

STEEL TEC STARTERS For Xmas 1995 Remco introduced 3 sets under this name, called Level 1, level 2 and Level 3. They are stated to be aimed at 4 to 7 year olds and consist of steel Strips, Brackets and Plates, plus special plastic parts, all held together with large diameter plastic N&B. The #1 has 119 parts; the #2, 155; and the #3, 277. The holes in the parts are at the normal 1/2" pitch but are 6mm dia, and to accomodate them the Strips and Brackets are 14.8mm wide. The sets are not progressive and the notes that follow are about the Sets 2 and 3 that I've seen. The theme of Set 1 is racing cars and it contains plastic parts for them that aren't in the other sets; its metal parts are probably mostly a selection from those in the larger outfits. All the sets are packed in attractive boxes and the models on their white lids show to better advantage than do those against the black of the regular STEEL TEC line. A friction motor is included in Set 3.

Sets have been reported on sale in the U.S. and Canada, at K-Mart, Walmart and Toys "R" Us. U.S. K-Mart prices are \$18 for a #2 and \$28 for the #3; Toys "R" Us in Canada list the #2 at \$30.

Thanks are due to Keith Cameron for sending the sets over, and to Chas Shrubsole and Richard Symonds for the Canadian ads.

THE PARTS Of the 85 different parts in Sets 2 and 3, 33 are metal, including:

- Strips with 3,4,5,6,7,9,11,&15 holes. A slotted Curved Strip which spans 8 holes. 5 DAS - 1*3*1, 1*5*1, 2*3*2, 2*5*2, and 1*2*1 with obtuse angled ends.
- Perforated Plates 3*3, 3*7, & 5*7h, and a rigid 3*5 Plate but with the hole pattern of a Flexible Plate. Also a 3*5h rigid Triangular Plate.
- 10 different Brackets ranging from a 2h Flat Bracket to a 1*5 with a slot spanning the 2 end holes. Some are angled; there isn't a 1*1h Angle Bracket.
- A 3h A/G and a 3h Flat Girder.

The plastic parts are too many to describe in detail but are all illustrated in the Extra MCS Sheets. Apart from one or two plates they are mostly intended for a specific purpose and would not be easy to use otherwise. The 100mm long loco boiler for instance could be a useful part except that its end, smoke stack and dome, although made separately, are permanently attached to it. Some of the parts have extra holes in them which aren't needed to mount them in the manual models, but they aren't always where they would be most use - for example the two halves of the cement mixer drum each have 18 holes but not one at the end to allow it to be bolted upright on a base. One unusual part is a Crank Handle with a double keyway, to take a push-on Winding Drum and push fit Collar.

The thread used is a coarse square section Acme type, and the N&B are made from a dark grey, slightly flexible plastic. The Bolts have cheeseheads with a square recess in them, and the Nuts are square. The 'L' shaped Key to drive

the Bolts, and the two Spanners, are made of the same plastic.

Apart from a few Plates painted red or blue, all the metal parts have a BZP finish. Plastic parts are red, blue, yellow and black. All the parts are well made and the paintwork and plating is very good. Strips from 5 holes up are stamped STEEL TEC, and the tools, and soft plastic Tyres, have STEEL TEC STARTERS moulded into them.

• **DATA** (in mm) **Strip** (11-hole): •Hole pitch/dia, 12.7/6.0 •width, 14.8; •thickness, .82; •ends fully radiused. **Boss**: •i/d, push fit. **Thread**: Acme type, 5.5 dia*.30 pitch. **Axles**: 5.5 dia plastic with threaded ends; also 3.00 steel with plastic sleeving. **DP (Mod)**: NA. **Nut**: square, 10.3 A/F; **Bolt**: cheesehead 10.2 dia, with square recess.

