

# How Music and Brick Building Come Together in LEGO® VIDIYO™

LEGO® VIDIYO™ was born of a desire to mash together the endlessly creative possibilities engendered by the LEGO brick with the equally creative landscape of music.

"On the one hand, we have a creative system of play in the LEGO brick," Will Thorogood, vice president and executive producer of LEGO VIDIYO, said during a recent episode of the Bits 'N Bricks podcast. "Every brick that's ever been made can be combined together in a new way to create anything you can imagine. And on the other side, you have the system of music, which is a number of notes, tones effects that you can blend in an infinite number of ways to create all music.

"So, there's a lot of similarities between these two creative systems and we were pretty convinced there must be a way to bring them together."

This notion kicked off a period of intense brainstorming around the concept, which failed to find a workable prototype or idea. Thorogood said that the early work focused on the opportunity space and even dug up some old music-themed prototypes from the '90s.



It was right after the LEGO Group had essentially given up on the idea of boiling down that big concept into something that could be turned into a product that digital design director Morgan James Walker had a eureka moment.

Walker showed off what would become the core of the idea to his boss after sketching something out over the weekend.

"I just showed them this little sketch of, you know, what became LEGO VIDIYO and just asked for permission just to give at least that one idea a little bit more breathing room," Walker told the Our LEGO Stories podcast.

Walker was given another month to try and fill out the idea, and it was in that space of time that project came to life.

LEGO VIDIYO was built around Walker's core concept of bringing your minifigure to life in augmented reality in your room as a member of a band. And then taking that band and use it to create your own music videos.

"The core of the idea just felt right, of all of the things we were exploring it tied everything together in an exactly the way we were looking for," Thorogood said. "And it had the magical element of never seeing anything like this before."

LEGO Group chief product and marketing officer Julia Goldin noted that the LEGO VIDIYO experience also taps into the LEGO Group's mission to inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow, but in a very unique, new way.

"I think music is a massive passion point," said Goldin. "It's a very immersive space and I'm sure that there will be multiple opportunities for LEGO building and LEGO play to be connected into music. This is a very interesting experience in particular because it also provides kids with an opportunity to express themselves and to do it in a safe digital space.

"So, I think that will also be an area that will provide a lot of opportunity for future exploration and growth. We stay very focused on children and how they engage. We're really looking forward to seeing what they will do with this experience. We have a lot of really exciting plans for the future, but we will be also looking and listening and understanding how kids play with LEGO VIDIYO to see how we can build on that."

LEGO VIDIYO launched on March 1 with a set of BeatBox sets, each of which include a unique minifigure DJ, a collection of BeatBits and a collapsible stage. The free LEGO VIDIYO app captures your BeatBox collection and brings it to life as augmented reality in your real setting. You can also play without the physical toys, making the sets and app a true fluid play experience, allowing children to seamlessly move between the physical and digital world.

The app and sets also tap into a unique set of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that children increasingly need to master, Golin pointed out.

"Skills like collaboration and creative resilience and creative problem solving and critical thinking, these kinds of skills are already very much essential to drive the progress and innovation and to live in today's world," she said. "And I think that will only accelerate and become more important.

"I think this is a perfect way for children to have a lot of fun, but at the same time experience what it's like to actually go through that process of learning and relearning, trying new things, thinking about things differently, working with somebody else, learning from somebody else and trying to replicate. There's many different things involved in this experience that will undoubtedly really help them to develop."

Thorogood said that the LEGO Group plans to continue to support the LEGO VIDIYO experience as they go through the year with both new digital and physical products.

"We'll try to understand exactly what the creators within the app are doing," he said. "Are there certain features that they really want to see, things that we can we can improve on, other functionalities that are missing? All of those things we're going to be looking at

together with the community to try and understand how we can continuously make the digital experience better for them."

## Explore more...

In order of appearance

[LEGO VIDIYO](#) — Official website

[L.L.A.M.A.](#) (Love, Laughter, and Music Always) — Press release

[Ne-Yo](#) — Official website

[Carmen DeLeon](#) — Official website

[Shake](#) — Music video

[Life of George](#) — Brickipedia

[LEGO Super Mario](#) — Official website

[LEGO Dimensions](#) — Wikipedia

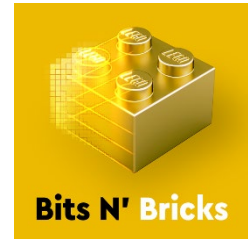
[Our LEGO Stories](#) — Official website

[Sam Battle builds a working DJ deck of LEGO pieces for DJ L.L.A.M.A.](#) — YouTube

# Transcript

Bits N' Bricks Season 1 Episode 14: LEGO® VIDIYO™: A Conversation

March 10, 2021 · 40:30



## Bits N' Bricks: Introduction - 00:00

(Child's voice announcing Bits N' Bricks)

**Ethan Vincent**

Welcome to Bits N' Bricks, a podcast about all things LEGO games. I'm Ethan Vincent-

**Brian Crecente**

and I'm Brian Crecente. Together, we look back at the rich 25-year history of LEGO games, chat with early developers and seasoned studios, who have all tackled the creation of video games for one of the most popular and respected toy companies in the world - the LEGO Group.

