the colors are gorgeous. The glider is a neat addition, but getting the toy balanced can be challenging.

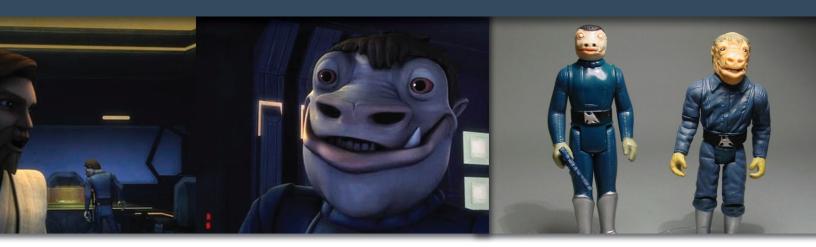
Still, it's an excellent design and recommended to **Goblin** fans.











Above, Left: Blue Snaggletooth returned to the **Star Wars** universe in 2012 in **The Clone Wars** animated series.

Above, Right: 1978 Sears action figure next to the 2004 K-Mart action figure. Photo from http://www.jedidefender.com/yabbse/index.php?topic=20558.0

Blue Snaggletooth Statue, 2009, Gentle Giant Club Exclusive: Shown below, this gorgeous statue was limited to 400 pieces and I'm happy to say I have one. It's a fantastic work of art.

Star Wars Jumbo Vintage Blue Snaggletooth, 2012, SDCC Exclusive: Limited to 2,000 pieces and the trigger that made me love the **Jumbo Vintage** line.

But what I want to know is who will move first on the next **Blue Snaggletooth** action figure, Hasbro or Sideshow Collectibles? I've been wanting a 12-inch scale **Blue Snaggletooth** for a few years now, but with the 6-inch **Star Wars Black** series out there will we see a **Star Wars Black Blue Snaggletooth** first?

I'll happily take either, but if I had to bet I'd say a 12-inch figure is more likely. Sideshow already produces lower runs, and the body would be easier to make in that scale. The only new tooling needed for Sideshow Collectibles to create a 12-inch scale **Blue Snaggletooth** would be the hands, head, and boots . . . and the hands and head could be used to create a **Red Snaggletooth**; a twofer!

The other reason I suspect Sideshow will get there first is the **Star Wars Black** series is very new; there are dozens of figures I expect Hasbro to produce before they even consider a **Blue Snaggletooth**.

But which do you want?

Right: Gentle Giant's 2009 Blue Snaggletooth statue with the 2012 Star Wars Jumbo Vintage
Blue Snaggletooth action figure. See my review at http://www.battlegrip.com/?p=41655







Transformers Generations Bumblebee with Blazemaster Hasbro, 2013

ith this **Bumblebee** – and the other toys at the same price point released during the summer – Hasbro brings the **Targetmasters** back . . . again. So how does the latest in an uncountable army of **Bumblebee** toys stack up?





Targetmaster Transformers

It's unfortunate that Hasbro didn't use the term "Targetmaster" anywhere on this **Bumblebee** toy, because this feels to me like the perfect opportunity for Hasbro to both make the trademark relevant and to expand the **Targetmaster** awareness to the new generation of **Transformers** fans who were introduced to the line by the movies and the **Transformers Prime** television series.

But while the packaging calls the relationship between the two a partnership, it never once says "Targetmaster" or even hints at the term. Is it possible that the "Targetmaster" trademark has lapsed and it's just waiting for someone else to claim and use it?

But regardless of the actual titles used and current legal status of the "Targetmaster" name, this **Bumblebee** – and all of the other toys released in this same format – will forever be **Targetmaster Transformers** in my eyes.

Two Small Toys

Both **Bumblebee** and **Blazemaster** are fairly short, a situation **Transformers** fans are seeing more and more often as Hasbro reduces costs in an attempt to keep price points down. Standing 3.5-inches tall **Bumblebee** is somewhere between a Legends and Deluxe size, while **Blazemaster** – at under 2-inches tall – is a standard "Minicon" size.



Above: Bumblebee and Blazemaster together in their robot modes. The official transformation places Blazemaster's helicopter blades on Bumblebee's arm.



Above, Left: Bumblebee

in vehicle mode. The car is not at all a real world design but does a nice job of blending the **War for Cybertron** vehicle design with an Earth-based car. Too bad the rear wheels like to

pop off without warning.

Above, Right: It's when standing in a static pose like this that the toy's unusually long arms are really easy to spot. The proportions are a bit off in my opinion.

