

Fantastic Plastics

Kent Welch covers collectable plastic figures.



Action-packed figures from Toy Soldier Central.

Toy Soldier Central Various New Releases

Kent Welch makers' latest and greatest plastic figures to be released into the hobby for collectors.

Reviewed by Kent Welch

Luciano Castellani of Toy Soldier Central is exactly the kind of person that we need to keep the toy soldier hobby alive. He is 'new blood' for the hobby, someone who is younger than most collectors or makers. Also, he is embracing new techniques and creating realistic resin figures priced at reasonable rates.

Childhood Fun

Luciano became interested in toy soldiers at a very young age. His father would bring home bags of army men to him. Those were, of course, the famous bags of inexpensive unpainted plastic soldiers made by Tim Mee Toys and other makers. Luciano spent hours playing with them with his dad often joining in on the fun. Then, on a trip to visit his uncle, Luciano opened a cabinet and found line after line of painted figures, and his passion for toy soldiers was cemented.

Luciano has become a committed toy soldier collector as an adult. Although he has many high-end metal figures, like many people his favourites are what he played with as a child: plastic soldiers. His extensive collection includes plastic figures by Airfix, Tim Mee, Matchbox and many other makers, but it also includes one brand less-known by many collectors: Fishel Toy Soldiers.

Luciano related, "They made this one line of generic modern army men that you bought at Toys R Us. They are my favourite brand of all time, but they are out of business."

New toy soldier maker Luciano Castellani.



A World War II German squad leader directs his men.



A marksman kneels to take a shot.

Web Info and Infantry

Now Luciano has taken his passion to the next level by launching his own US-based toy soldier resource website and figures under the banner Toy Soldier Central. He had begun a professional career as a web designer when an idea struck him.

"I'm good at graphic design and making websites, and I didn't see any modernised toy soldier websites," he said. "Plus, I wanted to work on something I love."

As a result, www.toysoldiercentral.com was born.



World War II Japanese firing line.



A painted example of a Toy Soldier Central figure.



Japanese soldiers launch an attack.



World War II German Wehrmacht soldiers.

Luciano explained, "We intend for the website to be a hub for all toy soldier collectors, wargamers and modellers." The site already has information about makers, reviews and more. There are initial articles on painting and wargaming as well. In addition, it's the place to order his new line of toy soldiers.

"We also plan on working with other toy soldier producers," Luciano said.

Toy Soldier Central's own products currently have two primary focuses; figures based on video games like *Halo* and *Fallout* and World War II historical figures. The figures based on video games give fans a chance to get soldiers they can't find elsewhere. The World War II figures spring from Luciano's passion for toy soldiers.

Embracing the New

To make the figures featured here, Luciano worked with fellow designer Martin Cordova. One of their goals as they designed them was to make only useful figures. As a result, all their figures are in dynamic poses ready to go into action.

The figures are made of an oil-based polymer resin of a very high standard and printed on a 3D printer.

Luciano commented, "I believe resin is the future of the toy soldier industry. It's easier to use than plastic and the detail is amazing."

This particular resin has two unique advantages over other brands.

"We chose our resin because it is strong and it enables

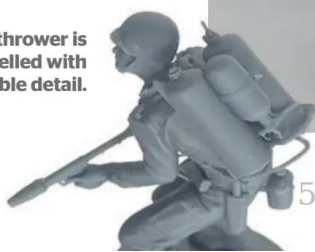


The complete 'Four Nations World War II Battle Bundle.'

The Red Army troops come in a half-dozen poses.



A flamethrower is modelled with incredible detail.



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The maker offers stands for the figures.



great detail," Luciano said.

A huge advantage of 3D-printed figures is that unlike plastic or metal figures, there is no need to create an expensive master mould or wait for factory orders. Once a toy soldier is designed in a computer app, the maker just sends it to their 3D printer. In fact, Luciano's printer

→ was busy printing figures as we spoke!

One of the biggest challenges to resin figures is that all of that amazing detail and thin parts come at the cost of a figure that is easier to break (as I experienced). However, Luciano backs his figures so if one arrives broken, he will replace it.

