

How Gaming Helps Shape LEGO® Star Wars™ Holiday Special

The LEGO® Star Wars™ Holiday Special was — in some ways — shaped by the upcoming game LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga and other LEGO video game elements, the movie's director said in a recent episode of podcast Bits N' Bricks.

Director Ken Cunningham mentioned the upcoming game while discussing how the movie, which hit Disney+ in November, came about.

"I was working on the Jurassic series at the time and had a meeting actually with my head of production, and he said that we were being looked at to do some Star Wars content," he said. "They wanted to really see if we could hit that sort of cinematic Star Wars look. And so, we dug in on that. I looked really strongly at the films and actually, at the time, the trailer for the new game that's coming out in the new year.

"We looked at the quality of that, which was really awesome. And we just sort of pushed as hard as we could, delivered a look I was pretty satisfied with, and apparently, so was Lucasfilm because we got the gig."

A team of more than 100 at Atomic Cartoons worked on the film, which Cunningham described as a "rip-roaring time romp through all the Star Wars fan-favorite moments."

Cunningham also noted that while the now infamous 1978 Star Wars holiday special was a "touchstone" for this film, it wasn't meant to be a starting point. What that means is that while you'll find plenty of references — like Life Day and Chewbacca dad Itchy — you won't find any of the sometimes-artless musical numbers. Instead, the film tells a wholly original tale peopled by the iconic figures of both the original and more modern films.

"We've got the Wookiees, we've got Itchy, but there's not a ton in there that we really picked up on," he said. "And that was by choice. It's really more modern, centered around Rey and Finn."

Cunningham also noted how the group at Atomic used LEGO Digital Designer — a program that initially was born of a video game — to create models using digital LEGO bricks, which are then brought into the studio's software system and used to help make the actual animation.

"They're basically taking virtual digitized LEGO bricks and clicking them together and putting the pieces together to make something," he said. "I mean, frequently they'll be working off an image from our design team, but the design team too will be doing the same thing. So as they're kind of roughing together concepts for the art director and I to look at, they'll also be working in Digital Designer and building these quick little things and

then maybe pull them into Photoshop and do a quick paint-over on them to flesh the idea out."

While the LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special was born of the hard work and creativity of Cunningham and the rest of the team at Atomic Cartoons, the history of LEGO video games and the rules they established and evolved for the look, motion, and tone of minifigures clearly had an impact as well.

Explore more

In order of appearance

[The LEGO Wars Holiday Special](#) (2020) Official page

[LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga](#) (2020) Official page

[The Star Wars Holiday Special](#) (1978) Wikipedia entry

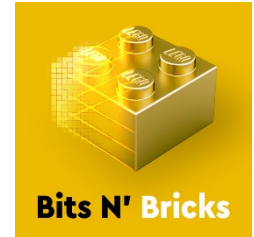
[LEGO Digital Designer](#) (2019) Wikipedia entry

[Star Wars' infamous Holiday Special, explained](#) (2017) YouTube video

Transcript

Bits N' Bricks Season 1 Holiday Special

December 23 2020 · 0:33:03



Bits N' Bricks: Introduction – 00:00

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, as well as seasoned studios who've all tackled the creation of video games for one of the most popular and respected toy companies in the world - The LEGO Group.

(Introduction music)

(Christmas bells jingling)

Chapter 1: Holiday Talk – 00:32

Ethan Vincent

Well hello, Brian.

Brian Crecente

Hey, how's it going?

(Fire crackles in background)

Ethan Vincent

It is going very well as you can tell, because we are both in our Christmas sweaters right next to the fire, all cozy and we are just getting ready for the holidays here, aren't we?

Brian Crecente

Yes. And I want to describe my ugly holiday sweater 'cause I'm so proud of it. It's a unicorn...of course, and it has little lights that light up and the unicorn is...what's a nice way of putting this...it is extruding pieces of candy. Violently.

(Laughter)

Ethan Vincent

I see. I see. It's having that holiday overload moment, right. Where it's just too much.