Bumblebee's Decent Articulation

Bumblebee is packed with just enough articulation to be fun to play with without so much that there are multiple failure points where the joints collapse and the toy falls to the ground. Running through each point we get:

- * **Arms:** Ball-jointed shoulders that are mounted to swivels which swing forward. The elbows are ball-joints and the wrists swing in toward the body (which is part of the transformation design).
 - * Legs: Ball-jointed hips and hinged knees.

There are no joints on the torso or head; the figure always stares straight ahead and cannot twist at the neck or waist which could cause problems in a fight.

While I know many collectors would have preferred more joints I think this works well as a toy for kids; it does have more than that 1984 original **Bumblebee** toy and is even taller than the original or the 2009 **Transformers Universe Bumblebee** (see p. 19).

Below: Left to right, **Transformers Universe Bumblebee** (2009), **Transformers Generations Bumblebee** (2013), reissue original **Bumblebee** (2004). The original design is the best "toy car" with nicely-rolling wheels.



Above: Left to right, **Transformers Universe Bumblebee** (2009), **Transformers Generations Bumblebee** (2013), reissue original **Bumblebee** with cartoon-styled head (2004). The colors on all three are surprisingly close for being produced at different times.





Blazemaster and 1990

If we go all of the way back to 1990 and the **Bumblebee Action Master** toy – see **http://tfu.info/1990/Autobot/Bumblebee/bumblebee. htm** – then we find that **Blazemaster** may very well be a modern version of the 1990 **Action Master** toy's Heli-Pack accessory. A blue and yellow backpack that turns into a gun, the helicopter and gun side of things automatically made me think of that toy when I saw this new release; but maybe I'm wrong and it's only a coincidence.

Blazemaster is as simple as he looks, but as I age I appreciate the **Mini-Con** concept even more and understand the marketing ideas behind the little robots.

Above, Left: Blazemaster in vehicle mode. The helicopter blade spins!

Above, Right: The simple robot mode. The arms swivel!

Below: The helicopter blade turns into a shield for **Bumblebee** while **Blazemaster** turns into a decent enough gun.



Fantastic Packaging Artwork

One thing that really makes action figure and toy packaging look incredible is when the toy company behind a line sinks some cash into original artwork. Back in the eighties this happened often – who doesn't love the old **Masters of the Universe** or **G.I. Joe** box artwork of the 1980s? – but as years have gone on the practice has become rarer and rarer.

Fortunately, someone at Hasbro understands how important artwork is to selling toys and the **Transformers Generations** toys have been decorated with great illustrations . . . like the Bumblebee art shown at right.



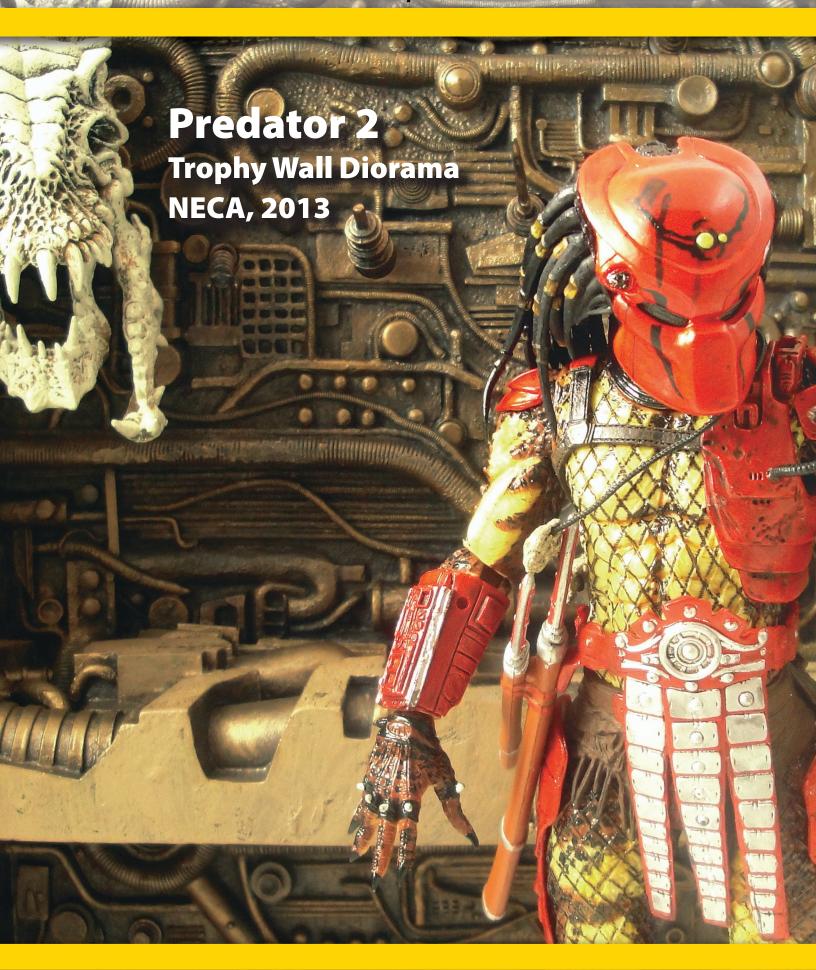
Below: As you can see, the face sculpt is fantastic and one of the best **Generation One**-like **Bumblebee** heads we've seen on Hasbro's **Bumblebee** toys.

