

The brightfull models in the My First Matchbox range, 1989-1994.

By: Marcel Bakker

Since 1970 "Matchbox Toys" have diversified into many different ranges of toys and diecast toys. The basis for this is that should a major competitor bring out a new idea which threatens the sales of any particular range, there would be many other ranges to soften the blow. In the late eighties there have been many innovations in the 1-75 series alone. These have included Laser Wheels, Colour Changes, Team Convoy sets, World Class, Motorcity and the GT range. In 1988 Matchbox achieved a growth rate of 20%. This was mainly due to growth in diecast vehicles and Pre-School business.

In 1989 the company took a positive step forwards increasing the sales of Pre-School items. The whole Pre-School line was relaunched with new packaging at the centre of which was the Activity Bear. The sales figures were staggering for the sales of this range went up by a massive 71%. In order to facilitate this rate of progress Matchbox became involved in 'extensive new product development'. At the heart of the campaign was a 'fun series of Matchbox Miniatures' developed especially for younger children. Brightly coloured models were 'designed to give hours of imainative play and educational fun'

The 1989 Trade Catalogue showed three LL sets (LL-103 Railway, LL-102 Town and LL-101 Farm) under the heading 'Toddler Toys'. These were sets with plastic 'Playtracks'. The major interest to 1-75 collectors was the appearance of a Volkswagen Ambulance (MB20e) in a new livery showing a bandaged teddy, and a Ford Transit (MB60g) showing a teddy with cakes, both in the LL-102 Town set.

In addition to the Ambulance and Transit designated to the models from the LL-102 Town Set, in Volume 5 No. 1 of MICA of april 1989, Paul Carr revealed a Volvo Tilt (MB26f) in yellow with a yellow canopy bearing the Matchbox logo and a teddy bear.



Sadly these three models were not released. The only place where the three elusive first three models could have been seen at the time was in the Matchbox Room at the Chester Toy Museum. All the three models do have Macau cast baseplates, and did not yet feature the colorfull wheels.

I managed to find the Volvo Tilt Truck for my collection as Paul Carr had this for sale some years ago.

The Ford Transit (MB60g) was sold by him also but that model went to another collector.

In the following months a number of collectors were disappointed when, after opening the large 'My First Playtrack' sets, only standard models from the 1-75 range were found.





Learning is fun with



In Volume 5 No. 1 of MICA of april 1989, Paul Carr also revealed that there were to be three Triple Packs without track. The three packs, known as 'My First Playsets', quickly appeared and there was considerable competition between collectors and parents to purchase these models. One local Tesco store reported that its shelves were cleared within one day of displaying these three triple packs. The interest in this range appeared to be phenomenal for the appeal was certainly not limited to the under fives.



The Leyland Titan Bus, featuring the 'My First Matchbox' logo with the Germany spelling of 'Nurnberg' 1990 on the roof, was the model chosen to be given away at the Nuremberg Toy Fair. Perhaps this served to show the importance of the range with potential trade buyers.



Indeed, the 1990 Trade Catalogue revealed that the miniature 'My First Matchbox' model would now number 24 and the name of the series had been changed from 'My First Playset'. There was no sign of the three models from the 'My First Playtracks'. The 1990 trade catalogue showed 3 sets with different artwork showing My First Matchbox models and only a few standard models:



LL-101 My First Playtrack Farm

LL-102 My First Playtrack Town (no picture)



LL-103 My First Playtrack Railway

The LL-105 My First Playtrack Superset set with 83 pieces ! but only 2 models. (the 0-6-0 Steam Loco (MB43c) and Passenger Coach (MB44c)) The set has a similar box design and was not pictured in the tradecatalogue.

Collectors with sharp eyes studied the various Playtracks and wondered wheter there would be a Tractor and Trailer, GMC Wrecker and Reynolds Crane Truck An enlarged design on the Bulldozer with simulated rocks on the blade instead of diagonal lines.



In Volume 5, No.6 of MICA of february 1990, Paul showed six more of the new models, including the Horse Box (MB40b) , School Bus (MB47e) and Utility Truck (MB33g) which were not shown in the 1990 catalogue. Paul suggested that there would be 23 models in the range and three models not previously shown anywhere would be a new version of the Volvo Tilt Truck (MB26f) the Passenger Coach (MB44c) and Combine Harvester (MB51c) Eighteen would be due to release in Germany at the time and fifteen of these were available for the UK. In february 1990 it was not yet known if the range was going to be released in the USA.