Brian Crecente

Too much, too much holiday sweets.

Ethan Vincent

Yes. Do you have traditions and stuff? Any favorite movies or things that you watch to kind of get ready for the holiday season?

Brian Crecente

Yeah, totally. Yeah, we...man, we are huge fans of the movie Elf, of course.

Ethan Vincent

Oh, we love Elf, yeah.

Brian Crecente

And I think a lot of people, especially our generation, love A Christmas Story, which is fantastic. And I actually recently decided I really wanted to go back and watch The Grinch with...

Ethan Vincent

Jim Carrey or?

Brian Crecente

Yeah, with Jim Carrey, which I think is a classic, he's so great in that movie. I love it. So what about you? Do you have things that you watch?

Ethan Vincent

Oh yeah. We love Elf as well. I mean, I love the scene where he's getting the candy off the subway and chewing gum. That's old, that's always gets a great laugh and also how he answers the phone. It's just so great. There's so many wonderful moments and it never goes old. I mean, it's one of those fun Christmas evergreen movies, for sure.

Brian Crecente

Yes. You know what movie we can't watch? Well it's hard to watch. That is the Star Wars Christmas special. Do you remember that?

Ethan Vincent

Yes, I do remember that. It's funny how that's this cultural phenomenon and this bootleg that showed up out of nowhere and now you see reference to it everywhere. But boy, was that a crazy kind of thing. Have you ever actually watched the whole thing?

Brian Crecente

Yes, well I watched it when I was a kid, and at the time, loved it. I've gone back and watched it and yeah, it's...oof, it's painful.

Ethan Vincent

It just doesn't make sense sometimes too, right? Where it just jumps all over and does all kinds of crazy things, but it was in that really interesting period, right after Star Wars went huge, not huge enough to be a cult classic and to be unattainable, and someone had the idea of this Christmas variety show, right, that's like, Hey, let's make it fun. You know, sing and dance and bring in the storm troopers.

Brian Crecente

Yeah. And celebrate Life Day, which was this sort of, I guess, generically created holiday, which has, pardon the pun, taken on a life of its own.

Ethan Vincent

Yes. Well, we have a movie that we are looking at, The LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special, is what it's called, which is a holiday special. And you know, that was funny because that was the first thought I have is like, wow, this is probably in reference to the Star Wars tv holiday special. So, have you seen the LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special trailer?

Brian Crecente

I have. Yeah, and it's amazing. I also watched the movie of course.

Ethan Vincent

Yes. Yes, I have too, and it's quite fun. I enjoyed it a lot and I think it's one of those things that's going to be fun to watch with the kids and get ready for the holidays. So let's take a listen to that trailer.

Brian Crecente

Yes.

Chapter 2: LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special – 04:05

(LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special trailer)

Ethan Vincent

Yeah, so Brian, it's this story, that's all over the place. A fun little idea here where we're following Rey and she gets to jump into, by the means of, some portal magic into all the episodes and see all the great Jedi masters and kind of learn from them. It's a fun little mashup, of sorts, with all kinds of little references and insiders that I thought was cool.

Brian Crecente

Yeah, and it's also about the celebration of Life Day, but more importantly, at least for us I think, Ethan, is that when you look at something like this, you can't help but think about all of those LEGO video games and in particular, the original LEGO Star Wars game, which really sort of set the look and the tone for these sorts of endeavors.

Ethan Vincent

Yes, and it's so crazy how we do that, right? I can't look at anything LEGO digital anymore without thinking of the early days and just the effort it takes to get the polygons to look that way, and the kind of the philosophy and the rules behind how a Minifig should move. I mean, there's just so much that goes into these things, and both of us familiar with the LEGO Group also knows how much is important on their end. They take great pride in being as close as possible to the physical brick, which I think is great.

Brian Crecente

Yeah, it's very cool and the representation of the brick in digital form is obviously a huge theme of our podcast, which explains a little bit, I guess, about why that's what we're talking about this episode.