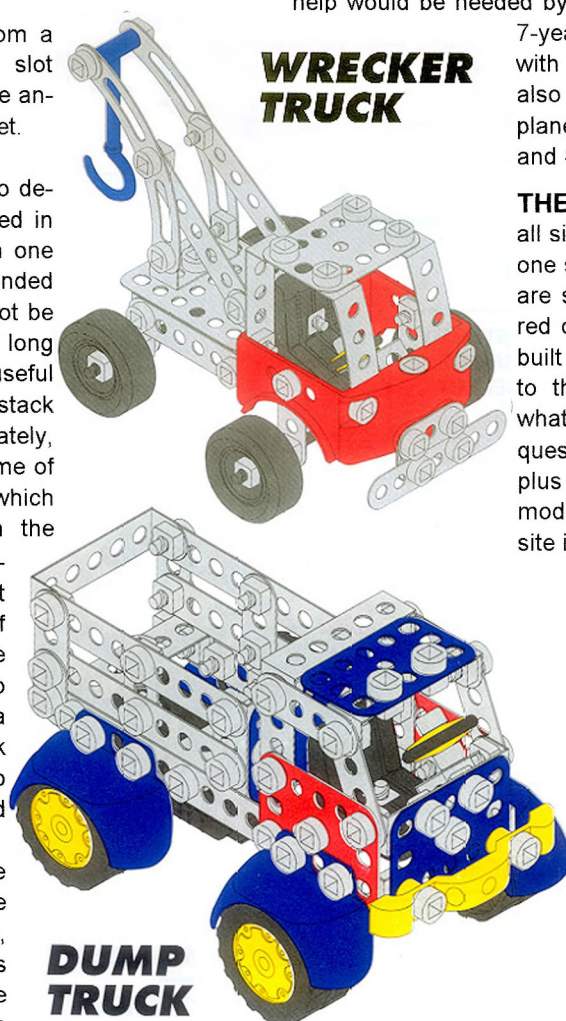
THE MANUALS The manuals for both Sets are similar in layout with the parts shown at the beginning, with PNs which are consistent between the Sets, followed by the usual step-by-step instructions for the models - 6 for the #2 and 10 for #3. The illustrations are line drawings with the parts shown in colour, good of their type and much better than colour photos. The parts needed for each assembly step are listed by quantity and PN, and each length of Bolt needed is shown full size. A novel feature in the drawings, to try to make building the models easier, is that the PN of each part used is colour coded red, yellow or blue, and so are the lines from each Bolt, through the holes in the parts, to its Nut. The 'red' parts are meant to be assembled first, then the yellow ones, and finally the blue.

Basic instructions on how to screw the N&B together, and assemble the models are on a separate sheet addressed to Dear Parents. One may imagine that quite a bit of parental help would be needed by a 4-year old but perhaps a keen

7-year old could manage on his own with just the manual. The loose sheet also shows a rather clumsy looking Bi-plane made from a mix of standard and STARTERS parts.

THE MODELS The #2 models are all simple but quite attractive Trucks of one sort or another. All their front ends are similar with the cab made from a red one piece plastic lower half and a built up top. A rear platform is bolted to the back of the cab and carries whatever is appropriate for the truck in question. The overall length of the cab plus platform is about 7" for all the models, and the Wrecker Truck opposite is typical.

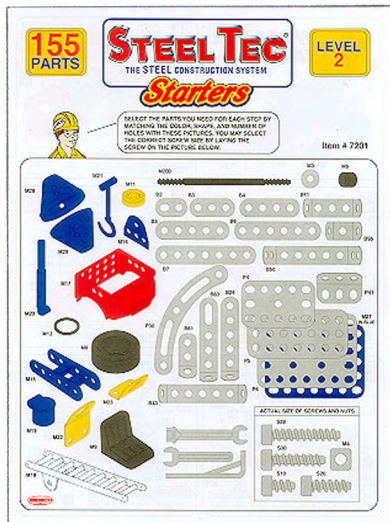
There is more variety in the #3 models, with a Helicopter, (3-wheel) Trail Bike, and Locomotive, as well as various Trucks and a Police Car. The Dump Truck is a little over 8" long. The cabs are built up from Strips and Plates, and the mudguards give an improved appearance. The Ambulance though looks more like a cattle truck, and all the trucks would look better if, like the #2 models, a Plate was used at the back to provide a base for the rear structure. The plastic casing of the Motor is moulded to look like a car engine, and



Wheels are pushed on the shafts which emerge from it on both sides. It is used in all the models, usually driving the rear Wheels.