The China based sets began to appear and by July 1990 the first variation was recorded. Whereas the original Fire Engine (MB18c) had a yellow ladder with a blue base. With the imminent demise in terms of production in Macau, this could prove to be a short lived variation. The 0-6-0 Steam Loco (MB43c), Passenger Coach (MB44c) and Peugeot Quasar (MB49e) were the first My First Matchbox models which were changed from Macau to China bases.

One of the main changes was to the 0-6-0 Steam Loco (MB43c) which underwent a complete redesign. A few of the yellow and lime 0-6-0 Steam Locos appeared in the last Macau sets. (pictures from www.garyscars.co.uk)



MB18-C Oshkosh fire engine, silver base, Macau



MB18-C Oshkosh fire engine, blue base, Thailand



MB43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco, yellow & red

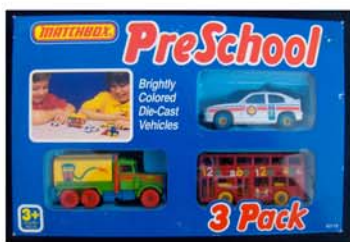


MB43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco, yellow & lime

Several 6 packs of models appeared over the life of the range, some were exclusives for certain stores, the pack which contained the Lincoln Town Car (MB43g) was the only source for this model in the UK. Other packs then the 5 pictured may exist as they were made with Macau, China and Thailand boxes.



In 1990 several packs have been manufactured for the USA in the 'Pre-School' three packs. These only contain China-based models and are essentially the same models as those found in Britain. Two differences relate to the stricter laws in the US whereby it is thought that the plastic top on the Volvo Tilt (MB26f) and the arms and buckets on the Utility Truck may be swallowed by very young children and so they have not been fitted. The only variation noted in the US involves the colour of the pivot for the arms of the Utility Truck. These may be either blue or yellow plastic. The yellow plastic versions have not been seen for sale in Britain.



Also in 1990 at least 2 sets with different artwork comparing to the sets released in the UK were released in the USA. The artwork does show My First Matchbox models but like the 3-packs they were marked as Matchbox 'PreSchool' sets. I do not know if a Railwayset was made and can only show the Farmset and Townset. Confirmation of the Railwayset, if exist, is required. The sets contain China-based models.



62101 Matchbox PreSchool Farmset



62102 Matchbox PreSchool Townset

Railwayset is not known to exist



After that the first models from Thailand have filtered through, there are many variations for the keen collector. The Bulldozer mentioned above has appeared in the different livery shown in the catalogue and several models have seen a change in the colour of hubs.

In Volume 7 No. 1 of MICA of april 1991, Paul Carr revealed six more models due for 1991, all with a Thailand base.

From left to right upper row:

Lincoln Town Car (MB43g), Ford Sierra (MB15d) and Ford LTD Police Car (MB16e) These are now very difficult to find and the rarest My First Matchbox models.

From left to right lower row: Flareside pickup (MB53d), Ford Bronco (MB39e) and Porsche 935 (MB55f)



These six models were pictured in the 1991 and 1992 trade catalogues although the Ford Bronco (MB39e) in the catalogue had yellow wheels with red hubs while the MICA photo showed a model with yellow wheels and blue hubs.

The 1991 trade catalogue revealed 5 sets of which LL-101, LL-102 and LL-103 were the same as in 1990:

LL-101 My First Playtrack Farm

LL-102 My First Playtrack Town

LL-103 My First Playtrack Railway

LL-230 Fold'n Play Garage

LL-310 My First Matchbox Jigsaw Playmat



LL-105 My First Playtrack Superset, China 1990
(not shown in tradecatalogues)



LL-310 My First Matchbox Jigsaw Playmat



30 Pieces Play Track (Argos)

The 1992 trade catalogue only revealed the 1st four sets of the above listing.

In Volume 7 No. 6 of MICA of february 1992 Paul revealed that the Porsche 935 (MB55f) was not going to be released. This was to be the end for the small models in the MY FIRST MATCHBOX range and no more new models were introduced. The last year these models were available was 1994.

The last models produced had one colour hubs (possibly as an economy measure)

The Taxi with all red hubs is very hard to find as it was only available in an 1993 ARGOS gift set (nbr. 62117.21) This set contains China-based models.

All 10 models in the ARGOS set were sealed in baggies.