Ethan Vincent

Yep. And we reached out to the director, Ken Cunningham, and we asked him all things related to the movie and how it came together. So let's take a listen to that and enjoy.

Chapter 3: Conversation with Ken Cunningham – 06:41

Ethan Vincent

Welcome to our little podcast, Ken.

Ken Cunningham

Hey, thanks very much.

Ethan Vincent

Why don't you go ahead and just introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about you and your background. We'd love to get to know you a little bit and how you got to this point to be able to direct this fun animated, holiday special.

(Ken Cunningham laughs)

Ken Cunningham

I guess, like basically, I've started directing many, many, many years ago sort of starting in preschool. I've been at Atomic Cartoons for about four years now, prior to that, I was living

in Toronto and directing at a number of different studios there, made the move to Vancouver, basically was hired by Atomic Cartoons to move out, came out, we landed some LEGO content...I've been doing that for several years now, starting on Jurassic World - did about four specials on a series, have done some Marvel content; Spider-Man and Avengers. And the latest project is the Star Wars Holiday Special, which has totally been a geeky dream-come-true for me being a Star Wars kid from the seventies. And I sort of wonder if this is the high point of my career really.

(Laughter)

Ethan Vincent

No, it's a fun special, it was great to watch. Did you start, kind of like all of us, playing with LEGO sets growing up? Or do you have a favorite kind of LEGO set that you grew up with or a certain period? What was that like for you in your childhood, I mean, your affinity for the LEGO Group?

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, no, totally. I mean back when I was a kid, it was sort of pre the LEGO sets per se or the licensed sets, you know, back when I was a kid, it was just a small box or a big box.

Ethan Vincent

Exactly.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, and I loved it, playing with that stuff was great. I've also kind of reacquainted myself with it, obviously working on this stuff, but also being a father of a 10-year-old and she loves LEGO bricks, so it's a kind of a connecting point for her and I. She's really big into the Harry Potter sets, we've got a few of those kicking around and obviously I'm doing the Star Wars stuff, so we've gotten a couple of Star Wars things, too.

Brian Crecente

Right, right.

Ken Cunningham

And then I've got my own stuff actually. I'm really big, actually right now, on their classic NASA stuff. So I've got the Saturn V, and I've got the Lunar Lander and I've got my eye, this Christmas, on the International Space Station.

Brian Crecente

So you, you obviously you've done a number of LEGO shorts and TV shows. When did you first hear about this idea of creating a LEGO Star Wars Special? How did that come about?

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, I was working on the Jurassic series at the time and it sort of came...well I had a meeting actually with my head of production and he said that we were being looked at to do some Star Wars content, that they wanted us to do a test, so we proceeded to do a test, which they wanted to really see if we could hit that sort of cinematic Star Wars look. And so we dug in on that, I looked really strongly at the films and actually, at the time, the trailer for the new game that's coming out in the new year. So we looked at the quality of that, which was really awesome. And we just sort of pushed as hard as we could, delivered a look I was pretty satisfied with, and apparently, so was Lucasfilm 'cause we got the gig.

Ethan Vincent

Wow. So, Ken, how would you pitch the movie? How would you describe the movie? How would you help viewers understand what this movie is about?

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, it's a rip-roaring time romp through like basically all the Star Wars, fan-favorite moments. We were focused on Rey, her journey to be comfortable being a Jedi Master. I had learned from all the other masters who've come before her. I mean really a lot of the motivation for the whole thing came from me, like I said earlier, being a Star Wars kid, like I was one of those kids that was, I think I was 10 when the first film came out, and I got my friends and I to go see it over and over, like I think I saw it probably 20 times in the theater during that first run, and we were allowed at that point, like, you know, like you could just go to the matinee showing and sit through like three showings.

Ethan Vincent

It's amazing.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, it was awesome.