## Chapter 1: LEGO VIDIYO – 00:33

**Ethan Vincent**

Hey, Brian.

**Brian Crecente**

Hey, how's it going?

**Ethan Vincent**

It's going great. Why shouldn't it be going great, because it's not too often that a new LEGO toy's used to debut a single. And in February L.L.A.M.A released Shake, which features three-time Grammy winner Ne-Yo and Carmen DeLeon, and it was premiered on the new LEGO VIDIYO app.

(Snippet of Shake plays)

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, and you know, you're forgetting the very best part, Ethan, and that is DJ L.L.A.M.A, who is a llama-headed DJ, who also happens to be a minifigure. So this is the first time a minifigure, I think, has ever hit the charts. And he's a minifigure in the LEGO VIDIYO app.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yes.

**Brian Crecente**

By the way, L.L.A.M.A is actually an acronym. It stands for Love, Laughter and Music Always, something I think we need right now. So now if you download the app, you can not only listen to this great single, which I think you can also see the video and it's out there in a bunch of different platforms, musical platforms, but you can actually play around with it a bit using the VIDIYO app. The great thing about the VIDIYO app is that it really allows you to play around with the music, with video creation and also tinker with these cool little new minifigures that came with it. By the way did you get L.L.A.M.A when you got your BeatBoxes from the LEGO Group? I didn't.

**Ethan Vincent**

I didn't either. I just got the Candy Mermaid and the HipHop Robot. So those were the two that I received. You know, but before we start talking about our fun little toys, let's dive into what VIDIYO is exactly.

**Brian Crecente**

Yes, that's a good idea. So VIDIYO is the LEGO Group's latest exploration of augmented reality and fluid play. And it lets you use a smartphone app and special LEGO sets to create your own music videos. It's pretty cool. It all traces back to two things that the LEGO Group has been exploring for years now. One of those things is fluid play, and the other is of course music. So fluid play comes from the LEGO Group's examination of how physical and digital play intersect and interact with one another. The LEGO Group's interest in that can be traced back to even before the LEGO Group's first video game, which was Fun to Build, 25 years ago. So examples of fluid play, that I think we've even talked about, include things like the never-released KidPad, and Life of George, and Fusion, and Hidden Side, and even LEGO Super Mario.

**Ethan Vincent**

That's right. And you know, we actually had an entire podcast talking about how that idea was explored and evolved over the past two and a half decades and the LEGO Group also had, you know, long been interested in music as well. You know, the company has released a number of music-infused sets for its Dacta educational toys, the original LEGO Friends computer game was all about creating music, we did an episode on that as well. Dance routines, and even a light show for a band. And of course, not to forget LEGO Rock Band, which of course embraces music, but the LEGO Group took that interest in the impact of music to the next level and they did that by developing and working closely and partnering with Universal Music Group to create this app called VIDIYO.

**Brian Crecente**

Yes. So VIDIYO basically what it does is it uses the camera on your smartphone, to unlock special minifigure bandmates, and audio and visual special effects. Then what you do is you choose a song from a library of Universal Music Group music, and you then get to watch your digital band perform live right in front of you. So like I've done this right on my desktop, my physical desktop, not my computer desktop. And as you're watching it perform, I watched this little band, sort of these minifigures, dancing around and performing, you get to control what they do and how everything looks and you can even tinker a little bit with the music. It's pretty cool.

## **Chapter 2: Conversation with Julia Goldin – 04:38**

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, it is, it is, and VIDIYO launched on March 1st and we had a chance to speak with the LEGO Group's chief product and marketing officer Julia Goldin about the ideas behind VIDIYO and how it fits into the bigger picture of LEGO theme sets and video games.

(Music)

**Brian Crecente**

So yeah, Julia, do you think when you look at VIDIYO, do you feel that it is more physical or digital? Like how do you think it's appealing to these children who have become so digital native?

