Ambassador Report 8

Last week I flew to Los Angeles for several reasons. I wanted to include a visit as Ambassador to the Matchbox Research and Design Department personnel at Mattel, visits to the three Mattel stores around Los Angeles just in case some more International Brush Fire Truck were hung on the pegs in error and search out the two latest Mission Force sets together with the final single release – the turquoise Tree Trimming Truck.

I must have visited most of the Kohl’s stores in southern California without success. I was unable to ring round the stores as the set appears to have been removed from their data base. I then contacted Kiddie Kar in PA and received this response:

*Can't help you at this time with the items. Mattel will no longer let us order the new letter codes of the Mission Force or RWRs. They will send me whatever is in the warehouse at that time.* Last time I received several cases of 5 pieces which contained 2 new fire, 1 Arctic, 1 jungle and 1 old police set from 2012 in 60th Anniversary packaging. Financially it becomes a problem. The time before I received a better mix containing 1 new fire, 1 farm, 1 new police but 1 old Arctic and 1 old police from 2012. Would you please ask Mattel why they changed their policy on ordering letter codes for these items? (also can't order the letter codes on Creature Catchers) Thanks, Joyce

*MATTEL: I cannot comment but will forward your questions to our team.*

I understand that the most recent single Real Working Rigs will continue to be made but in exactly the same colour scheme as previously, as there is no possibility of a recolour. However, one piece of good news is that the Tree Trimming Truck has been found in Nashville at Hobbytown but as these stores are franchised it depends whether the owner wishes to stock the range and it may be luck whether the truck is in the case sent from Mattel. I have been asked to find out whether the Mission Force UFO set will be released and I have been told that it definitely will be issued. I asked how many more Mission Force sets will there be before the RWR is replaced by 2 other single miniatures and was given this reply:

*There are 7 Mission Force packs this year (2013) that have a RWR vehicle. 2014 will have RWR replaced by 2 “singles miniatures”. 2014 packs will have new deco and themes.*

I deduce from this that there are two more Mission Force sets to be released this year, one of which will be the UFO.
My visit to the three Mattel stores proved to be fruitless. There were plenty of old singles and a surfeit of Twin Packs, especially Secret Swamp and Snow Attack, which I think first saw the light of day more than two years ago. I asked at Mattel HQ whether more Hitch ‘n’ Haul Twin Packs are planned and was told that more of the same Twin Packs were being manufactured. Given the very large quantities in the Mattel stores already, one would imagine that it will be some time before they are all purchased.

**Some further answers from Mattel**

Will there be any enhanced models produced for 2014, such as the 60th Anniversary or Double Diecast models?

*There are no plans for enhanced models in 2014 but there could be more in the future.*

Is there any further news on the Brush Fire Truck that has featured prominently in discussions?

*No decision has been taken regarding this model.*

Much of the artwork for the 2013 blister packs has been outstanding. However, some of the design is always lost by having the Matchbox logo printed vertically. Will this change in 2014?

*The artwork is produced in China and a decision has been taken to revert to the Matchbox logo being shown horizontally across the top of the blister pack. The new logo will be shown on all products.*

Will we see the Mercedes McLaren reintroduced into the range along with other Mercedes vehicles?

*The situation with Mercedes is unresolved at present.*

When the Mission Force sets are produced with three uniquely coloured miniatures, will the cost be reduced as two miniatures are much cheaper in the stores than one Real Working Rig?

*It is not envisaged that the sets will be any cheaper.*
Will we ever see a return of the Rover 3500? If Mattel ever decides to bring that awesome casting back, I will be sure to get at least 100 of it.

Manufacturing processes are always changing, often to keep the costs down. Castings older than five years cannot be re-introduced for this reason, so the Rover 3500 cannot be revived. It is also too expensive to extensively alter a mould or change tooling methods.

The Ambassador shows models from many years ago with opening parts, plated parts, suspension and even steering. Why can’t these features be included today in the Matchbox miniature range?