Brian Crecente

Yeah. So I've got to ask, especially because you're of the generation, and I think Ethan and I both are, that the original Star Wars Holiday special came out, was there at any time where you were thinking, maybe we should recreate that with LEGO Minifigures, or maybe we should do like a little bit of a wink and a nod to that original special, or was it just something you'd never even thought of touching on?

(Ken Cunningham laughs)

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, that one's complicated.

(Laughter)

Ethan Vincent

I can imagine.

Ken Cunningham

I mean, it did but it was more just a touchstone rather than a starting point. I mean, and we have stuff in there that is definitely from it, like the Wookiees-

Brian Crecente

Right, yeah.

Ken Cunningham

-with Chewy's family...

Ethan Vincent

And Life Day, right?

Ken Cunningham

And Life Day, yes exactly. Well, an aired-on Life Day, I mean, it's sort of like, it's funny that that has sort of become, you know, cannon and become kind of a big fan-thing, really. That's the main connecting point. It's really more grounded in the more recent films and obviously like, you know, all that kind of key, iconic Star Wars moments.

Brian Crecente

Right.

Ken Cunningham

I mean, for me personally, again, I was probably 11 when that came out, and it was just at the time, it was like more Star Wars, you know? Like, I mean, it was a bit confusing, on the same level obviously, but at the same time I was like, wow, more Star Wars, like you know, I just take whatever I could get at that point.

Brian Crecente

That's a very nice way of putting it.

(Laughter)

Ken Cunningham

Yeah. I mean, it had that awesome Boba Fett cartoon, which was really, actually really cool.

Brian Crecente

Yeah, I think that's what's so funny, like as much as people like to sort of knock it, the reality is, I think an entire generation that watched that right around the time the movie had come out, loved it. Like you said, we weren't really...I was, I think eight, when it came out and I didn't look at it and think, Oh, this is terrible, this isn't canon. I just was like, Oh, this is great. Like you said, more Star Wars, but on TV.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, totally.

Brian Crecente

And so in that one, it's celebrating Life Day, you guys touch on Life Day. Did you manage to squeeze any sort of Easter eggs in there? Is there anything people should look out for or is Life Day really the only touch point?

Ken Cunningham

Oh, from the special, really that's kind of like touching point. I mean, we've got the Wookiees, we've got Itchy, but there's not a ton in there that we really picked up on. And that was by choice really. It's really a more modern...like it's centered around Rey and Finn.

Brian Crecente

Right.

Ethan Vincent

And is that fluidity, to be able to jump between the various Star Wars sagas, was that something that you think is kind of in sync with the video game to be released soon? Is this something that helps that in sense of like, you can jump into any kind of episode you want and play, and then leave, and that kind of thing? Do you think there's maybe an impetus there, or is that the origin or how do you interpret that?

Ken Cunningham

I wouldn't say it's the origin, but I think it definitely creates a strong connection. I mean, and that's the appeal of a game, right? Like you can jump into these narratives and experience some of that yourself. And this special kind of establishes that as a storytelling premise, you know? So yeah, absolutely, I think that can connect for sure.

Ethan Vincent

Yeah, I watched how my son plays with LEGO bricks and he throws everything together, so this idea that you can play with whatever you want, whenever you want, no matter what era the set is in, particularly when it relates to Star Wars and it gets more complex with all the episodes. So to me that was a very fun kind of interactive experience just to jump all around and have fun, you know show up in an elevator, show up on the lap of Luke, there's

some really fun little kind of insider things and fun little moments that you recreated. I thought it was really fun to watch those.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah. We had so much fun with that. I kept like commenting gleefully, like at various points in the production my little 10-year-old heart would be aflutter. I remember when I first was starting to do script work and I was working through the trench-run sequence and I was sort of drawing out shots and I had this really weird moment of déjà vu, like doing a little thumbnail of the classic down the trench with the X-wing coming to camera and just having this visceral memory of like drawing that when I was like 10 and 11, you know? Yeah, and then when I saw the board, when the board got pitched to me, you know, again, it was like, Ooh, wow, this is so awesome. You know, and then reviewing it in lighting, you know, it's like, Oh my gosh.