**Julia Goldin**

I think it's a very good question. And I think we will see from kids how they choose to engage, I think it really depends on the child, I'm sure that there are some kids that will spend a lot of time figuring out how to actually create the perfect video, and they will be fiddling around with different BeatBits, and trying different tiles and doing a lot of that. And I'm sure there'll be other kids that will actually really enjoy not just creating their own videos, but also watching videos from others and engaging in a more digital space. It really depends on the child, but what I can say is that this is really an experience that gives a lot of opportunity for different types of kids and different types of interests to be fulfilled, and I also feel that this is going to, you know, there's going to be an opportunity for more building in the future. There's more interesting stuff that's coming, but at the core of it, I think the experience is going to be exactly kind of what you're describing, which is really, really fluid. I mean, I played with it myself, and I kept going back and forth and trying different tiles and figuring...and scanning, and then figuring out what other special effects I wanted to have. So I'm imagine that kids will do the same.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, be cool to see what kids come up with, but do you think this is the sort of thing that the LEGO Group will continue to pursue, you know, this idea of creating more musical apps, or, you know, more physical creations that lean into the musical side of things?

**Julia Goldin**

I think music is a massive passion point and it's a very immersive space. And there's so many people...it's something that I can't imagine people not of all ages and interests, not having music as a passion, having their own way of engaging with music. And I'm sure that there will be multiple opportunities for the level building and the level play, to be connected into music. So I definitely see it as a massive passion point, very immersive, very broad, engaging many different people in different ways, so I'm sure that there's going to be a lot of opportunities. And this is a very interesting experience in particular, because it also provides kids with an opportunity to express themselves, and to do it in a safe digital space and to connect with others in the safe digital space. So I think that will also be an area that will provide a lot of opportunity for future exploration and growth. We stay very focused on children and how they engage. We're really looking forward to seeing what they will do with this experience that they're launching. You know, we have a lot of really exciting plans for the future, but we will be also looking and listening and understanding how kids engage to see how we can build on that.

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, I think that's really fascinating, this idea of sort of blurring the lines between the physical and digital, and I know the LEGO Group has a quite a long history: Hidden Side and LEGO Super Mario, and then of course there was a Life of George and Dimensions. How do you think, in developing this game or talking about VIDIYO, did they go back and look at some of those older experiences to sort of incorporate lessons learned?

**Julia Goldin**

Well, absolutely, I mean, I think one of the key things that is very important for any kind of innovation is to be able to learn from the lessons of the past. So for sure there was a lot of looking back, but there was also looking forward and also some experimentation along the way, you know, this was really developed as a proper digital experience. But we learned a lot about how kids engage with augmented reality, we learned a lot how they engage with the sort of fluid play experiences, and that of course, contributed significantly to how we have developed this particular experience, which I would expect to be even more seamless and engaging and immersive than what we have been able to do previously. With each experience we try to up the game.

**Brian Crecente**

So I know that obviously the LEGO Group is very focused. While they're incredibly fun to play with the LEGO theme sets and the LEGO bricks, the company is very focused on

helping with developmental skills in children. In terms of this application, in terms of VIDIYO, how do you think it will help children develop and build 21st-century skills like creative problem-solving and critical thinking, and also why do you think that's important?

**Julia Goldin**

Well firstly, I think that 21st-century skills like collaboration, and resilience, and creative problem-solving, and critical thinking. These kinds of skills they've already been very much essential to drive the progress and innovation and live in today's world, and I think that will only accelerate and become more important. There's been many famous articles and people that have spoken about the fact that the illiterate of the 21st-century will not be the people who cannot read or write, but people who cannot learn, relearn, unlearn. And that's the whole process of continuous learning, continuous iteration, trying things, learning from that, doing it again, doing it better, doing it different - that's what drives progress. And we know 60% of kids will have jobs that don't exist today. So there's just, you know, we need to prepare them with the skills that will give them an opportunity to succeed within whatever world they're going to be living in 10, 20, 30 years from now. I go back to this experience, it's exactly the kind of experience that they're giving them some starting points, but it's up to them to design and create what they want to design and create, and I'm sure that they will learn. The first time they do a music video, they will look at it, they will look at the special effects, and then they will start thinking about trying something. They'll try something, they might not like it, it might not work exactly the way that they have planned on it. They might need to go back and rebuild some things. And every time that you build with the LEGO bricks, you undoubtedly come into some mistakes, they have to troubleshoot. And the same thing happens when you create a digital product. So I think this is a perfect way for them to have a lot of fun. But at the same time experience what it's like to actually go through that process of learning, unlearning, relearning, trying new things, thinking about things differently, maybe speaking or talking, working with somebody else, learning from somebody else and trying to replicate. There's many different things involved in this experience that will undoubtedly really help them to develop. What we're doing with this experience is that all of this development will happen, but while they're having great fun, and while they're really immersed and loving what they're doing, even if some of it is going to be about trying new things, and not being super satisfied with the result and wanting to do things differently. And I'm certainly very excited about this innovation, and really, I'm looking forward to see what kids create.

