

MEGO TEEN TITANS

by Rob Kelly

Courtesy of Benjamin Holcomb. Teen Titans TM & © DC Comics.



Contradictions.

If one word could sum up the legendary Mego toy company, *that* would be it. Capable of producing breathtakingly cool plastic reproductions of kids' favorite comic-book, movie, and TV characters, Mego just as quickly could make something so pathetically cheesy that Santa wouldn't have dared leave it for you under the Christmas tree.

And no Mego line is a better microcosm of those inherent contradictions than *Teen Titans* (TT). Produced in 1977, the *Teen Titans* line consisted of four figures—Wonder Girl, Speedy, Kid Flash, and Aqualad (Robin having been Mego-ized in 1972). Despite being established characters in the DC Universe, Mego chose not to brand the Titans with its massively popular *World's Greatest Super-Heroes* (WGS) label, and their packaging was different than the standard WGS design, even though in trade ads they were sold alongside the WGS line.

Within the TT line itself, quality varies wildly. While Kid Flash, Speedy, and Aqualad are spitting images of their comic-book selves (and Speedy coming with a full complement of detailed accessories), Wonder Girl has the creepy, dead-eyed visage of a baby doll, something I doubt any young boy would've been caught dead buying. At least you could buy Batgirl or Supergirl because you had feelings for Babs or Kara that you were too young to understand, but Wonder Girl looks like she wants to help you whip up some brownies in your sister's Easy-Bake Oven.

Also, *Teen Titans* would become victims of Mego's cost-cutting practices at the time. Mego used an inferior, cheaper plastic on them, causing "molting," where the Caucasian skin tones eventually turn a sickly grey, making the kids look like they're the stars of *Teen Titans Zombies*.

As many toy manufacturers have learned, kids are an inscrutable bunch, and you never know what will sell. While the WGS line was a monstrous, industry-changing hit, the TT line flopped. According to Benjamin Holcomb, author of the ultimate WGS reference work, *Mego 8" Super-Heroes: World's Greatest Toys*, "The *Teen Titans* had an extremely short production life, offered to retailers only once, at Toy Fair in February 1977. With no marketing support, the *Teen Titans* failed." (Yet the line lasted long enough to produce one tiny packaging variant and two different sets of arms—one that bent, one that didn't—for Wonder Girl.)

One of the other things going against the line was Mego's (usually excellent) timing. In 1977, there was no *Teen Titans* cartoon or movie, and the *Teen Titans* comic was heading for its second cancellation. Ironically, the Titans would take off to nearly unrivaled heights of popularity under the genius hands of Marv Wolfman and George Pérez just a few years later.

Partly because of their unusual-ness (face it, you don't see a lot of Speedy toys out there, even in today's DC Direct world) and the fact that they weren't collected *en masse* like a lot of the other WGSs, the TTs now go for hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars to collectors. *Teen Titans Go!*

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