(Laughter)

Brian Crecente

Did you guys...I know that with the LEGO movie, the people over there were using a form of LEGO Digital Designer, I think they called it the Hollywood version, to sort of basically build out some of the things they needed to see what they would look like in LEGO brick form, were you guys doing anything like that, or what sort of tools were you using to create-

Ken Cunningham

Oh yeah, we absolutely use the LEGO Digital Designer. So to a certain extent, our designers are just putting digital models together from a huge library of bricks, but then we have to take that and ingest it into our systems. So it sort of comes into Maya, goes through all our surfacing tools so that it can interact with our lighting environment.

Brian Crecente

So, and just because I think there are a lot of people who aren't aware of LEGO Digital Designer, just so we can all picture this in our heads. You had designers who were essentially literally putting digital bricks together to build sets, it sounds like to some degree.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, essentially. I mean, they're basically taking virtual digitized LEGO bricks and clicking it together and putting the pieces together to make something. I mean, frequently they'll be working off an image from our design team, but the design team too will be doing the same thing. So as they're kind of roughing together concepts for the art director and I to look at, they'll also be working in Digital Designer and building these quick little things and then maybe pull them into Photoshop and do a quick paint-over on them to flush the idea out.

Brian Crecente

But is that...from my perspective, that seems so, in a very cool way, that seems so weird. Like, were you like, Wow, this is so bizarre that they're doing this (laughs).

Ken Cunningham

Yeah. No, I've been doing CG for a long time so it sort of seems natural, like we...like this weird disconnection, where you're working in a computer, like it's very much like nowadays, like there's very few kind of analog tools used in the digital animation process. Besides me scribbling on scripts, which even now I basically do on an iPad, there's very little paper, pen or tactile materials used anymore. I mean, that's sort of what I miss about the days when I worked in stop motion, is like there were physical sets and physical puppets and I could walk downstairs, and my DP would come into the set and we'd talk about where we were going to put the lights and you could reach out and move the puppet around or move the set pieces around against where the camera was sitting. But I mean, that's all digital now-

Brian Crecente

So if you had tried to do something like this using physical bricks and physical Minifigs would...I mean, obviously completely different thing, because it would have been stop motion in its truest form, but is that even possible, do you think today, with the size of these sets and the way that you guys implement both the bricks and the non-brick backdrops?

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, it would be extremely hard due to the scale of the actual Minifigs themselves versus like how big...I mean based on this, 'cause there's limitations to what we can do digitally based on memory size of a scene file. So, we can't just build on forever either. There's a memory limit to what we're allowed to do. So we have to early on when we're talking through logistics, usually when we're putting together the asset list and stuff, we sort of talk through what the applications of certain sets are and what we are going to build, and then I have to work with my storyboard artist to work within the framework of those limitations. I think like the real...to do true stop mode that would meet the level of the LEGO films, it's really more down to the small size of the Minifigs, and rigging that stuff up in the end, like the physical limits of the Minifigs themselves more than anything else.

Brian Crecente

I think what's fascinating, and I'm sure, Ethan, you probably have the same feelings about it, but it's interesting that you can trace back to the root of LEGO Digital Designer to basically everything, in terms of motion at least, that the LEGO Group and LEGO bricks are dealing with. So, LEGO Digital Designer is now sometimes used for actually designing sets; they use it for sometimes for instructions; they use it for video games; using it for movies. I think that's really fascinating, just that use.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, no, absolutely. I mean, it's cool, 'cause you can...anybody can download it off the internet, right?