Known 3 packs (beside the early 1989 Macau My First Playsets with unique models as shown on page 2 of this article)



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1989 Macau



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1989 Macau



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1989 Macau



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1989 China



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1989 China



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1990 China



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1990 China



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1990 China



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1992 Thailand



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1992 Thailand



LL-113 My First Matchbox 3-pack 1993 China

In 1994 a totally different design was made for the My First Matchbox range, the boxes more white in color. This change of design sounds strange as no new models were introduced since 1992. So far I only found 6 different models in a single pack (all numbered 62111.21). All boxes were made in China and had the Mt Laurel U.S.A. address printed on them. Generally this type of packaging is more difficult to find. See also the variation listing at the end of this article for the model variations I found in these later boxes. I also found a 3-pack with a similar blue/white design. A very rare pack and I would like to hear from you if you have found this also, maybe with different contents. The pack is numbered 62113.21 and also made in China with the the Mt Laurel U.S.A. address.



MB 17-C Leyland Titan, issue 50
B body casting, all yellow wheels, China



MB 26-F Volvo tilt truck, issue 18
lime canopy, all yellow wheels, China



MB 21-E Chevrolet breakdown van, issue 13
all blue wheels, China



MB 49-E Peugeot quasar, issue 12
yellow, all blue wheels, China



MB 08-G Vauxhall astra gte with roof light, issue 11
all blue wheels, raised China



MB 31-G Rover sterling, issue 11
blue & yellow, all blue wheels, China

MB 08-G Vauxhall astra gte with roof light, issue 11
all blue wheels, raised China

MB 26-F Volvo tilt truck, issue 18
lime canopy, all yellow wheels, China

MB 33-G Ford utility truck, issue ?
blue turret, blue & lime boom,
all blue wheels, China



This range provides an interesting theme for collectors and I am sure that I am not alone. I started to collect them in the early nineties as I like the toys value of them and the fact they are unique in their kind, because of being so brightfull. That collection was sold in 1996 when I moved house to my current place. In 2004 I started to build a new collection of these again. Since then I managed to collect almost every variation known. I'm still missing a few giftsets, particularly the 'LL230 My First Matchbox Playtrack Garage' (box shows the German text; Meine Erste Spielstrasse Parkhaus) and the 'LL250 Fold-n-Play Farm'. The following 2 pictures on the left came from Chinese Ebay, many years ago. The seller didn't want to sent to Europe. I never saw these sets again until october 2015 when I bought the german version of the LL250 Klappset Bauernhof as pictured on the right.



LL230 My First Matchbox Playtrack Garage



LL250 Fold-n-Play Farm



LL250 Klappset Bauernhof

I'am also missing 2 of these early 'Playtrack' sets from 1989, LL-101 Farm set and LL-102 Town set (with standard models) I just only found the LL-103 Railway set as pictured on the right. (photos from Ebay)



LL-101 Farm

LL-102 Town (no picture)



LL-103 Railway

My 'My First Matchbox' collection was on display; at a meeting of the Dutch Matchbox Models Yesteryear Club in Uden, The Netherlands, 14 oct 2005. At a meeting of the Dutch 3-inch club in Gravensteed, The Netherlands, 20 june 2009. (members still talk about that presentation) and I also had them on display for visitors of the German Matchbox Collectors Club in Amersfoort, The Netherlands. 6-8 june 2014.



Credit to: Paul Carr and Nigel Cooper of their articles in MICA, to: Charlie Mack and Christian Falkensteiner for their variation listings, to Carsten Oettler for his help and to Gary James for his website with great in on the 'My First Matchbox' range: <http://www.garyscars.co.uk/mb/inl/index.htm>
Please inform me of any variations that you have which are not included in this listing.



Around spring 1992 two Superking sports cars (K-8-E Ferrari F-40 and the SP-13/14-A Porsche 959) and the K-15-B The Londoner in MY FIRST MATCHBOX range has been released in the UK and that was the end of this range of colourful models for pre-school aged children, and us older kids.

A photo of the K-15-B The Londoner in MY FIRST MATCHBOX colors for the Save the Children was shown in Volume 9 No.2 of MICA of august 1993. The bus features the Matchbox logo on the front panel of the upper deck and for each bus sold Matchbox donated 20 pence to the charity "Save the Children" fund.

The only Kingsize models released within the 'My First Matchbox range'. (the Ferrari and Porsche proofs to be quite difficult to find)



K-8-E Ferrari F-40, issue 5



K-15-B The Londoner, issue 27



SP-13/14-A Porsche 959, issue 11

Some other items of interest:

A counterdisplay for 36 models in original outercarton for the trade.



