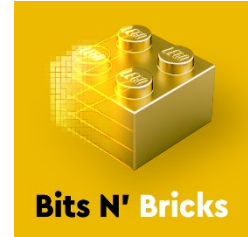


Transcript

Bits N' Bricks Season 1 Episode 0: Introduction



Prologue – 00:00

Bjarne Tveskov

It's kind of like digital clay, it's something you can create anything out of: The LEGO idea is simply too strong to be kept down. No matter what you do.

(LEGO Star Wars video game commercial)

Jeremy Pardon

I don't think the majority of us really had any clue how big this was gonna be.

Claude Aebersold

They basically responded that they don't work with outside people, please go away. You know, that was pretty much a, leave us alone, kind of approach they had, but I knew we had a great thing.

Sam Coates

We fundamentally changed what a LEGO experience was-

Ryan Seabury

-and it sorta just happened almost overnight. Suddenly it was canceled, like whoa.

Anders Holm

Imagine that you are sitting in your living room on the carpet with just a pile of bricks in front of you, and then start building essentially, and start making your game.

Sean McEvoy

It's a huge milestone. All of the work that's come before us has led to this moment, but we're really poised for something big.

Bits N' Bricks Intro – 01:08

(Introduction music)

Ethan Vincent

Hey, Brian.

Brian Crecente

Hey, Ethan.

Ethan Vincent

So here it is - our introduction episode to the Bits N' Bricks podcast. We just heard some of the great quotes from a variety of people we interviewed along the way as a bit of a teaser, but, Brian, what is Bits N' Bricks? Please tell me.

Brian Crecente

Of course. Bits N' Bricks is a regular podcast that's going to dive into the history of the LEGO Group's decade long work in digital play, unearthing wonderful stories, conversations with creators and a wealth of valuable insight. You and I, of course, will be exploring innovation at the LEGO Group through the lens of games. And we're going to examine the past and present to learn and better understand the possible future scenarios for digital play.

Ethan Vincent

That sounded lovely, Brian, almost like it was written by an incredible writer.

Brian Crecente

I don't know about incredible.

(laughter)

Ethan Vincent

But I guess my question would be what is it really? That is nice, but what is Bits N' Bricks?

Brian Crecente

What is it really? Yeah. I mean, what it is really is an opportunity for myself, a journalist, and you a documentarian to spend, gosh, it's been, I think, 14 months now.

Ethan

Yeah.

Brian Crecente

Digging into the nitty gritty and sort of the hidden secrets and wonderful stories of LEGO Games, which goes back 25 years.

Ethan Vincent

Yes. That's the occasion, isn't it? 25 years of LEGO Games. Kind of remarkable if you think about it.

Brian Crecente

Yeah. And our work has been, if nothing else, it's been incredibly fascinating. We've so far talked to more than 120 people. We've done research on 275 people and we've looked into more than 50 games, and there were a lot more than 50 games that LEGO Games has come out with, but so far we've been able to dig into 50 of them.

Ethan Vincent

Yeah. Yeah. And I've probably accumulated, you know, over 11 terabytes or so of footage, audio interviews and all kinds of other assets related to LEGO games, kind of going back dating to, I want to say 2008, at the beginning of LEGO Universe, that's where I had my first run in with the LEGO Group, and kind of followed the behind the scenes of the creation of that game, which was fascinating. There's just a treasure trove to pull from, and that's been really cool to kind of see this history unfold and to reconnect with Ronny Scherer, the producer of the series who really has this, I would say, passionate affection for all things history and it's particularly LEGO history. He knows his stuff and he was very keen on us compiling and researching this.

Brian Crecente

Yeah. You know, it's been amazing. We started work on this in 2019 in September. Obviously we both have different histories going back to our relationship with the LEGO Group, but our research dates all the way back to the mid-nineties, where we looked at some really early stuff, even pre the first LEGO game, which was Fun to Build, by the way. And what's so cool about this is that through this process we've both essentially become LEGO game experts, which is crazy, right? And-

Ethan Vincent

It is.

Brian Crecente

-all this research we've been putting together isn't just being used to help us create this public podcast, but they've actually taken all of the written material, and the recordings, and some of the images, and even physical objects we've collected. And now they all reside at the LEGO Group archives which is part of the LEGO Idea House, which I think is fascinating.

