



Greetings and salutations, LEGO Club members! Today, we've got an exclusive interview with Daniel Lipkowitz, the writer of the LEGO® *Star Wars*™ comics in LEGO Club Magazine as well as the computer-animated episodes at starwars.LEGO.com.

Hey, Daniel! So who are you, and what do you do?

Hello out there, LEGO Club! I'm a Senior Writer here at the LEGO Group. I work with the famous BIONICLE® author Greg Farshtey to write the various LEGO Club magazines all around the world. We also come up with storylines for new LEGO themes and do pretty much any other creative writing needed by the company. Though I didn't come up with their original stories, I worked a lot on Knights' Kingdom and EXO-FORCE® and even wrote a few Knights' Kingdom books. Recently, though, I've spent a lot of time on a certain LEGO *Star Wars* project...

So spill the beans already! What's up with LEGO *Star Wars* in 2009?

Okay, okay! As readers of the Club magazines already know, we've got a year-long storyline going on called "The Hunt for R2-D2" that takes place during the Clone Wars. Artoo has gone missing, and everybody is looking all over the galaxy trying to find him. The story is running through every issue of LEGO Club Magazine this year, as well as on the LEGO *Star Wars* website.

Who's looking for R2-D2, and why's it so important to find him?

Aside from the fact that Artoo was my favorite *Star Wars* character as a kid, there are two main reasons. Anakin and Ahsoka are trying to find him because he's their friend, and he got lost on one of their Jedi missions, so they feel responsible. During that mission, R2-D2 got the blueprints for a top-secret Republic project stored inside of his memory banks. Supreme Chancellor Palpatine wants those plans himself, so he's sent a squad of clone troopers to find the droid, too. Meanwhile, Count Dooku has somehow found out about the blueprints and sent his own elite team of assassin droids to track down R2-D2 first. And then there's one last group looking for him: a team of battle droids that accidentally overheard Dooku and think he wants THEM to find the missing droid.

How are you telling the story?

The magazines are telling the Jedi side of the story, with an illustrated comic in each issue (6 total) starring Anakin and Ahsoka as they go from planet to planet looking for their lost friend. On the website, we've got the clone side of the story, with 10 new computer-animated movie-comics showing the adventures of the clone trooper squad that Chancellor





Palpatine ordered to go find R2-D2 before the Jedi do. The first new episode is due to appear on the site in March, so hopefully it's up right now when you read this!

How did you get involved with this LEGO *Star Wars* story?

It all started back in 2005 when I wrote the script for "Revenge of the Brick," a 5-minute computer-animated mini-movie that was shown on television to celebrate the release of *Star Wars* Episode III. It was really well-received (it even won a Clio Award!) and ended up being popular enough that the LEGO *Star Wars* team decided to do it again in 2008, but this time as a series of shorter animated episodes for the web. I was asked to write ten new Clone Wars mini-adventures, which have probably just finished up as you read this. That was a great experience, and I even got to fly out to Lucasfilm HQ in California to research them. They were really popular too, so one day last year, we all sat down to talk about what to do next and hit on the idea of having one big LEGO *Star Wars* storyline all across the magazines and website in 2009.

Are you a *Star Wars* fan yourself?

Oh, yeah. I was only 2 when the original movie came out in 1977, but I read all about it and grilled my parents' friends for information when they visited. By the time I actually saw the movie in theaters a couple of years later, I'd memorized the entire thing. I'm definitely a lifelong fan.

What's it like writing a *Star Wars* story?

It's amazing! Sure, LEGO *Star Wars* stories may not be quite "official" as far as the overall *Star Wars* universe goes, but it's pretty much this grown-up kid's dream come true to get to write stories set in that galaxy far, far away. I have a lot of fun with it, and I hope it shows through with some of the sillier *Star Wars* references that I manage to sneak in once in a while.

Can you give us an example of one of those silly references?

Sure! There's one in Episode 3 ("Always Count Your Clones Before Take-Off") that's written on the side of the crate that the two clones open.

"Do not open until Life Day"?

That's the one! And if you don't know what Life Day is, then you've missed out on the extremely memorable *Star Wars* Holiday Special that aired on TV in 1978.

Do you have a favorite character to write?

You'd think that it would be one of the main characters, but the truth is that I like writing droids and clone troopers more than anyone else! With a famous *Star Wars* character like Anakin or Obi-Wan, a writer is limited by the fact that they already have established personalities. This is LEGO *Star Wars*, of course, so I can make them goofier and exaggerate their reactions, but with droids and clones, anything goes. I can make those little guys do and say pretty much anything!

LEGO, LEGO BrickMinifig and the LEGO logo are trademarks of The LEGO Group. © 2009 The LEGO Group.

clubTM



My favorites at the moment are 1137 and 1139, a pair of clone troopers who look exactly the same, but act completely different. They originally only showed up in the third 2008 website comic, but they're back in 2009 as part of the squad that Palpatine sends to track down R2-D2.

They're just a fun pair to write, and I'm glad I had the chance to bring them back. I'm hoping that even though they're physically identical, by the end of the story, readers will be able to tell which one is which just by looking at what they're doing in a particular scene. (For the record, 1137 is the serious one, and 1139 is the crazy one.)

If I had to pick a real *Star Wars* character, I'd say it would be Ahsoka Tano, Anakin's new Jedi apprentice who was created for the new Clone Wars movie and TV series. She's got a fun personality, and I enjoy writing snappy dialogue exchanges between her and Anakin.

What's been the biggest challenge in writing the Clone Wars comics and animations?

Part of it is time and budget – I'd love to include more huge galactic battle scenes with hundreds of vehicles, troopers and droids, but it's not really possible to get something like that animated for the web. I also tend to see everything I write in my imagination, so it's a little weird when things in the comics and animations don't quite match up to the picture I had in my head. But the biggest challenge for me personally is that whenever I come up with a really silly moment for the battle droids that I totally love, the real Clone Wars TV series tops me by having one that's even sillier. This is *LEGO Star Wars*, so the goofiness quotient has to be cranked up to the maximum, but it's tough when the show is coming up with the same jokes as me!

There was one other tricky bit when I wanted to include a particular vehicle in the comics, but the episode of the Clone Wars TV show that featured it hadn't aired yet, so I had no idea what it did or who the characters that came with it were. Believe it or not, some of the storylines at Lucasfilm are so top-secret that even the LEGO writer can't always find out about these things ahead of time!

So...any hints about how "The Hunt for R2-D2" ends? Who gets the blueprints? Do they find Artoo?

I'm not tellin'!

Oh well, we had to ask! Thanks, Daniel! Keep on building – and writing!

Hey, LEGO Club members! Check out the new Clone Wars animated comics and remember, if you don't get LEGO Club Magazine, you're missing out on half of the story! Sign up today!