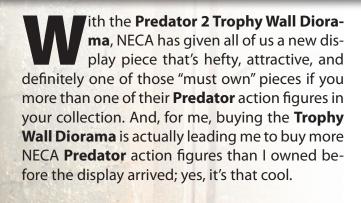
Closing Thoughts

The toy isn't perfect, and if it wasn't for the tires popping off and the strange arms I would be recommending this toy to **Transformers** fans since it's actually quite good. But those little details that leave me a little unsure of the toy's quality.

I'm liking the toy enough to buy the other Targetmaster-like releases, and I suspect that in the long run I'll be happy I didn't skip this.







It's Massive

Roughly 11-inches tall, 12-inches wide, and 5-inches deep, the Predator 2 Trophy Wall Diorama simply cannot be missed once you've got it out of the box and on your shelf. And constructed of some sort of heavy resin or polystone, the display is as much a statue as it is an action figure diorama; it is definitely more statue than it is playset!

A Beautiful Sculpt

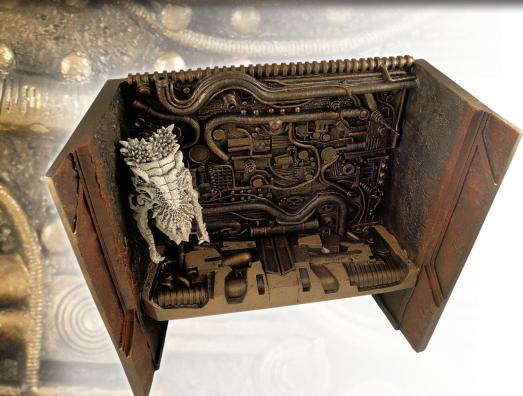
If you take a look at the photos of the Trophy Wall Diorama I've included in this review then I think you'll see why I feel that NECA did a remarkable job with the display's sculpt. It may be only a simple wall, but the pipes and textures covering the wall are all cleanly sculpted and the extensions from which you hang the skulls – nine separate pieces that must each be inserted into the backdrop – are all as attractive as we can hope when it comes to buying a \$60 or \$70 display piece for action figures.



Minimal Paint

Not surprisingly, the **Trophy Wall Display** actually doesn't have much in the way of painted details. But it looks like some drybrush work and washes across the surface of the wall did the job; diorama pieces are meant to be nice settings and this one looks incredible; see p. 24 for a close shot and above for a look at the full display piece.







Above: Wall detail.

Skulls!

tor 2 Trophy Wall Diorama is intended to hold several skulls, the display itself comes with only one skull. Fortunately, NECA released a pack of skulls as an Amazon exclusive – see p. 26 – and that set was only about \$20 including shipping. Highly recommended if you're planning to buy this Trophy Wall Diorama.

The various skulls look fantastic and really help the display; again, please see p. 26 for more on the skull accessory pack.



Closing Thoughts

I know that not everyone loves action figure displays, but if you're a fan of creating scenes in your collection then I have no problems at all recommending this piece... even if you don't collect **Predator** action figures! The price is reasonable for the size and weight of the piece, but you won't want this unless you also grab that skull accessory set (see p. 26).