This 60+ year old found the models reasonably easy to build, and they had a solid feel to them when completed. The N&B could be well tightened with the Tools provided although it would have been easier if one end of one of the Spanners had been angled. The Nuts didn't seem to work loose but some were too tight on the thread to be run down without using a Spanner. Pivoted joints were made by tightening a N&B onto one of the soft plastic Washers provided, and this seemed satisfactory. Sometimes though lock nuts were shown but there was no mention of them in the instructions. Initially the Motor seemed rather feeble but this was because its shafts were rubbing in the holes in the inside faces of the Mudguards, which they had to pass through. It was possible with some difficulty to rectify this, and then the model performed well on a hard floor.

SUMMARY OF MANUALS [Details for the #3 manual, where different, are given in square brackets.]



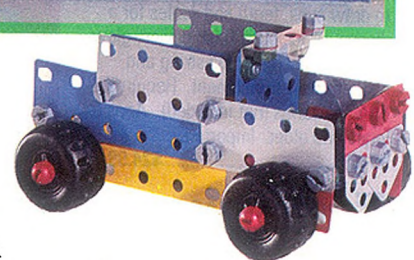
(No Model Nos) •Other notes: none.

•Name: Steel Tec Starters Level 2 [3]. •Details of maker: Remco, Tel: 1-800-243-2961. •Dates & Ref Nos: ©1995; 3/23/95 [6/10/95 and 5/12/95]; Item #7201 [7203]. •Page size: 217*280mm deep. •No. of pages: 16 [36] inc covers. •Language: English. •Printing: coloured line drawings. •Page Nos. of Illustrated Parts & highest PN: 1, S38 [1-2, X1]. (No Set Contents) •Sets covered: Level 2 [3]. •No. of models: 6 [10]. •Name, Page No. of first & last model: WRECKER TRUCK, 2; CEMENT MIXER TRUCK, 14. [INDY RACER, 3; WRECKER, 33]

And COOL STEEL Don Bock kindly sent an (American) Sears Holiday 1995 Wish Book and the illustrations from one item in it are shown below. The accompanying text reads 'Get Ready to Rule with COOL STEEL™ Dynamic Vehicle Set! The only steel construction toy for 4 to 7 year olds. Rough 'n tough pieces are sized just right for little hands while designed to work with big imaginations! 125-piece set includes 4 plastic tools. Pictorial instruction book contains plans for 7 projects. Ages 4 through 7. Wt. 1.25 lbs. \$29.99.'

No indication of size is given but by the look of the (plastic?) N&B the holes are quite large and the basic hole spacing might be 1".

The model truck featured looks a little nondescript perhaps but the biplane on the box lid is better, and the small models shown along the bottom include a jet plane and a helicopter.



The parts that can be seen in the ad are 3, 4 & 6h Strips, Plates of the same lengths and 2h wide, Angle Brackets, and Flat Trunnions with 7 holes at half the standard pitch. They are variously coloured grey, yellow, red or blue. The N&B are shown grey and red, and both are hexagonal with a wide screwdriver slot in the bolt heads.