Ethan Vincent

Yeah. Tine Froberg Mortensen is the records manager with the LEGO Group and she runs the archives there, which, you know, isn't available to the public, just for a select people internally at the LEGO Group, but she told me that the role of the archives is of course to collect, preserve and share the history and evolution of the LEGO Group. And they have all kind of things, products, prototypes, machinery, documents, press clippings, and much more...and it's literally like 4,5 km of shelf space in and around Billund, Denmark. And on the one side it's like the archives of all the LEGO products that have launched. And on the other side, it's like the non-released or non-launched assets. And, I guess in my mind's eye I always envisioned like this, you know, basement with this shelving on the left and right, spanning into eternity, much like Raiders of the Lost Ark, just this massive warehouse -

Brian Crecente

Wait, are you telling me that all of our stuff is in a box that says, do not open, and it's sort of maybe 4,000 rows back on the left?

Ethan Vincent

Maybe or like we talked about in our episode on fluid play, it could be buried somewhere between the jars of pig's feet that are in the shelves, you know?

(laughter)

Ethan Vincent

But, Brian, what would you say was your favorite moment so far when you look at these 14 months in compiling LEGO game's history?

Brian Crecente

Man, there are so many things, and some things that we still can't really talk about, I can say that I'm incredibly excited for our introductory episode in this podcast, which is about Minecraft and the relationship, that I think a lot of people weren't aware of, between the company that made Minecraft, which was Mojang, and between the LEGO Group and some of the efforts they had in trying to come up with some new sort of game. I love that. I have a lot more, but I'm curious to, what do you have, like a top one, that's your favorite moment?

Ethan Vincent

Yeah, for me I think it's probably the interviews I was able to conduct in person with members of the Strategic Product Unit Darwin, which is this division within the LEGO Group in the later half of the nineties that was really there to tackle the physical to digital transition, or transformation revolution, or whatever you want to call it. And over the summer, I was able to extensively interview some of the early pioneers that were on that project and hearing firsthand of their experiences in creating, really the first kind of CGI

LEGO movie, and then just cold- pitching it to the LEGO Group, which really kind of started that whole effort to bring the physical to the digital space. Yeah, it was amazing, and I look forward to that episode as well.

Brian Crecente

Yeah, and there's so much more we're going to be talking about over the course of this podcast series as well. We'll be talking about LEGO Island, we'll be talking about some of the philosophy behind some game design choices, and systems that were created for LEGO Universe, and the 25th anniversary and its importance, and LEGO Builder's Journey. There's just a lot of interesting stuff that'll be coming up.

Ethan Vincent

Including the blockbusters, right? You know, LEGO Star Wars, some of these amazing games that really did bring, I would say gaming with LEGO bricks and characters from the LEGO Group into the living rooms of a lot of people. And I think what's remarkable is that the LEGO Group really wanted us to look at this, and dive deep like we like to do, but also not be afraid to maybe find or unearth some things that are maybe not that easy to look at. You know, sometimes in your history or your personal history, we'll find things where you might have some regrets or you might've made some mistakes and I've just...man, I've just found it really refreshing to see the energy with which the LEGO Group takes us in and says, yeah, you know what? We need to change this. We need to do better. That to me was also kind of a really cool insight.

Brian Crecente

Yeah, I think it's amazing that they are allowing this level of transparency to get out there. The reality is, this is a podcast that's been available to employees of the LEGO Group for quite a while now, but they're open to everybody taking a listen to this podcast and hearing the same sort of things they hear because they know that there are lessons to be learned in history. And those lessons can only come if you're completely honest about what happened and why it happened. So, there's a lot here and I think it's amazing and I hope that everybody finds it as interesting as we did.

Ethan Vincent

I sure hope so. And I think with that, we should probably end this little introduction, don't you think?

Brian Crecente

Yes, absolutely.

Ethan Vincent

Well, it's time to say goodbye, Brian.

Brian Crecente

M.I.C. See you real soon.

(laughter)

Ethan Vincent

Ciao.

Brian Crecente

Bye, bye.

Bits N' Bricks: Credits – 09:39

Ethan Vincent

Bits N' Bricks is made possible by LEGO Games. Our producer is Ronny Scherer. Your hosts are Ethan Vincent and Brian Crecente. Episode producing and editing by Ethan Vincent. Writing by Brian Crecente. Original music, sound design and mixing by Peter Priemer. Voices and participants in the introduction trailer are Bjarne Tveskov; Jeremy Pardon; Claude Aebersold; Sam Coates; Ryan Seabury; Anders Holm; and Sean McEvoy. We'd also like to acknowledge the entire LEGO games' team as well as the great folks at the LEGO Idea House for their support. For questions and comments email us at bitsnbricks@LEGO.com and as always stay tuned for more episodes of Bits N' Bricks.

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