## **Chapter 3: A Closer Look at LEGO VIDIYO – 11:56**

(Tune)

**Brian Crecente**

I love hearing Julia talk about the impact the LEGO Group hopes VIDIYO has on developmental skills in children.



**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, yeah. And it's super easy to forget that behind all of this fun and joy, you know, there are really some important things going on. Speaking of fun and joy, Brian, what did you name your VIDIYO band? I know you're dying to tell me.

**Brian Crecente**

Yes, I know. I sort of won't shut up about it. So when you start playing VIDIYO, you get to name your band by using a bunch of randomized words. And personally, I think I hit the jackpot with Crave the Kangaroo.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yes, very nice. Now mine is kind of a boring name, not that exciting, Brian. It's called Artistic Club.

**Brian Crecente**

It's classy, though. I like that, I like that.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, it's classy and I guess we're very artistic, so that's good. But before we get into the details of the app, and kind of the fun with creating your music video, talk to me a little bit about BeatBoxes, right? Basically, you can pick up these little kits that come with the musician minifigure, an assortment of the effects called BeatBits, and a little stage that holds everything. Once you put it together it sort of looks like your minifigure is standing in front of a wall with album covers on it. It's kind of a cool vinyl retro-look, I think too, right?

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah. So yeah, I have two, I think you and I share one.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah.

**Brian Crecente**

It is the HipHop Robot, who has a...his head is sort of...he has like a visor on that shows the levels of his music that's probably playing.

**Ethan Vincent**

He kind of looks a little cyborg-ish, you know? But he's got like this microphone extension coming off of his neck in this like, I don't know, this half Daft Punk kind of helmet going on. It's meant to be funky and cool, right?

**Brian Crecente**

A moment of silence for Daft Punk though, right?

**Ethan Vincent**

Oh my gosh, I could cry, but please.

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, so speaking of, I guess a little bit of what they call ETDM, the other character I have is Alien DJ, and he's kind of like this neon blue, he has this spiky hair and...no face really, it looks like he's wearing a helmet, à la Daft Punk. And like you said they come with these...it's actually they come in little boxes. I'm holding one right now (sounds of rattling.) You can hear things clunking around.

**Ethan Vincent**

I can clearly hear it now, Brian, thank you for doing that.

(Laughing)

**Brian Crecente**

What that is, is those are the the little BeatBits, which are these little, again they look like little record album covers. And you put them, you attach them on the back of these, sort of these two wings, these two walls that are on either side and behind your character. And when you scan your character in with the app, it both recognizes your minifigure, but it also recognizes those BeatBits. And those BeatBits (sounds of music in background) are the things that you're using, you're sort of tapping on while the music's playing, to have a direct impact on the music video you're creating. And so you want to like swap those out and switch them up so that you can kind of have a lot of fun with them.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, it's basically LEGO tiles. And it kind of reminds me of what the behavior tiles did in, you know, the WeDo programming language, we're kind of geeking out here about LEGO Universe, which we recently talked about. But they also had these behaviors you could throw on, you know, these LEGO creations. And that's kind of the same concept, a little bit, is you click on, you know, you put up your tiles, the BeatBits you want to use, and then in the app, you can actually click on them and they create a certain movement, or a certain performance, or a certain behavior. It's pretty cool how that works.

(Extract from LEGO VIDIYO commercial)

## Commercial Voiceover

LEGO VIDIYO is powered by physical LEGO tiles called BeatBits, the bits unlock powerful special effects, adding sounds, props, dance moves, and wild video effects while you record.

### Brian Crecente

It's worth mentioning what some of these effects do. Like you click on one, it turns...you can have up to three major band members, but then you can also have like a backup band. And so you sort of focus on which band member you want to control, and some of these effects affect just that one band member, some of them will affect everybody. But it'll do things like turn them into a chicken, or at least into a person wearing a chicken suit, or wrap them in, you know, so they look like a mummy, or maybe a tornado will go through. And remember all this is happening in the real world when you're looking through your screen. The other thing that's kind of cool is you can do different sizes - so you can do sort of a minifigure size, so it's like literally playing on whatever table that you happen to be sitting in front of. Or you could do something that's like person-size, or you could do this giant size. So like you can go out to your backyard and have these giant minifigures dancing around.

