

Tom Kuntz' bad-assed Brat Beater kit has a place to swing with Jean-Louis' Cemetery III base.

Jean-Louis Crinon

Garage Kit
GOD

name: JEAN-LOUIS CRINON
occupation: General Clerk (sic!!)
age: 33
residence: San Francisco, California

Q: How did a Frenchman end up in America, doing garage kits?

A: Love and adventure brought me here to America. My wife brought me

to San Francisco with the idea of continuing my hobby of creating miniature scenes with figurines and eventually selling them to the public. I had no idea that people would like my work. As a beginning, we rented space as a street artist in San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf where I could show the various steps involved in creating a small scene; the historical figure hand-painted with oils and with its own custom made base.

Then the idea came to me to make custom bases for Dungeon & Dragon pieces. I then came out with a line of small bases. Then the small bases evolved into larger ones like you see today.

Q: What was the inspiration behind the idea of doing bases for garage kit figures?

A: I think it goes back to the miniature figurines. I

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started in the hobby in Europe where it is taken very seriously. In competitions bases were a must — a figurine was considered to be incomplete if it didn't have its' own personalized base. Sort of like telling its' story. But I was becoming a bit tired of it because it was so time consuming. So I started to duplicate a couple of bases to be used with different figurines. I then applied this idea when I visited a hobby shop and saw the garage kits.

Q: Can you tell us more about that transition?

A: I created a line of a dozen bases covering different kinds of fantasy and science-fiction landscapes for the

miniatures market (Dungeons & Dragons). The line was not made of resin but of a brand of water putty. Quite a bit of time was put into them and with the fact that I have a regular daytime job, our kitchen at home became slowly but surely a mini workshop! (By the way, I still sell them but plan to discontinue them soon so I can keep more of my attention toward the monster/science-fiction film characters.)

Q: Other than not having a base, what are some of the factors that help you decide which figure you'll create a base for?

A: Sometimes I'll watch a movie and find that images will come to my mind of old places in France where I used to hang out. Since my preference is to vampires and werewolves, it's easier for ideas to come to mind since these creatures are mostly associated with a Gothic atmosphere. Also, I used to visit England a lot and had lived in Scotland for a year. Many images of these places have stayed in my mind and will just come out when I watch some movies. Personally, I think that to create a base for a character is like drinking a fine wine while I'm eating a good cheese. One compliments the other.

Q: Once you've selected a figure, how do you go about planning a base for it?

A: It would depend on the creature. I try to make a base that would look nice with the creature as well as fit other characters—like the Gothic door. But there are also bases that I like to do just for the attraction of the shapes (i.e., the Niela base). When I created the cemetery bases, a lot of research was done on architecture through the centuries as well as the designs and the association of the creature with the scene. Sometimes it's just luck. For instance, I recently discovered the Rawhead Rex by Creature Featured Resin. I had never seen the movie so I rented it one day and noticed that there was a scene at the end in a cemetery. That's why I say that sometimes it's just luck that a base will go hand in hand with a specific character.

Q: Do you collect garage kits? Care to list any favorite kits, companies, or sculptors?

A: Now, yes. Since I am able to trade with people. But I'm only starting (feel free to call me if you have anything in mind). Concerning sculptors, my preference goes to Thomas Kuntz of Artomic Creations (the Nosferatu is a must - the hands talk by themselves! And don't forget his beautiful Alien Queen.) Also, Mark Newman, Mike Parks, Jeff Yeagher. For companies there is Terry Smith and last but not least George Stephenson of



Jean-Louis' bases perfectly compliment the base-less Billiken figures.

GEOmetric Designs for their wonderful line of kits.

Q: Since doing bases, you've crossed over to Figures. Will you eventually stop doing bases?

A: Not at all. On the contrary, I'm planning on many more bases, even with a lighting system inside of one. Since I've been sculpting, I love to criss-cross between projects, from a base to a character and back again to the base. For instance, now I am working on the Critter and the Predator base.

Q: What do you like best about the garage kit hobby?

A: First the diversity of the kits on the market. The pleasure of collecting them all and the fact that it brings me into contact with a lot of people. Also, it's nice to know that you can obtain a copy of one of your cherished characters after seeing a movie. What I like also is the fact that you can do different things. Like for instance the hobby brings out a lot of skills such as painting, sculpting, creativity. It's a wonderful change from historical figures.

Q: If you could change one thing about our hobby, what would it be?

A: Well, two things. First, when someone creates his/her own kit and sells it for themselves, it would be great if people didn't recast it

and sell it on their own. Second, it's so much fun...but does it have to eat so much of my wallet!!

Q: What does the future hold for Jean-Louis Crinon?

A: I hope to progress and do better. I don't want to disappoint the confidence that people hold in my work. Also, this Fall I plan to go to night school to take courses in sculpting to perfect my kits as well as casting techniques. And always more and more ideas for bases. Also, I hope to be able to sell my work at a convention. I think it would be great to be able to meet people and hopefully see some of the people who have bought my kits.

Q: I understand you have plans to work with fellow garage kit sculptor Tom Kuntz. Do you plan to work with any other sculptors or companies in the future.

A: At this time, Thomas is very busy with other projects so I still have to wait for a finalization of the project. Concerning other sculptors, I would be very flattered to be able to work with some very well-confirmed sculptors. It all depends on timing and the design in mind. My wish was to be able to do the base to complement a figure that

was designed by a sculptor. The first time will be the project with Thomas.

Q: What material do you sculpt in and why?

A: I use all different kinds of materials, even toilet paper! Generally, all my bases are sculpted in plaster that I then carve using homemade tools. Why plaster? Because it's a tender material and strong but not strong enough that it can't be carved on. For the figures I use, like everyone else, the well-known and wonderful Super Sculpey I can work on it practically in the same way as plasticine or clay. But the advantage with Super Sculpey is that you can bake it in a regular oven.

Q: What types of sculpting tools do you use?

A: From toothpicks to regular files, dentist tools and some kinds of tricky homemade

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Jean-Louis' enormous altar type base (which could be assembled two different ways) designed for Mad Lab's slab-styled figures

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ones that I can't describe since they are so weird! Also, I have to confess publicly today that I use an enormous amount of bobby pins that I steal from my wife for the armatures. It works great and is cheap (now I'm in trouble).

Q: What advice would you give to a beginning sculptor?

It's difficult to say because my experience is very limited and so new. I would say work hard, ask for a list of critiques on your work and be prepared to accept them.

A: Accept advice which will help with the progression of the work very well. And, with some luck, a beginning sculptor could meet some of

the right people after having passed through some bad experiences. I've got a long way to go and plenty of advice to get before I'm comfortable in my work.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to say to the garage kit fans out there?

A: I'd like to thank all of the people who responded to my work - they've all been wonderful both with their advice as well as their appreciation for the work that I've put out. I've enjoyed so much to talk to you all on the phone as well as reading your letters. I hope that the future kits and bases that I plan to do will continue to attract your

attention. Don't forget, suggestions are always welcome. I must admit, I didn't expect the response or the enthusiasm that I received. I expect to improve the quality of my casting. If I become successful enough, I promise to provide boxes with artwork on them for the individual kits because I have learned that that is the way the Americans like to collect kits.



Jean-Louis poses with two of his fine figure kits, *Kreator* & *The Supreme Intelligence*.

Son Of The Garage Kit That Ate My Wallet