

## A No.0 EL MECANICO Outfit

MECCANO had a strong following in Argentina before WW2 but government restrictions after the war prevented its importation. To fill the gap several home grown systems appeared. Most, including EL MECANICO (EL MEC henceforth), were more or less copies of MECCANO, but EL NUEVO INGENIERO ARGENTINO was similar to ERECTOR, see 15/421. The MECCANO type generally had sufficient parts for sets up to the equivalent of the MECCANO No.6 of the time, and most of the manual models were inspired by the post-1937 MECCANO designs, with a good many just straight copies.

The EL MEC No.0 to hand, courtesy David Hobson, is unused & complete with a 0-1 manual. What follows is an account of it in relation to the details given in MCS.

**MAKER** Not known, and the only clue is 'Marca Registrada bajo el No.244.165 INDUSTRIA ARGENTINA' on the box lid & manual cover (bottom left in the photo above).

**HISTORY** MCS gives 1945-55 as dates.

**SETS** The MCS entry is based on a 0-6 manual, and includes the contents of Nos.0-6 & linking sets 0-1 to 5-6, identical to those in the present 0-1 edition. Outfits 0-10 are mentioned on a manual page about better models, but it's unlikely that sets larger than No.6 were ever produced.

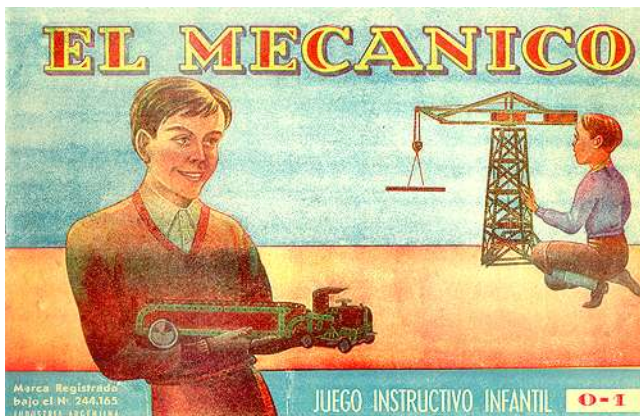
The **No.0** is in a red box, yellow inside, 25¼\*19¾\*2¾cm. The lid is covered by a label identical to the manual cover above except it has '0' in the white panel bottom right, and a thin white edging along the top & bottom. The parts are strung to a yellow board with thin yellow cord. The small parts are in a red end-opening box 10¾\*4\*1¼cm, as below, glued to the board.



**HHOLES:** Most are 4.4mm with a few 4.2. The only **slots** are in the Flat Bracket\*, some 6½, some 8mm long. (Starred parts can be seen in the photo above.) **PITCH:** 12.7mm.

**MATERIAL/FINISH** The main parts are painted steel - Strips are 1950s MECCANO green, & the Flanged Plate\* a lightish red, between the 1950s & 1960s MECCANO shades. The finishes of other parts are given below.

**PARTS Basics** • All the parts in the Set are mentioned below - most look like MECCANO, exceptions are noted. • **Widths** Strips are 12.7mm but the DAS is 13.2mm. • **Ends** of Strips are near fully rounded; the **corners** of the Flanged Plate are fully rounded. • **Bosses** are unusual zinc die castings\*, 10½mm Ø with a 14½mm flange, and a bore of about 4.2mm; they are 12½mm long including the flange, & double-tapped



about 14½mm deep. • **Flat Bracket\***: 23 or 24½mm long, nicked. **A/B\***: made from the Flat Bracket, 12\*12½ to 10½\*14mm. • **Trunnions**: both are the 7h type though the M126 pattern is shown in the Manual. The Flat Trunnion is 38½mm wide & 40mm high; the Trunnion\*, 13\*26mm, is made from it, and is a darker shade of green. • **Flanged Plate\***: 5\*11h, 66mm wide with four 14mm deep flanges. • **Flexible Plates**: none are included in the Set 0 but the parts are shown in the Manual with unusual corners (right). • **Pulley\***: 23mm Ø, with a vee about 4mm wide, painted a lightish turquoise. Its **Rubber Ring\*** is black, 4½mm wide, and EL MECANICO is moulded on one side, with 49 diametrically opposite. • **Bush Wheel\***: 37mm Ø with nickel disc. • **Axles**: 4.00-4.07mm Ø, 51 & 102mm long, nicked, with square, sheared ends. **Crank Handle**: 4.11mm Ø, 131mm long o/a with 98mm shaft, & 23mm handle offset 18mm. • **N&B**: Plain steel, ⅝ BSW. • **Nut\***: square, pressed, 5.9-6.2mm A/F & 2mm thick. • **Bolts\***: pan headed, most 7.1-7.5mm Ø, 7¼ & 9mm u/h. • **Washer\***: 10mm (but one 12mm) Ø, nickel. • **Spring Clip\***: 1mm thick steel, badly blued, 6½mm wide with 6mm long wings. The Clips aren't springy and couldn't be pushed onto an Axle. • **Screwdriver\***: nickel, 4.00mm Ø wire, 132mm long o/a. • **Spanner\***: nicked, 73mm long - the M34 type is shown in the Manual.

**SET CONTENTS** The parts found in the Set correspond to the inventory in the Manual. The contents of Sets 0-6 given there (and in MCS) are similar to 1937-41 MECCANO outfits but with a few extra of a small number of parts. However in the larger sets some of these compensate for certain parts not in the EL MEC range, the 25h Strip Plate for example.