No model today can have more than four parts in its design and there are other considerations such as weight, ease of manufacture, ease of assembly and mould size.

Have I misunderstood what you said about the Panamera - is it to be included in the 2014 range as well as being an exclusive for the 9 pack?

The Panamera is only included in mainline and is not an exclusive in the 9/10 packs. Sorry for the confusion.

Will the Jeep Willys in the Outdoor 5-pack also turn up in the basic range. Yes.

I’d like to know about the 2014 list which was shown once then was erased from the net. It included Pierce Velocity Aerocity ladder fire truck, Scania airport fire truck, International Ambulance... was it all humbug or will they really be part of the new castings sometime in the future?

This list was a fabrication and is bogus.

Is there any chance of seeing Saabs anytime soon? Now that they have a new owner who is restarting production, I would think now is the time that would become a possibility. I’d love to see the 92, 99, 900, Sonnet, etc., but I'd be happy just to see the new 9-3 if that's all that's possible. Will there be any more European models included in the range - either old or new castings?

We always include European models in the Matchbox line and will continue to do so.

Regarding your website for Matchbox, why is it already out of date? Why is it not possible to see pics of the complete MINIATURES range and be able to print them out? This issue has been raised too many times to be continually neglected.
We are considering a way to provide “complete” images of the Matchbox singles line in lieu of a hard copy poster in the future. We do not have this at this time.

The Matchbox website is a great way to check out a miniscule portion of the 2012 range. Too bad it's approaching the end of 2013.

Sorry for the disappointment. Currently the ambassador reports will show images of current and upcoming product.

The Lotus Exige is a very good casting, let down only by what appears to be inconsistent paint. Is this something Mattel is working to improve?

Define inconsistent paint.

Why can’t we get a non-chrome hub for military models like the Jeep? A near perfect model, let down by a small but important detail.

This is subjective. We do like to add a bit of sparkle on the wheels from time to time. Sorry if you felt let down by this.

(Ambassador – I referred to the Jeep last time. Here are some early pre-production models from the 1970s together with some pre-production samples from 1997 showing black wheels. What do you think?)
Is it possible to correct the nearly vertical windshield on the BMW Z8? This is a very good casting, deserving the effort to correct this.

*We will look into this.*

Can you give us the names of the 2014 5 packs please?

*Yes. Here they are:*

· **ICE MOUNTAIN MISSION™**
· **DINO ADVENTURE**
· **BATTLE MISSION**
· **CRIME SQUAD™**
· **MBX© EXOTICS**
· **JUNGLE RECON®**
· **CONSTRUCTION ZONE™**
· **FIRE COMMAND™**
· **RESCUE DUTY™**
I may have spoilt you by revealing too many images last week, as there are only three available to show you this week. They are all examples of 2014 colour schemes. The Lamborghini Miura, which I thought looked good in the metallic green of the 2013 9/10 pack, will appear in metallic brown. It will be in the Exotics 5 pack for 2014.

Here is an advertisement for the original Miura of the 1960s.
The All Terrain Crane is shown in a new deco for 2014 which will be used for both mainline and the Construction 5 pack.

Finally, the International MXT-MVA will be used in the Battle Mission Force pack for 2014 in this livery.
I do read all of the comments on the boards to which I have access and I try to include a cross section of comments and questions. I understand the Matchbox team do read your comments and it is good to have a balance of praise as well as criticism and so last week’s comments were well received. I tend to include all the information I have to hand and let the next week look after itself but I do rely on your comments and suggestions. Occasionally I think that some collectors lose sight of the fact that Matchbox miniatures are manufactured down to a low cost and consequently cannot compete with models which are made in far less numbers for a much higher price. However, the models produced for the Conventions have consistently shown what Matchbox can achieve when not tied to a budget.

Finally, a few reminders of what once was the norm. Sorry the fold out leaflet was produced that way. Notice the green paint that was used on some of the new models. No doubt these were samples before a final decision of model colour had been taken or maybe just an artist’s impression. If there are particular models that you would like shown, I will do my best to show them.