Ethan Vincent

Oh yeah, and it's actually becoming something, too, where I feel like we're becoming more and more literate with it, in the sense that it's no longer this kind of clunky tool that struggles with polygon count, but I mean, even downloading on my laptop and playing it and using it, you become a little bit more fluid and versatile with it and it feels like building in this space is fine. That's something I don't think was happening 15 or 20 years ago, granted technology, but also just, I think the concept of doing it digitally wasn't really a thing.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, no, absolutely. And I mean, this is a thing we deal with in our industry where just the tools are constantly and constantly getting better. So, even like four or five years ago, like serious I worked on then...the technical limitations we were dealing with are all kind of like just blown out of the water at this point. So you're kind of constantly able to like...which is great for somebody like me...you're constantly able to kind of push the look of what you're doing, you know? And it just makes our ability to do more ambitious projects.

Ethan Vincent

So I want to talk a little bit about these rules. The LEGO Group has tons of rules and then you go back to doing LEGO Jurassic World, LEGO Marvel Spider-Man, so you come with all this experience working with the LEGO Group, and now you're throwing in Lucasfilm and you've got a huge IP and you've got a very strong brand with a lot of rules. How did you navigate that? Was there like daily handoffs? Did you have to get everything approved? How that working for you?

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, there's a heavy approval process. I mean, pretty much every asset goes in front of the LEGO Group. Less so, like Lucasfilm defers to them on a lot of that stuff, like on an asset level or, anything that's basically LEGO-brand related. And then on the Lucasfilm side, it's more...they're obviously...their main concern is the Star Wars brand. So you know, that's where a lot of that insight comes from. And then I just...we don't do with daily handoffs, but I do a weekly creative call, and we talk through...I basically come into the meeting with any questions I have or anything that I want to do and put forward and pitch to them. Any reactions to notes, you know, we just sort of hash through everything that is kind of most current to what we're doing in production on that week say.

Ethan Vincent

That's awesome. I think about just what it takes to pull this off, and one of the things that you talked about too, is this idea that the LEGO Group wants certain things to be very clear in how you represent the brand, right? So like the LEGO logo on the studs...different things, but then I also saw some really interesting things in the film, which was, for example, when Rey sits down and meditates. There was a shot where I thought, Oh, that's interesting. There's certain LEGO Minifig representations where it's like, Oh, there's a little bit of liberty taken there. I don't have to see every little clutch or stud or things like that, and I thought that was kind of interesting. Was that something too that seemed to be a little bit fluid in how you were able to be creative with the LEGO brand?

Ken Cunningham

Yeah. I mean, we...like there's a line we draw. I guess we sort of have this sort of 70...70/30 rule of like 70% LEGO bricks to 33 or 30% organic-

Ethan Vincent

Yeah.

Ken Cunningham

-quote unquote (laughs). Although that organic is frequently, like something that looks like it is also plastic. But, yeah, we...and if there's any...like we hit...sorry, I'm being super inarticulate here (laughs).

Ethan Vincent

Well, it's such an exciting question, isn't it?

Ken Cunningham

There's like...if there's a physical problem that comes up that we need to get around, I'll flag it and we'll talk through how we think we can solve the problem and you get a yay or nay on that. Or sometimes it comes down to a scale issue. Like, you take say, the Star Destroyer and you scale it up and those studs start to kill the idea of scale. So sometimes there's places where you want to strip them off...they're rules around...they don't want Minifigs walking on studs. So if I have a surface that is an actual LEGO set that maybe has studs in it, but I need to walk a character through, we'll remove those studs. So there's, yeah, there's a fluidity, absolutely. And it basically comes down to the needs of the story more than anything else.

Brian Crecente

And that makes sense. Like, you don't want them getting stuck.

Ken Cunningham

Exactly.

Brian Crecente

'Cause their little feet would get...you'd have to get out the orange tool.

Ken Cunningham

It's all over.

(Laughter)

Ken Cunningham

And the union, the union gets upset and-

Ethan Vincent

That's right. Who knows who? What's going on? Exactly.

(Laughter)

Ethan Vincent

What's your favorite moment in the film? There's so many fun, little exchanges. I can see, I'm excited to watch it with my five-year-old. I could see them laughing at various points probably even out loud and just enjoying it. Do you have favorite moments and segments from the film?