### Ethan Vincent

Talk about scale. Pretty interesting.

### Brian Crecente

Yeah, it's cool.

### Ethan Vincent

(Inaudible) What's going on?

### Brian Crecente

Yeah, and I think the end goal is essentially you're creating a music video. Like that's really what this is about.

### Ethan Vincent

And so yeah, when you click on the music video thing, you can hear basically your performance. (Music video playing) Whoa, whoa, here it's going. So this is the music video I created and obviously can't see it. But basically the minifigures they dance and with every tile you press, the music is kind of altered, and it's kind of run through these filters. And then, you know, you can be like a mummy and it like levitates and you can throw like tomatoes at them. It's very interactive, and lots of things are happening, so I see this as kind of a fun interactive thing, and of course, when it goes into the HipHop Robot BeatBoxing mode, the beakdance is very cool.

**Brian Crecente**

And like a huge library.

**Ethan Vincent**

Totally.

**Brian Crecente**

It's like really good music.

**Ethan Vincent**

Totally. It's basically what's in the charts right now, which is kind of fascinating to think about just the task of getting all that music to work on your app and to be able to use it with the LEGO brand. Pretty fascinating that they got this app to be what it is, again, another testament of how strong the LEGO brand is and be able to lure these great artists and this great label to collaborate with them, you know?

## **Chapter 4: Conversation with William Thorogood – 18:05**

**Ethan Vincent**

So we talked to Julia Goldin, and she of course gave us the big picture behind VIDIYO and how it fits into the LEGO Group's desire to help fuel creativity. But we also spoke with William Thorogood, who is the vice president and executive producer of LEGO VIDIYO, about how the game was created, and basically how it started with this kind of early exploration of the music opportunity space and began what I believe, Brian, is like three-and-a-half years ago. And so he, you know, talks to us about VIDIYO, its creation, and what the future holds. So let's listen to that conversation.

(Music)

**Brian Crecente**

So where did the idea for VIDIYO first come from? Was this something that was inspired by some of the earlier work that the LEGO Group has done on interactive toys and music?

**William Thorogood**

The idea for LEGO VIDIYO came really through quite a long exploration of opportunities around how we can bring two creative systems together. So on the one hand, we have a creative system in play in the LEGO brick - every brick that's ever been made can be combined together in a new way to create anything you can imagine. And on the other side, you have the system of music - which is ultimately a number of notes, tones effects, that you can blend in an infinite number of ways to create all music. So there's a lot of

similarities between these two creative systems. And we were pretty convinced that there must be a way to bring them together. And I think we started off really exploring music, and how we could bring LEGO play and music together in a very, very broad opportunity space exploration. Trying to understand how big these two systems were, and really what those opportunities could be. And it actually took quite a while before we ended up with the idea that eventually became LEGO VIDIYO.

### **Brian Crecente**

Now on the on the LEGO Group side, there are obviously a lot of augmented reality experiences out there that the LEGO Group has either released or experimented with. So you have things like, Life of George and some of the other titles. I'm curious how you looked at those experiences when you were messing around with AR, in particular, Hidden Side, which is obviously an activeproduct. How did those sort of things influence the design of VIDIYO?

### **William Thorogood**

I mean, they obviously, from a technology point-of-view and a development point-of-view, had a huge influence. But I think we should probably just sort of take a step back and really think about VIDIYO, as a music video-maker, was was a concept based around the play experience more than the technology. And actually, what we discovered was to bring this experience to life, what we needed to do was to take from these these experiences that you already mentioned, these augmented reality play experiences, like Life of George, like Hidden Side, that we'd been experimenting with. And so we've got this technology to a level where actually it could be brought into this great play experience that had been conceived by the team. And I think that was hugely valuable for us. Because I think if we hadn't had those sort of forefathers, if you like, of augmented reality within within the company, it would have been much harder to realize this vision of minifigures coming to life in your world, and you interacting with them to make really appealing music videos in a really fun, playful way, because it absolutely relies on the technology, but the technology wasn't the starting point in itself.

### **Brian Crecente**

So you...it's interesting, there's obviously...there's so many things that the LEGO Group could have done. Why did you all settle on a music video creator, specifically?

