The NUTS & BOLTS Dockside Crane Two models a little more sophisticated than the usual 'POLYLONG' offerings were noted in 43/1294 and right, the box lid of another. It contains well over 600 parts and comes from a company called FIA Toys of Garstang, Lancs. Their website, www.fiatoys.com, shows a range of sets with one or two 'better' models, and another larger model, a Hammerhead Crane, with 'over 500 parts'. Before last Xmas the Dockside Crane was being sold by both Amazon & The Entertainer toy shops at £12.49.

The box (much larger than it need be) is 51½*34*8cm and on the lid is 'Engineer designed in the UK for budding young engineers' and 'Designed for easy building & instant play'. The parts include 74 Strips & DAS from 3 to 15h long; 19 Plates; 43 Brackets; and over 200 N&B. All the circular parts except a 50mm Disc are plastic.

Paul Goodman told me about the Set and he kindly agreed to send me his comments, as follows.

'The finished model is quite impressive and looks very like the photo on the box lid. The top of the jib, at its lowest, is about 52cm above the 'ground'. The luffing range is only about 10cm but within that the hook rises just 1cm – so not bad for a simple model. The turntable works better than I expected but the model will overbalance if the jib is turned to the side in its extended position. As a final 'plus', the N&B are of good quality, meshing easily (unlike my experience with modern MERKUR sets), and this did help to make assembly that much more enjoyable.

Turning to the negatives. • The Screwdriver is too small to provide adequate purchase and the Nuts too large for the Spanner. If the sequence of assembly steps was followed long tweezers & pliers were need to reach items inside the cab. • The longer Strips in a new set were bent/distorted and had to be put through my strip roller. This was not down to the packaging (quite typical with parts in polythene bags, placed in the usual styrofoam insert, inside the box). Some of the DAS had to be bent back into shape as well. • The plastic used for the Flanged Wheels is poor quality and will probably not withstand much use. Also, every Wheel appeared to have been removed from a sprue and required trimming to remove flash around the axle hole & on the rim. • The design of the bogie/wheel assemblies allows the Wheels to float so before the model could be run on rails (STOKYS A/Gs) a MECCANO Spacer & Washer was needed on each axle. • The structure is adequate but a few more DAS in the base (and possibly a couple more in the jib) would add rigidity. • No provision is made for a hoisting/lowering brake but this was easily resolved by adjusting the Bolt used in the Wheel Disc as a winding handle to protrude far enough to be inserted in a hole in the cab side when the winding drum Rod is slid 'inwards'. • The luffing mechanism is very neat, but with one drawback – with the parts provided it doesn't work! It has a long Bolt turning in a Nut situated on the inside back face of a small D/B, and said Nut is meant to be jammed and prevented from turning by a Bolt through each of the Brackets lugs. Sadly, the Nuts provided are, at 2mm, too thick. Eventually a suitably doctored MÄRKLIN Nut was used.

So far as the instruction leaflet is concerned, I will let you be the judge of its legibility and suitability for a 6-12 year old (or someone my age with varifocal lenses!). I found myself referring regularly to the large illustration on the box.

Despite the various problems this kit would be good value at KIA's price of £20, and at £12.49 it is a real bargain. It compares very favourably with the competition.'

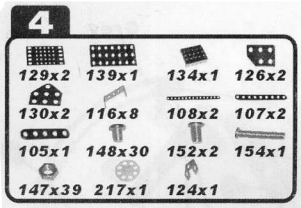
The Instructions really are dire. They consist of rather faint, low contrast B&W photos on both sides of a folded A3 sheet of good quality art paper and apart from the illustrated parts (with PNs & quantities) on the back page, the model is to be made following 15 steps, each with a list of the parts needed and the usual exploded view. The main problem is that after the first 3 steps these views are much too small and even blown-up to twice their area are still not that easy to follow. Right, Step 4, exactly as per the original.

I am fond of multi-jib cranes and when Paul told me about the FIA set I decided to build a MUSALA version with the parts

FIG.1

described elsewhere in this Issue. A counterweight was added to overcome the tendency to topple. The jib geometry was retained but the luffing control allowed a full range of movement – over twice that in the original. The downside was that the height of the Hook fell rather drastically over the increased range. It was then found that level luffing within 2cm or so over the whole range could be achieved if the pivot point of the top jib was moved 2 holes backwards, and the lower pivot point of the main jib was moved forward by 1, or preferably, 2 holes.

Congratulations are due to whoever designed the Crane on producing an eye-catching model, and to FIA and the retailers for selling the Set at such a low price. It should 'fly off the shelves' but what will the 6+ years old it is recommended for make of it? I suspect that, sadly, unless a dedicated dad intervenes, many will end up in car boot sales. One wonders how much the set would have cost if adequate instructions had been provided and improvements made to overcome the more serious of the various problems that Paul found.



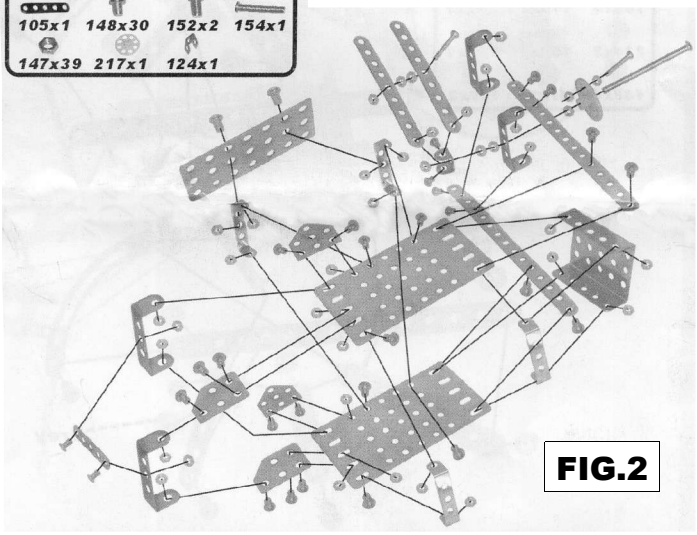


FIG.2