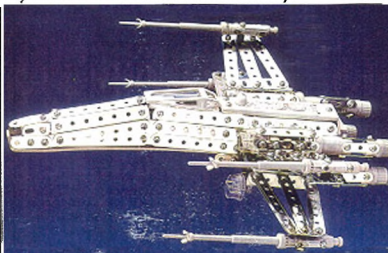
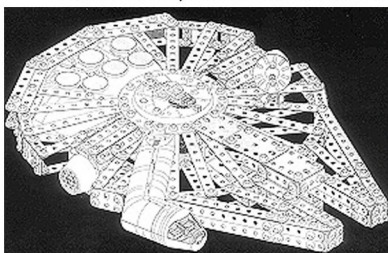
The box lid is white with a blue border and the word MYKIDS can be seen, no doubt a brand name.

Update for Normal STEEL TEC Thanks are due to David Hobson, Don Redmond, Chas Shrubsole and Richard Symonds for sending details of ads or sets that they'd seen prior to Xmas.

From Canada. At 'Toys R Us': • #7127 Vehicles, 1182 parts to make 58 models. \$130. This set contains only standard parts, including a 17h A/G. • #7130 Helicopters & Planes, 564 parts, 6 models, \$100. Special plastic parts are used for major areas of each model, and are specific to that model. • #7140 Millennium Falcon, 1063 pieces, \$130. • #7141 X-Wing Fighter, 450 parts. Mostly Strips with some plastic trim, \$70.

Kmart had Sets No.2 and 3 (see 10/240), No.201 (12/322), and an 'ADJUST-O-MATIC' Power Wrench for which the drive can be at 90° to the handle, like the normal Power Wrench, or at 135°, or straight ahead at 180°.

From Dufferin Game Room Store: • A Star Wars Millennium Falcon set at \$150 (below). The top deck is mostly Strips with some plastic fill-in parts. • A Star Wars Wing Fighter at \$100 (below) - it is said to be 'exclusive' but the illustration is identical to the one in the Toys R Us ad. • Also a Deluxe Power Wrench at \$25 (Eaton had this too with a picture which looks similar, but not identical to the adjustable one mentioned above).



An Irwin ad shows a 262-piece No.2 at \$30. An unidentified ad shows some of the outfits already mentioned plus 16 of the single model sets -

no details can be seen except that 6 are No.1's, 7 are SK's, and 3 might be either. There have also been references to the Work Center/Storage Case at \$40, and a Road/Rail/Air Set (302?) at \$50.

In England sets were seen on sale in Bath and Midsomer Norton, and at 'Toys R Us'. The Argos set (13/357) was still available, at £38. Sets known, or shown on the back of the boxes, with what details are available, are:

- #950992 U.S.S. Starship Enterprise Star Trek 410, including battery lights and electronic sounds. ©1994 on box. £35.
- #950712 Harley-Davidson Electra Glide, Café Racer, WW2 Cycle. Motorised. 545 parts. £40 (later reduced to £25 in Bath). This looks like the No.301 of 12/322.
- #700502 Speedsters. 6 models. These are the 6 SK models mentioned in 12/323.
- #950682 Road Wreckers, 262 parts, 8 models, £20. This is the original No.2 (10/240), which was later called the No.202 (12/322).
- #950692 Speed Demons, 8 motorised models. The original No.3 (see 10/240)
- #950702 Heavy Duty Destructosaurs, 9 models. The original No.6, including the dinosaur head (10/240).
- #950722 Power Wrench, £10.
- #951012 Heavy Duty Power Pack (?).
- 6 sets to make a single model at £10 each. All are ex-No.1 models with different names and in some cases parts that were yellow are shown as red.
- #950622, Rhino Hauler.
- #950672 Tough Truck.
- #950822 Rescue Ranger, 154 parts.
- #950832 Dirt Digger, 139 parts.
- #950922 Road Grader, 141 parts.
- #950932 Hover Hawk (helicopter), 168 parts.

Boxes seen had the 'Peter Pan' logo of the UK distributor on them, and were marked 'Made in China. © 1993-1995 Remco Toys, Inc. New York, NY 10010. Peter Pan is the registered trademark of Blurbird Toys [UK] Ltd. Customer Services, Peter Pan, Dragonparc, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 1PQ. Tel: 01685 721456'.