### **William Thorogood**

it was a sort of a long explorative process around where we could go within the music space. And ultimately, it came down to one Monday morning, one of the team [Morgan James Walker] had...he had an idea over the weekend, and he just kind of, we sat down and had a coffee and he pitched this idea of: wouldn't it be great if you could bring your minifigures to life, in augmented reality, in your room as a band? So he was taking the idea of creating a band and making music videos with these unique characters. That was the

kind of core of the idea and it just, it felt right from that first pitch. And he actually has a one-page pitch. And it's very similar to where we've ended up. It's really, really similar as a concept. Because the core of the idea just felt right, of all of the things we we're exploring, it tied everything together in exactly the way we were looking for. And it had that magical element of never seeing anything like this before. I think, you know, every time you show this experience to a child, this is the first time they've ever seen a LEGO minifigure, it's plastic and it's in front of them, and then five seconds later, is their size in their house. So it's a really magical moment seeing these characters come to life as a real moving, dancing, performing characters that you get to interact with and control and dance alongside and interact within ways that have not been possible before. So I think that part of the experience felt really magical, and really new. And it was from that point on that was clear that that was the core of that experience and how we kind of took our explorations to where we could go from that core.

**Brian Crecente**

So how long was the sort of development the active development of this game? How long did that take? And were there any particular challenges you faced in trying to bring this idea to life?

**William Thorogood**

Yeah, so we've been exploring the music opportunity space for, I guess we started that maybe three-and-a-half years ago. But the first sort of meeting that we had between the LEGO Group and Universal Music Group was in 2018 - Abbey Road Studios. So that's kind of where we have the core of this idea, and we knew that we would have to find a music industry partner to bring this to life. And start to explore this concept together with. So that was 2018. Abbey Road Studios, obviously, that sort of iconic location to kick the project off. And it's been a really exciting journey from that point to get to where we are today. Hugely challenging. You know, there's a lot of things we're doing that we've never tried before as a company. And a lot of things, you can imagine from a technology point-of-view that we're trying to combine together, which is technically quite demanding on the devices that we're running on. And obviously, we've got a...incredible work done by our technical teams to bring this to life.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, William, I was gonna ask you, so were there any particular things that you ended up having to cut either for time or size or any other reasons that you can talk about?

**William Thorogood**

There are plenty of things that we've cut out, but I can't go into too much detail, because we've cut them out for launch (laughs). There are obviously certain things that we have in the backlog, in the roadmap for where this can go into the future that we originally would have would have liked to include at the launch phase, but for various technical reasons, we

haven't solved all of those challenges yet. But I think what you'll see is we've built a platform, based on this core idea of music video-making, that we feel has got plenty of space to expand over time. As we see what our users doing, I think this is now a really exciting phase. Because we have this great music video-making platform within LEGO VIDIYO. And we have a feeling of what people are going to do with that. But we don't actually know. We're now passing it into the hands of kids all over the world, to see what they will do with it. And we're already seeing things that we didn't expect and really creative video content being produced that we hadn't dreamed of. So actually seeing where users are going to take this over the coming months and years is extremely exciting for us. And obviously, we need to make sure we can follow, follow along with them, follow what they need, follow what they're missing, and make sure we're adding features and adding the functionality that they're expecting.

### **Brian Crecente**

So do you, I know that there is a lot of work that has been put into this notion of fluid play, the idea of sort of being able to effortlessly shift between the physical and the digital. How do you think that this particular app is going to play into that? Do you think it's sort of pushing that envelope forward?

### **William Thorogood**

I do think it is. I mean, the idea behind VIDIYO really, is to have this perfect blend of these two worlds. You have the magic of the physical coming to life in the digital world. But the augmented reality layer means that the digital layer is on top of your real physical world as well, so you have that really nice blend, as you said, that fluid play that we talked about quite a lot at the company. The other thing we saw that's really interesting is obviously the BeatBit tiles that you use to control and interact with the music video. We initially thought that those could probably just be a digital component. It's digital buttons on the screen once you've scanned them in. And it really lost a lot of value if we did that. For the kids we've been speaking to, the physicality of the BeatBit tiles is really important for a few reasons. One is because you have this sort of physical collection. Now for me, and I guess you guys as well, that physical music collection is not new. Whether it's CDs, cassette tapes, vinyl. Yeah, we have physical collections of music. That's a real novelty for children, and the sort of BeatBit tiles are a bit like that vinyl collection. So actually, you can see in the back of the BeatBoxes, there's a rack to store your collection of BeatBits in. And it's just like rifling through a drawer of old vinyl records, and it kind of brings back some quite nostalgic memories for those of us old enough to have done that before. But for kids this is really new and it's really exciting. And it suddenly adds a lot of value to these tiles. You can also more easily show them off, they have a lot of schoolyard credibility, I guess you got this value of these physical tiles that you can show off and you can trade with your friends if you get duplicates. And you've also got the physical building element on the back of the BeatBoxes as well. So on the backplate there's a space for personalization and decoration and that's for the kids that we've been talking to throughout the development phase. That's really important because it's a place to, you know, physically express yourself