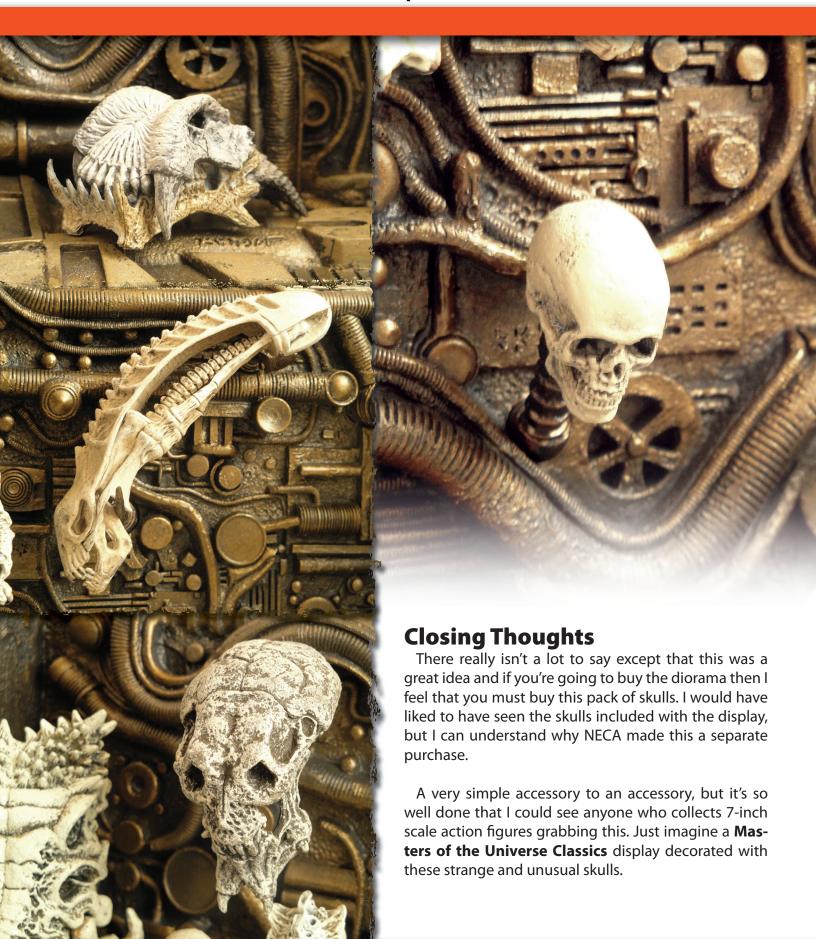




Where the **Trophy Wall Diorama** is a heavy, solid piece that is very statue-like, the skulls in this set are far lighter and have some slight give. I'm no expert in plastics, but I'm guessing these are PVC.

But this isn't to say that the skulls feel cheap. Not at all! All ten skulls in the package are nicely crafted and everything from the sculpt to plastic to painted details feels professional. NECA did a great job putting this together and it's a fun addition to the diorama (see p. 22).

Above: All ten skulls packaged. Including the spines on two of the four human skulls in the set was a nice touch.







How Good Is It?

larlier this year, Hasbro announced their "Black" series Star Wars collection, an attempt at pumping life into the decades-old brand with new packaging and, most importantly, the introduction of a new scale for official Star Wars action figures. There was a lot of online discussion and excitement when the line was announced and the first press pics were released, but now that the first figures are in stores we have to ask:

How good is it?

Right: Hasbro's initial press pics excited fans and looked amazing. This Luke Skywalker in X-Wing Gear photo still looks fantastic . . . unfortunately the final toy's not as nice as the press pic.









Luke Skywalker (X-Wing Pilot)

Since **Luke** was one of the very first action figures shown for the 6-inch scale **Star Wars Black** action figure like I thought one great way to determine the quality of the new line would be to look at various reviews of that figure. I only managed to get my hands on one a few days ago – expect a review next issue – so all of my opinions to date have been based on various reviews and photos posted online.

The reviews have been generally favorable, but for me photos of the face sculpt make the toy look off; wrong and less like **Luke** than I was expecting.

Above: NoisyDvL5's review at It's All True – see http://www.it-salltrue.net/?p=24449 – includes a few great photos and addresses the face sculpt with "...there's just something not quite right about it to me..." a statement I completely agree with.





Left: Reviewer Matthew K – in his review at The Fwoosh http://thefwoosh.com/2013/07/first-look-star-wars-the-black-series-luke-skywalker – provides us not only amazing photos but also clearly loves the face sculpt more than I do.

In his review Matthew writes: "The sculpt is fantastic – bar none. The likeness to Luke is slightly soft, but I totally see Mark Hamill there. I love that his shag cut flyaway curls get well represented here."

Right: Luke Milton's review – http://www.fruitlesspursuits. com/2013/08/review-star-wars-6-inch-black-series.html – makes me question my own opinions of the toys. In his review he writes: "You know, it's really good! Great even! I love what they've done here. That's a shaggy late seventies Skywalker if I ever saw one."

Am I looking at the same toy as everyone else?

Am I Too Picky?

Why is it when I look at the photos of the **Luke** action figure I see problems where others see an amazing work? I know I'm sometimes overly critical of art – and toys are art! – but I honestly don't think I'm asking too much when I want the toy sculpt to look better than I'm seeing in these photos.

I guess I'll have to take a very, very close look at this toy when I write my review for the next issue. Until then, though, check the reviews mentioned here and form your own thoughts. See you next month!



