McF Dragons Series 5 review

Posted by L - 2007/02/20 15:28

Well, the new Dragons from McFarlane are out, and I've got mine. Found them on-line. Here's a quick review.

This is not a wave I was really excited about, in some ways, since I tend to use these figures with DF, and this time around the dioramas and figures were going to make that somewhat impossible. It's a shame. If you want, though, you can rip off the tiny figures and all but 1 or 2 of the dragons will be useful with DF -- I just can't bring myself to do that. If I really, really, really decide it's worth it, I may buy a second version of one or two of these guys and maul THAT one.

To be fair, the diorama approach is a neat idea. They appear to have decided that the deluxe boxed sets from the past waves were the coolest figures they've done, and decided to go ahead and dedicate a whole series to that approach. Each carded dragon has a diorama scene going for it, with a human (or several) characters to interact with. Since the figures are smaller than the boxed sets, the human figures are tiny, tiny, tiny in ways I hadn't anticipated, but for people who really dig the diorama approach, this is gonna be a popular series. For those who don't, or who think the whole shebang should be BIGGER if you're gonna do it this way, this is a disappointing series. (and as far as DF is concerned, you could conceivably leave some of these tiny figures alone, as they are so small they might go unnoticed! seriously, these are tiny figures -- when I do post pics, you'll see what I mean)

Here's the dragon-by-dragon breakdown:

Berserker: One of my personal favorites. The pose is nice and basic, with a sculpt that captures the essence of classical, conventional European dragon qualities. Even the way he's been "captured" seems familiar. I like the sharp green they've given him, and the highlights work very well. The collection of tiny men holding him down is well done (though I have to wonder, how'd they get these chains on him to begin with?)

Eternal Clan: Tied with Berserker for my favorite of the series. It's like they did a mini version of the series 2 boxed set -- same pose, essentially, with a very similar style dragon and the same purple hue. The forest below is VERY well done, and if they sold that as a separate item, I see people like IO buying it by the ton as an easy way to build cool forest easily. Seriously, this is a great little grove. The tiny, tiny rider is a bit laughable, though.

Water Clan: I really didn't like this guy at first, but the fact is, he is more interesting to look at than the other two, so he comes in at a close third. The boat and drowning men and water are all EXTREMELY well done, and the dragon is a classic "sea serpent" look, which after 4 Water Clan dragons they still hadn't gotten around to (though series 2 came close). So I suppose this is something they had to do eventually. Of all the dioramas, may be the most traditional, Ray Harryhausen-esque. It's also the one dragon that clearly just can't work with DF. I suppose an expert modeler could remove the boat and even the figures, in which case the splashing water might work really well with the well or the cavernous water sets -- but I am not sure. In any case, as it stands, it's totally going to clash.

Komodo Clan: This one has some really nice details, but the pose is just awkward, and the colors are a bit garish for my taste. His face is interesting, but the way he's posed, he's looking sort of backwards, which means you can't really see it from the "front" of the figure. Just awkward. Overall, a bit dull.

Sorcerer Clan: I really am not crazy about this one. The neck frill is just too lizard-y for me, and while I LOVED the Series 4 Boxed Set Komodo, which essentially WAS a lizard, this time around I don't think it

works. The color is also a bit odd, too bright and too uniform. Just a bland entry, I fear.

As always, the question of which dragon is the best is largely a matter of personal bias, so I can't speak to that, beyond what I've already said. I can say a few general things, though:

1. As we'd expect by now, the sculpt and paintwork is stellar. Phenomenal details in the sculpt, great use of highlighting in the paint, just a really outstanding set of figures, as display items.

2. The articulation is worse than ever, after a vague step up in recent issues. These guys just cannot move at all. I believe the Eternal's wings can be raised and lowered, and that's it.

3. The dragons, once again, are surprisingly small. Since series 2 this has been remarked on, but series 3 had a few that seemed close to what we saw with the first figures, and series 4 had some decently-sized dragons, even if the boxed set one was tiny. But this time, make no mistake -- these are very small dragons.

4. The plastic feels a little harder this time, less rubbery. Assembly of wings is therefore a little easier, but it's a shame they dropped the translucent plastic they used on all the first dragons, and a few of the figures since then.

5. As I said, these won't work perfectly with DF. The Water Clan has that big boat, the Eternal Clan is flying over a forest, the Berserker is being chained down by 5 tiny men. You could remove the tiny men holding down the Berserker, though, or the woman in the tail of the Sorcerer Clan, just as you could remove the tiny figures from the Komodo. Anyone willing to do that would have some neat DF-compatible dragons.

All in all, it's a nice series, worth having, but I'm not one of those saying this is the best yet. Series 4 was, for me, the clear highpoint of this line.

Watch the "Cool Photos" space, as I will be posting pics of these guys in the next week or so.

L

==========