creatively on the boxes, on the BeatBoxes that you're able to do in the digital world throughout the music video creation in the app experience. But obviously, you're not allowed to be on the screen, you know, you're not allowed screen time all the time as a child, you might not be allowed to have your phone at your friend's house or at school, but you can always take the physical product as well, so you can show off your creativity in that way. So we have this real blend of creative expression, both through a really simple physical building experience, right through to music video creation, and kind of everything in between.

**Brian Crecente**

So why a party llama?

**William Thorogood**

(Laughs) I wish there was a really clever answer to this question. But we just fell in love with him, to be honest. He was one of the enormous range of concept characters that we were working on. And everybody just fell in love with this llama guy who was just fun and just crazy and lighthearted and had...I think it was the middle of winter as well, so he had this kind of tropical, summery vibe, and I dunno, I think he feels like the sort of character that the world needs right now. Just something lighthearted, and fun, and summery. And I think, you know, within the team, there was a huge amount of love for this character, but also every time we showed it to kids, he pops up, he pops up as this kind of fun character, and everyone just sort of smiles. And I think, that's what we want. We want someone that people just smile at and think is kind of funny and charming at the same time.

**Brian Crecente**

So I know that there's obviously there's got to be a ton of hoops that have to be jumped through in terms of licensing for all this music. How hard was it to get, not just the rights to the music, but get the rights to sort of do things with the music, like introduce sounds on top of that music? Was that a tough hurdle to clear?

**William Thorogood**

This is absolutely why we needed a partner like Universal Music Group. This is all the work that they've been doing together with us, together with artists, together with publishers in order to clear all those rights. So we've worked very, very closely with them, their legal teams to make sure that we have access to these tracks. And that's why we've had...this is a true partnership, yeah we've been working on developing this together. And then from the music industry side, to deal with all the complexities that you can imagine exists around licensing certain tracks for the experience, and obviously us from the toy development side.



### **Brian Crecente**

Obviously, a big part of any app really nowadays is the ability to share and social channels. I believe right now it looks like all that sharing is happening internally. Are there any thoughts? Or what are your thoughts about potentially allowing these videos to be shared to other platforms like TikTok or Twitter or Instagram?

### **William Thorogood**

Yeah, I think it's a really important question because at the heart of everything we do, as the LEGO Group, is safety. Now, it's always been that way with with physical product and it will remain that way as we move into a digital world, and that's absolutely key for us. When we're trying to build an app like LEGO VIDIYO, and trying to build in a social experience in there, we absolutely have to make sure that's a safe experience. So yes, you can, after you've created your videos, you do have the ability to share them within the feed. However, to do that they all have to go through a moderation process. So we absolutely want to make sure that there's nothing in there that's either harmful for children or not appropriate, or the children have accidentally shared something they shouldn't. So there'll be no personally identifiable information (inaudible) at all. If there's any faces or anything like that, it won't pass through moderation. You can comment on videos, but only in emoji form, which sounds really childish. It turns out it's really fun (laughs). It's a really great way just to add comments on videos, it's actually pretty amusing. And you can tag but you can only tag with sort of predefined hashtags as well. So it is very, very highly curated and moderated because we absolutely have to make sure it's a safe space for children. And I think the safety goes in terms of what children want. When we speak to kids in this sort of seven, eight, nine, ten-year-old age bracket, they're very aware that there are some pretty questionable dark places on the internet, and there's some things that they should be worried about, and things that they should be concerned about when they are online. And they really appreciate that there's a place they can just not worry about. You know, everything's safe here, this is good. Likewise, parents, they're really looking for safe spaces for children online. So this is a great first step for them to have that safe experience within this closed ecosystem.

### **Ethan Vincent**

So yeah, you've you've indicated that, you know, this is going to be something that evolves. You know, are there any plans that you can talk about? Anything seasonal or anything that's going to happen? New sets that they will come with? Like, what will be kind of the general approach? Or will you be using the long tail of the app of this game?