Boxes with French text 'MA PREMIERE MATCHBOX'. These 7 models were found from a Canadian seller by Dutch collector Alwin van Hattum and are now part of my collection. The price sticker show that these were originally bought from the 'GALERIES LAFAYETTE' chainstore. I never saw any others, did you?



MB 19-D Peterbilt cement truck



MB 40-B Bedford horse-box



MB 43-C 0-4-0 steam loco



MB 75-D Helicopter



MB 56-D Peterbilt tanker



MB 04-E Carodies taxi fx 4 r



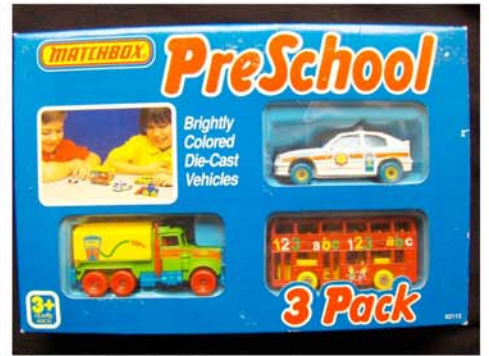
MB 51-C Combine harvester



□ MB 17-C Leyland Titan, issue 40, Nürnberg 1990
A body casting, yellow and blue wheels, China



□ MB 17-C Leyland Titan, issue 44
A body casting, yellow and blue wheels, China



□ MB 17-C Leyland Titan, issue ?
B body casting, yellow and blue wheels, China



□ MB 17-C Leyland Titan, issue 50
B body casting, all yellow wheels, China



□ MB 19-D Peterbilt cement truck, issue 20
yellow & blue wheels, Macau



□ MB 19-D Peterbilt cement truck, issue 24
yellow & blue wheels, Thailand



□ MB 19-D Peterbilt cement truck, issue 25
all yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 29-C Muir Hill tractor shovel, issue 29
yellow & orange wheels, Macau



□ MB 40-B Bedford horse-box, issue 41
lime & red wheels, Macau



□ MB 40-B Bedford horse-box, issue ?
lime & red wheels, China



□ MB 40-B Bedford horse-box, issue 42
lime & blue wheels, Thailand



□ MB 40-B Bedford horse-box, issue 43
all lime wheels, Thailand



□ MB 43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco, issue 13
yellow & red, blue wheels, Macau



□ MB 43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco, issue 18
yellow & lime, blue wheels, Macau



□ MB 43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco, issue 20
yellow & lime, blue wheels, China



□ MB 44-C Railway passenger coach, issue 31
blue wheels, Macau



□ MB 44-C Railway passenger coach, issue 32
blue wheels, China



□ MB 53-D Ford flareside pick-up, issue ?
red & yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 53-D Ford flareside pick-up, issue 15
all red wheels, Thailand



□ MB 64-D Caterpillar bulldozer, issue 29
blue metal base, yellow blade, blue rollers, Macau



□ MB 64-D Caterpillar bulldozer, issue 34
yellow plastic base, lime blade, lemon rollers, Thailand



□ MB 71-C Dodge cattle truck, issue ?
blue & yellow wheels, yellow towhook, Macau



□ MB 71-C Dodge cattle truck, issue 134
blue & yellow wheels, red towhook, Macau



□ MB 75-D Helicopter, issue 37
Macau



□ MB 75-D Helicopter, issue 38
Thailand



□ MB 20-C 4 X 4 Jeep with canopy, issue 20
red & lime wheels, Macau



□ MB 20-C 4 X 4 Jeep with canopy, issue 24
all red wheels, Thailand



□ MB 56-D Peterbilt tanker, issue 27
red & yellow wheels, Macau



□ MB 56-D Peterbilt tanker, issue 29
red & yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 56-D Peterbilt tanker, issue 32
all yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 52-B Police launch, issue 11
red wheels, Macau



□ MB 52-B Police launch, issue 12
red wheels, Thailand

MATCHBOX My First Matchbox Kleinkind-Spielzeug



□ MB 55-F Racing Porsche 935, pre-production yellow & red wheels, Thailand
This casting is NOT released as MY FIRST MATCHBOX
□ MB 15-D Ford sierra xr 4 I, issue ? red & blue wheels, Thailand
Both on 2nd row in the 1992 trade catalogue



□ MB 15-D Ford sierra xr 4 I, issue 41
all red wheels, Thailand



□ MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine, pre-production silver base, yellow ladder, blue & yellow wheels, Macau, firemans head facing wrong (to the right on driver side)



□ MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine, issue 8 silver base, yellow ladder, blue & yellow wheels, Macau



□ MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine, issue 14 blue base, blue & lime ladder, yellow & blue wheels, Macau



□ MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine, issue 15 blue base, blue & lime ladder, yellow & blue wheels, Thailand



□ MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine, issue 16 blue base, blue & lime ladder, all yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 16-D F1 racer, issue 13 blue & yellow wheels, Macau



□ MB 16-D F1 racer, issue 17 blue & yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 26-F Volvo tilt truck, pre-production yellow, yellow canopy, chrome wheels, China



□ MB 26-F Volvo tilt truck, issue 12 lime canopy, yellow & red wheels, China



□ MB 26-F Volvo tilt truck, issue 14 no canopy, yellow & blue wheels, China



□ MB 26-F Volvo tilt truck, issue 15 lime canopy, yellow & blue wheels, China



□ MB 26-F Volvo tilt truck, issue 18
lime canopy, all yellow wheels, China



□ MB 21-E Chevrolet breakdown van, issue 7
blue & yellow wheels, China



□ MB 21-E Chevrolet breakdown van, issue 13
all blue wheels, China



□ MB 47-E International school bus, issue 11
lime & red wheels, China



□ MB 47-E International school bus, issue 12
lime & blue wheels, China



□ MB 47-E International school bus, issue 20
all lime wheels, China



□ MB 49-E Peugeot quasar, issue 8
yellow, blue & yellow wheels,
Macau



□ MB 49-E Peugeot quasar, issue 9
yellow, blue & yellow wheels,
China



□ MB 49-E Peugeot quasar, issue 11
orange-yellow, blue & yellow wheels,
China



□ MB 49-E Peugeot quasar, issue 12
yellow, all blue wheels,
China



□ MB 75-E Ferrari testarossa, issue 15
yellow & blue wheels, Macau



□ MB 04-E Carbodyes taxi fx 4 r, pre-production
red & yellow wheels, larger TAXI on right side and
extra blue dash after C on rear door, Macau



□ MB 04-E Carbodyes taxi fx 4 r
red & yellow wheels, Macau



□ MB 04-E Carbodyes taxi fx 4 r
all red wheels, China (Argos set)



□ MB 70-E Ford cargo skip truck, issue 3
yellow & orange wheels, Macau



□ MB 08-G Vauxhall astra gte with roof light, issue 6
blue & yellow wheels, flat China



□ MB 08-G Vauxhall astra gte with roof light, issue 11
all blue wheels, raised China



□ MB 08-G Vauxhall astra gte with roof light, issue 11
all blue wheels, raised China, later box



□ MB 20-E Volkswagen transporter ambulance,
pre-production
This casting is NOT released as MY FIRST MATCHBOX



□ MB 16-E Ford ltd with roof light, issue ?
red & yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 16-E Ford ltd with roof light, issue 9
all red wheels, Thailand



□ MB 16-E Ford ltd with roof light, issue 14
all yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 39-E Ford bronco II, issue ?
yellow & blue wheels, Thailand



□ MB 39-E Ford bronco II, issue 9
all yellow wheels, Thailand



□ MB 31-G Rover sterling, issue 4
blue & yellow, blue & yellow wheels, China



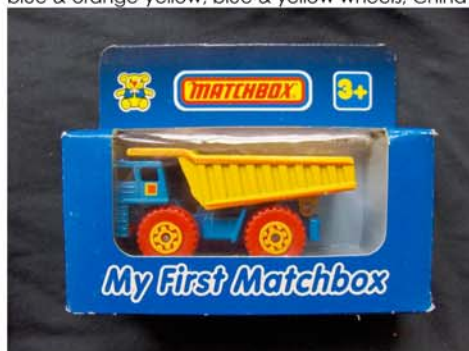
□ MB 31-G Rover sterling, issue 5
blue & orange-yellow, blue & yellow wheels, China



□ MB 31-G Rover sterling, issue 11
blue & yellow, all blue wheels, China



□ MB 43-G Lincoln town car, issue 5
all blue wheels, Thailand



□ MB 09-H Faun dump truck, issue 3
red & yellow wheels, China



□ MB 09-H Faun dump truck, issue 6
all red wheels, China



□ MB 33-G Ford utility truck, issue ?
blue turret, blue & yellow boom,
blue & yellow wheels, Macau



□ MB 33-G Ford utility truck, issue 3
blue turret, no boom,
blue & yellow wheels, China



□ MB 33-G Ford utility truck, issue 4
yellow turret, no boom,
blue & yellow wheels, China