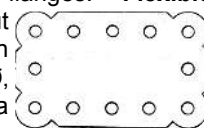
**MANUAL SUMMARY** •Name: EL MECANICO 0-1. •Details of maker: none. •No dates; the only reference is 'Marca Registrada bajo el No.244.165 INDUSTRIA ARGENTINA' on C1. •Page size: 255\*167mm. •No. of pages: 16, unnumbered, + covers. •Language: Spanish. •Printing: dark blue on cream with ½-tones of models. •Page Nos. of Illustrated Parts & highest PN: 16-C3,66. •Page Nos. of Set Contents & highest PN: C4,72. •Sets covered: 0,1. •No. of models for each set: 21,18. •Name, Model No., Page No. of first & last model of each set: 0: BANCO,1-0,2; MUÑECO EN LA BARRA,21-0,8. 1: CARRO PARA ARENA, 22-1,9; PULIDORA,39-1,14. •Other notes: C2 has Intro, p1 Basic Constructions, p15 has 3 models from larger sets.

For each model there is one large but not always very clear photo, and a list of the parts required. Some models are identical to MECCANO but many have been changed a little. Even in those most of the Trunnions & all the Curved Strips are MECCANO pattern (as in the No.1 model right - it is about ⅔-full-size). In some cases the Flanged Plate is shown

⅝ BSW. The **Set Screw\*** is like the standard Bolt\* (see below) but shorter, 6mm u/h.

• **Quality** The parts are generally well made with quite good paintwork, but the Brackets are poor, badly dished, with ragged holes, some off centre. 1 of the 2 Trunnions has ragged holes too.

• **Strips**: 5 & 11h. • **Curved Strip\***: as M90a but round holes replace the slots (slots are shown in the Manual). • 1\*5\*1h **DAS**: 62½mm o/a with lugs



Nº 36 al 40 - Placas flexibles





with no end flanges.

**REMARKS** Manual covers like the 0-1 have been seen for Sets 0-4 & 0-6. Also, from Ebay, another, below, with the



same registration number in the top right corner. 2 of its model pages were shown, one identical to a page in the 0-1 manual, and the other identical to MCS/FB p5, with two No.6 models.

A 0-6 manual from a related Argentinian system, **DU-EN-LOZ**, is to hand and it has a cover very like the EL MEC one left but with JUGUETE MECANICO DU-EN-LOZ in the blue bottom panel, and a registration number of 326.243 top right. (I wondered about the name DU-EN-LOZ but my dictionary gave nothing useful.) The contents are very similar in style to EL MEC with much of the text the same and, very minor details apart (the pages are headed DU-EN-LOZ instead of EL MECANICO for instance), the model pages are the same as all known EL MEC pages. The Illustrated Parts pages have the same PNs but show the modified pattern of Curved Strip, Trunnions, & Spanner, and Flexible Plates with normal corners (the fancy type are still shown in the models). So perhaps these changes, and the higher registration number, indicate that DU-EN-LOZ appeared later than EL MEC.

# OSN 31/937

## EL MECANICO: S2

**Snippet. 'New' System: GENIAL** New to OSN though the firm concerned, Genial-Spielwaren of Vienna, is listed in *Baukästen*. Jacques Pitrat kindly alerted me to the Ebay picture below which was being sold from Austria. It can be seen that the parts look exactly like DUX (see 20/558), and so do the models on the manual cover. I haven't actually found any of them in the couple of DUX manuals to hand but there are certainly a number of others I've never seen. The models on the lid are less obviously DUX but can't be seen at all clearly. Another possible DUX connection is the booklet above the manual, with 'DUX' in the top right green box, but it may of course not belong to the Set. It looks like the first manual described in OSN 20. The B&W symbol in the red ring on the lid label & manual cover is the maker's logo, a stylised man with legs apart holding a white semicircular annulus above his head, with GENIAL printed on it.

Another Ebay item showed a similar set but the covers of the 3 manuals with it were like the lid label below, but printed in plain B&W.

The *BK* entry says that the firm existed from 1946 to around

1951 and sold a Metallbaukasten in 3 sizes, plus an Electric Motor. Also mentioned are constructional sets for a clock, railway items, as well as house & garden, but I'm not sure if these were in any way related to the Metallbaukasten, and there is no mention at all of a DUX connection.

In fact there seems to have been GENIAL sets which did not have DUX-type parts. One such belonging to Dr Ansgar Henze is shown in the photo below, from the Swiss AMS Club N/L 1/2003, reproduced here by kind permission of the editor. The lid again has models all over it and they look similar in style to the ones on the DUX set, but are probably not identical. The label though is exactly the same design. Half way down the right side of the lid is what looks like a red circular sticker with a white '1' on it. No manual is shown. The parts, a rather strange selection with seemingly more Plates than Strips, are presumably in their original arrangement. Notice that not all the holes in the Plates are pierced, and that the end holes in many of the parts are closer together than the others, as in DUX Beams.

If in fact there were two types of GENIAL, could it be that the one below came first, perhaps DUX inspired to some degree, and with a selection of the original models on the box lids. Then a change was made to DUX parts, but using the same boxes, or at least the same style of lid.



**OSN 31/937**

**GENIAL: S1**