### **William Thorogood**

Yeah, I mean, I can't talk specifics because I don't wanna give too much away at this stage, but we will have, as you can imagine, fairly regular updates within the app itself. So be new music, new characters and accessories in the store. And as we go through the year cycle, there'll be new products appearing later in the year as well. So we'll have sort of digital

updates more regularly, and then an update on, or refresh on the physical portfolio less frequently. But as you can probably expect, from a LEGO product offer, there will be new physical products as well, later in the year. And then obviously, as we're going through the app updates, we'll try to be understanding exactly what the creators within the app are doing. Are there certain features that they really want to see? Are there things that we can we can improve on? Are there functionalities that are missing? So all of those things we're going to be looking at together with the community to try and understand how we can continuously make the digital experience better for them.

**Brian Crecente**

So is this, I know when you first announced that you were partnering up, the LEGO Group was partnering up with Universal Music Group, there was a lot of excitement. I'm curious, is this the sole product of that? Or will there be other things, that over time, that you'll be doing together?

**William Thorogood**

So this is the first collaboration, or first output of the collaboration and partnership that we have, with the Universal Music Group. As we announced, I guess it was last April we announced the partnership. We're looking at opportunities for the future together. So this is all we have in the pipe for now. And all I can talk about for now, but I certainly won't rule out anything for the future. I think we have a lot of very common ground as companies, and we have a lot of exciting opportunities that we're looking into. But unfortunately, I can't go into too many details with any of these future plans just yet.

**Brian Crecente**

Excellent. Well, thank you so much, Will, for joining us. I really appreciate it. It was a lot of fun talking about this.

**William Thorogood**

Well, thanks for having me. It's been a lot of fun. I've enjoyed talking a little bit about LEGO VIDIYO. I can't wait to see what everyone thinks of it in the future.

**Ethan Vincent**

Thanks, Will.

**William Thorogood**

Thanks.

## Chapter 5: Introducing Our LEGO Stories Podcast – 36:49

Ethan Vincent

Okay, quick sidebar here before we get back to the podcast. You can hear more about LEGO VIDIYO and some of the other great stories surrounding the genesis and philosophy of creating this brand new LEGO toy, in the newly launched podcast series, Our LEGO Stories, hosted by LEGO team members, Julie Foster and Loren Shuster. The first episode titled "Masters of Reinvention" features three guests who helped bring VIDIYO to life and their insights and stories surrounding that experience. Take a listen. And now back to the wrap-up.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions – 37:23

(Music)

Ethan Vincent

Well, Brian, that was a cool conversation, William's a fun guy, and just to hear the joy that exists for this product and kind of the love and care that was put into it is pretty fascinating. I think about this toy in these times as a real kind of gift to some parents, too, especially in this time where kids are so attached to their devices. And, you know, this is just how it is right now. And give them something that can, you know, help them go outside and be creative, but also still have their music and still have fun and also kind of be social and share it and do different things. I think this is a really cool moment that the LEGO Group chose to come out with this. And to be a little bit more playful with their brand in a fluid play kind of setting, where I think more than you can imagine, parents are going to be very happy about this coming out when it did, you know?

Brian Crecente

Yeah, no, I think you're right. And the fluid play aspect, I'm always fascinated with how the LEGO Group keeps pushing on that. Hidden Side was very cool with its ability to sort of hunt for ghosts in your LEGO themed sets, and huge fan of LEGO Super Mario and I think this is another neat idea. What I'm actually really anticipating is where this goes. So this is sort of, in my mind, this is like the jumping off point, and so, you know, Will wouldn't commit to what they're going to do in the future, but I asked him about this idea of doing things like mashups, which, boy, if they could get the permission from the label to do that, and allow you to sort of mash songs together while creating a music video, that would be so cool. I'd love to see that. The other thing I'm really looking forward to is what else the LEGO Group does in the music space. So you know, it's clear that VIDIYO is not the endpoint, it's the starting point. So I'm really looking forward to their partnership with Universal Music Group and where that leads everybody.

## Bits N' Bricks: Credits – 39:33

### Ethan Vincent

Bits N' Bricks is made possible by LEGO Games. Our producer is Ronny Scherer. Your hosts are Brian Crecente and Ethan Vincent. Episode producing and editing by Ethan Vincent. Writing by Brian Crecente. Mixing and sound design by Dan Carlisle. Music from the VIDIYO app featuring the song Shake by L.L.A.M.A, Ne-Yo and Carmen DeLeon. Additional music by Peter Priemer and Henrik Lindstrand from the award-winning game LEGO Builder's Journey, which you can play on Apple Arcade today.

We'd like to thank our participants Julia Goldin and William Thorogood. We'd also like to acknowledge the entire LEGO Games team. For questions and comments write us at [bitsnbricks@LEGO.com](mailto:bitsnbricks@LEGO.com). And as always, stay tuned for more episodes of Bits N' Bricks.

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