The second challenge is that buyers are very limited in their ability to alter a figure in any way. Unlike plastic, resin figures do not hold up well under the knife. I asked Luciano if the answer to this was for buyers to be able to order custom figures, and if he could do that?

"Not yet," Luciano replied. "That is something I want to explore. I would love to have a design your soldier tool on our website. That is possible with resin."

Toy World at War

Toy Soldier Central's first historical toy soldier release is the 'Four Nations World War II Battle Bundle.' It is a great way for buyers to get some excellent troops at a great price. The figures are in 1/32 or 54mm scale. The set is made up of six different poses each of US, Soviet, German and Japanese infantry. All are in action poses and have incredible detail. British infantry is in the works.

This first set costs around \$40. It supplies a hobbyist with 24 resin figures for less than half the price of high-end plastic sets of only six figures. Toy Soldier Central's figures can be used by modellers, wargamers or toy soldier collectors. For a small fee, a collector can purchase resin stands that the figures can be glued onto. All four sets have six figures each and all are modelled in a standard fair-weather uniform.

Combatant Groups

The German infantry group consists of an officer armed with a pistol, a pointing sergeant holding a submachine gun, a rifleman running, a rifleman kneeling firing, a soldier firing a submachine gun and a soldier holding grenade who has just been shot. The four privates have the same backpacks and gear.

The Japanese infantry includes two men advancing with rifles wearing fatigue hats and four in helmets. The latter quartet includes infantrymen kneeling firing, crouching firing, standing firing and a casualty.

The US infantrymen are modelled in field uniforms and helmets. They include riflemen kneeling and standing firing while a buddy runs forward. A crouching GI holds a flamethrower. Two men armed with Browning Automatic Rifles are posed either firing or reeling from being wounded. The half-dozen Soviet Red Army soldiers wear helmets and carry rifles. Half of them are heavily laden with gear in a nod to how their supply lines were notoriously bad during



A Toy Soldier Central figure stands second from the left with other brands' Axis troops.

most of the war, forcing them to carry all they needed. One infantryman is standing firing, another is kneeling firing and one has taken a knee to avoid detection. Of the rest, one is determinedly running forward, one is about to throw his grenade and the last is staggering backwards from being struck by German fire.

As promised by the maker, all these soldiers are in action poses. Even the German sergeant is ready with his submachine gun as he shouts an order about where he wants his squad to go. The poses are full of tension with the figures leaning, crouching or bending as they run. The detail is incredibly crisp.

As Luciano stated, all of these figures could be great in multiple roles, including as painted toy soldiers, models or in wargames. Luciano has yet to see these figures painted but they look as if they would be very dynamic and striking.

Moving Forward

I asked the maker what's next for Toy Soldier Central?

Luciano responded, "We will be expanding the World War II line. We'll be creating more American, Russian, Japanese and German troops. We are also going to finish and release the British infantry."

He also plans on more *Halo* figures and then the launch of a foray into one of the most popular toy soldier periods: the American Civil War. Luciano also hopes to bring Toy Soldier Central and its figures to a toy soldier show in the near future. When I asked him what he wanted people to take away from purchasing his figures, Luciano said, "We want them to feel like they finally have figures from a period, game or show that they have always wanted, and that they are glad they have them."

Figures can be purchased via www.toysoldiercentral.com/ store. If you use the code EHM05/ they will take \$5 off your order.

Thanks to Toy Soldier Central for sending product examples for this article. 

CONTACT

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A Red Army soldier is imbued with details.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

American Kent Welch is a long-time Britain's Deetail plastic figures collector. He works in marketing and lives in Tampa, Florida, with his wife Julie and their dog Roxy. He is one of the Collector Guys with multiple platforms devoted to collecting, collectors and their collections. Readers can check them out at Collectorguys.com, TikTok, Instagram and on YouTube under 'Collector Guys'. Enthusiasts can talk to him about toy soldiers at Deetailcollector@gmail.com.