□ MB 33-G Ford utility truck, issue 5
blue turret, blue & yellow boom,
blue & yellow wheels, China



□ MB 33-G Ford utility truck, issue 6
yellow turret, blue & lime boom,
blue & yellow wheels, China



□ MB 33-G Ford utility truck, issue ?
blue turret, blue & lime boom,
all blue wheels, China



□ MB 15-K Ford transit , pre-production
This casting is NOT released as MY FIRST MATCHBOX



□ MB TP-20 Flat car side tipper, issue 4
blue wheels, Macau



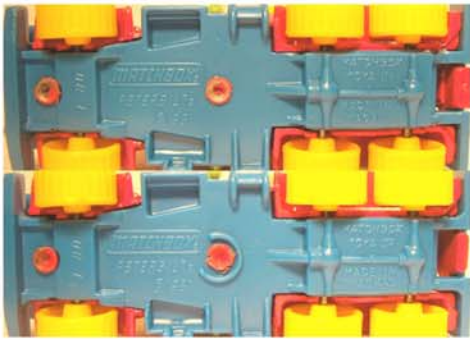
□ MB TP-19 Cattle trailer, issue 11
blue & yellow wheels, Macau



□ MB 51-C Combine harvester, issue 4
all red wheels, Macau



□ MB 51-C Combine harvester, issue 12
all red wheels, Thailand



MB 19-D Peterbilt cement truck
Macau & Thailand bases



MB 40-B Bedford horse-box
Macau & Thailand bases



MB 40-B Bedford horse-box
China base



MB 43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco
Macau & China bases



MB 44-C Railway passenger coach
Macau & China bases



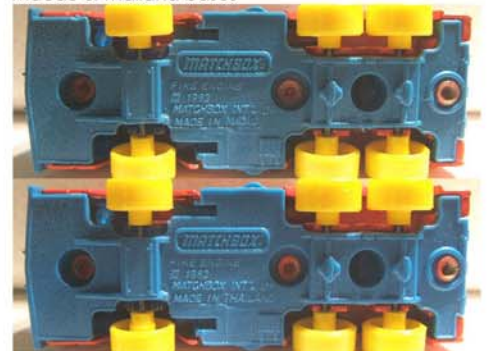
MB 75-D Helicopter
Macau & Thailand bases



MB 56-D Peterbilt tanker
Macau & Thailand bases



MB 52-B Police launch
Macau & Thailand bases



MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine
Macau & Thailand bases



MB 16-D F1 racer
Macau & Thailand bases



MB 49-E Peugeot quasar
Macau & China bases



MB 08-G Vauxhall astra gte with roof light
China bases flat & raised



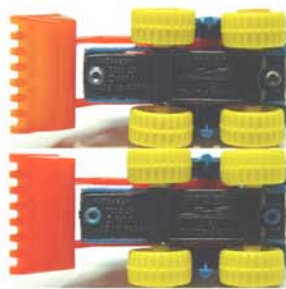
MB 51-C Combine harvester
Macau & Thailand bases

pre-production and other non released models in the My First Matchbox range.

Photos from Christian Falkensteiner's website: credit to Andre Tischer, Felix Kwong, Bernd Beger and Jim Gallegos.



MB 17-C Leyland Titan
no side tampo



MB 29-C Muir Hill tractor shovel
unpainted & blue rivets



MB 43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco
without tampo



MB 43-C 0-4-0 Steam loco
black wheels, found in China



MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine
without tampo



MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine
black helmet outline



MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine
unpainted



MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine
unpainted, blue base



MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine
white ladder, black base, silver & black wheels



MB 18-C Oshkosh fire engine
white ladder, black base, silver & black wheels



MB 16-D F 1 racer
blue, yellow and black wheels



MB 21-E Chevrolet breakdown van
tampo differences



MB 21-E Chevrolet breakdown van
gray boom, found in China



MB 21-E Chevrolet breakdown van
white boom, found in China



MB 49-E Peugeot quasar
silver & black wheels, found in China



MB 16-E Ford ltd with roof light unpainted



MB 43-G Lincoln town car yellow & blue wheels



MB 33-G Ford utility truck white boom, black base, found in China



MB 33-G Ford utility truck white boom, black base, silver & black wheels, found in China



MB TP-20 Flat car side tipper abcd on left side



MB 51-C Combine harvester lime & unpainted, black wheels



MB 51-C Combine harvester unpainted & blue, red wheels



MB 51-C Combine harvester unpainted & blue, red wheels, base