Ken Cunningham

Oh yeah, absolutely. I love the portal jumping sequence where we're kind of going through all these iconic moments, but honestly, I think my favorite moment is when Rey...after Rey talks to Yoda and she builds her own portal. That for me...just 'cause...I mean, as somebody working in animation and particularly North American animation, the frame in which you're working is children's material, so you don't frequently get a chance to do emotional work. And for me, that's a really emotional scene and I think we pulled it off pretty well. So that's, I think, one of my favorite moments honestly.

Brian Crecente

Yeah, that's great.

Ethan Vincent

That's awesome. I also love the fact that Yoda's narrating and you kind of have to put the sentences together. I mean, I thought there couldn't be a more complicated Yoda where I'm like, wait, what is he saying? Oh yeah, it's a Yoda sentence.

Ken Cunningham

It's all backwards-y

Ethan Vincent

Yeah. Did you have to rewrite that several times? Like, okay. I think we really lost him here. 'Cause that sentence makes no sense the way it's put together.

(Laughter)

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, his stuff went through like a lot of rewrites and pickups for sure. Well, and also just in terms of like, you start to...when you...when we first put an assembly of the whole thing together, like we were way long. So we have to cut time and decide what can go and...and frequently those connecting moments needed to get trimmed down, so then we'd have to rewrite what he was saying to make those connection moments work.

Ethan Vincent

How big's the team there? I'm just curious what your studio is like. I apologize that we didn't ask that upfront, but I want to hear about how many people are working on this and because, you know, that this is a lot of time and energy and just probably an army of people putting this together and uh, you know, giving it their all.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, no, absolutely. Yeah, at Atomic, my crew...I mean, it ranges really depending on what part of production we're in, but like, I think when we're up and fully running, we'll be at around...like at peaks we're at around 130 people just on the LEGO content. Right now I can't even...due to COVID, I'm not even sure where we're at, but studio wide I think we're around...what was the last number I heard? Over 500...550 maybe closing on 600. But again, that fluctuates based on...

Ethan Vincent

So really an army.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah.

Ethan Vincent

It's crazy.

Brian Crecente:

Well, this has been really a fascinating conversation, but unfortunately, we have run out of time. I want to thank you so much again for joining us, Ken. Can you remind us again where can we find the LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special? Where can people watch it?

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, it's streaming on Disney Plus.

Brian Crecente

Excellent. And is there a window of time that people have to catch it, or do you know?

Ken Cunningham

No, I think it'll be evergreen at this point. I know Disney Plus is trying to push it through the holiday season, so they'll be pushing it through to the new year. I don't know if it'll stay on...I know their plan is that it hopefully becomes an annual thing, so I don't know if they'll take it down for the rest of the year and then put it up every holiday or whether they're just going to leave it up.

Brian Crecente

Very cool. Well I hope you, listeners, have enjoyed listening to this little holiday reprieve and that you stick around and continue listening to the podcast that we have. We've got some great episodes coming up, right, Ethan?

Ethan Vincent

Yep, we sure do. It's been a fun chat. I really appreciate your time, Ken. Thanks so much.

Ken Cunningham

Yeah, no, absolutely. A pleasure.

Brian Crecente

Again, thanks for joining us.

Ken Cunningham

Thank you.

(Christmas bells jingle)

Ethan Vincent

Well, so there you have it.

Brian Crecente

Yeah.

Ethan Vincent

Yeah, I thought that was great, and Ken had such a fun way of talking about the movie. I think everyone should take a look at that and have fun time together and just enjoy this special season.

Brian Crecente

Yes, and make sure you come back next week when we return to our regular episodes, which we hope are going to be fascinating to you. And with that, happy holidays from our families to yours.

(Fire crackles)

(Music)

Bits 'N Bricks: Credits – 32:05

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. We'd like to thank our participant Ken Cunningham and his entire team at Atomic Cartoons and other studios for their work on the LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special. 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 or comments, write us at bitsnbricks@LEGO.com and as always stay tuned for more episodes of Bits N' Bricks.