

So... how's life?

- Lovely.

How are you liking Iceland?

- Always fantastic. Some day I hope to see the New Year's Eve fireworks spectacular.

Proof please?

- <http://i.imgur.com/LiCVY.jpg> Stefan Karl (Robbie Rotten) visited us in December.

why is your username jack dawkins?

- That's the real name of the Artful Dodger, I've always liked that character.

So.. do you primarily write childrens tv?

- More or less these days. You become typecast in writing as in most areas of showbiz. I've sold a lot of feature scripts that have never gotten made, written three TV movies. But kids TV is cool to write, I've traveled internationally for it, and it allows me to work from nearly anywhere. And once you make your bones, people become familiar with you and know they can rely on the work you produce.

You have to murder someone to be a kids writer?

- Perhaps figuratively.

I am writing my first feature now. Right at this moment. It is quite interesting. You ever venture into directing or what not?

- Thought about it many times but I don't have the temperament. I love writing, we get to see the whole movie in our heads first. Things don't always pan out on film but that's the risk.

I thought William Lane Craig was the 'artful dodger'

- I see what you did there.

That appears to be an Eames bent plywood chair. Is it yours?

- Wow, good eye. Yes.

Aply, all of my reddit comments today are going to be about Eames chairs. Completely unrelated to the AMA at hand (but, hey, it is an AMA), are you a fan of modern furniture (midcentury or otherwise)? How's the market for modern furniture in Iceland? Cheaper than the States?

- I'm not sure about that but I do know that Scandinavian furniture in general is really sleek and interesting. More so to my eye than the average American furniture.

How do you feel that Stefanie has become somewhat of an Internet Icon? How old is the actor? Because some people on the Internet seem to make "risky/questionable" jokes. Edit: I haven't seen LazyTown in years, and even then I was a late Teenager. It bothers me that I knew her name was Stefanie without goggling it.

- That was weird for all of us, but most particularly for Julianna and her family. It's only natural for viewers to extrapolate their own take on the shows they watch, but the level of pedobear rose so quickly, it took everybody by surprise. She was just a kid at the time, she took her career seriously, worked really hard. That whole risky/questionable part was just something to ignore.

Thanks for your response. I always wondered what it was like for people on the other end of that kind of treatment. Obviously certain websites and areas of the Internet find it pretty funny to add that kind of material to pictures, but it's difficult to think that Julianna would get the joke. Also, why is it "the most expensive" and have you seen the Lil John Music video of Lazy town? Dammit... I got to stop asking questions about this show.

- That kind of bizarro stuff started up again when we recast the part of Stephanie with our new actress this year. The fan base is pretty respectful but there are always a few.

That's something I've wondered..... Why recast Stephanie? That is to say, why did you cast another actress and give her Stephanie's identity versus giving her an altogether different identity?

- I actually pushed to have a new character come on board but after seeing Chloe play Stephanie I think this is the right way to go.

Wow, so you weren't fully satisfied with Julianna's Stephanie? I figured it had to do with her and college or something.

- No, this was after the initial shows were completed. I thought she was wonderful as Stephanie but she grew out of the role. And yes she's now in school I believe.

Do you like living in Iceland?

- I'm only there when I'm actively writing. They're shooting a new batch of 13 at the moment, so I haven't been there since May or so. Will return in October for the next batch. Iceland is awesome, the people are extremely cool and not just in a Celcius way. Smart, innovative - it's no surprise to me they bounced back after the 2008 financial collapse.

Also they prosecuted their banksters/allowed them to die, so they have their ethics in order. That's pretty crucial. ;P

- I can't imagine them doing anything else. They carved out a place to live from the most unlikely place I can think of. A little money crisis isn't going to stop them now.

They also have Sigur ros.. and well.. if you have seen them live.. then you know why im saying this.  
- :)

Is Robbie Rotten really played by Mel Gibson or are they just estranged brothers?

- Robbie has never called anyone sugartits in his life.

Haha, good answer. Btw I love your show, Robbie Rotten is what makes it awesome in my opinion.

- He's the most fun to write for, it's hard to beat feeding dialogue to a melodramatic villain.

Really? I've seen many cases of kids misbehaving because they want to be like that god damned character. Obnoxious and jumpy and mean and entitled. I've had to prohibit Lazy Town around my home.

- :( Well, maybe you could use it as a teachable moment of what not to do.

He's actually the illegitimate love child of Mel Gibson and Quentin Tarantino

- Don't forget the Bruce Campbell chin.

Why did you make Lazytown?

- Magnus Scheving, the guy who plays Sportacus, created the show as a way to encourage kids to be healthy. The fact that the show has become a cult hit among other demographics is a strange yet welcome bonus. :)

Did you ever see that Lil Jon video?

- I think everybody on the crew has seen it. Hilarious. There are a lot of fans out there who remix the songs. I've written a lot of the lyrics and it's beyond bizarre to see what they become from time to time.

Glad to see you guys have a great sense of humor :D

- Before I broke into showbiz I wondered if people ever read the letters they received, or were aware of things people said about them or created in their name. Now I know - they see it all.

Haha, that's great. While I have you here, what do you think are some of the strangest children's television shows out there? Lazytown seems VERY tame compared to some of the weird out there...

- To me the weirdest ever was the Soupy Sales show, you can google it. It was on a long long time ago and was so bizarre. Clearly, he was entertaining himself and the crew as much as the kids.

What about Alestorm's cover of You Are A Pirate?

- I have, it's a great grog-drinking version.

I only know the show because of this video. Should I watch more television?

- Yes and no. Leave the TV on but engage in more fruitful pursuits.

So in short, 'We'd appreciate the ad revenue, but you don't really need to watch'. I approve of this message.

- Personally I love TV but I admit that it has dominated my time in some ways, probably should've been out there engaging in social activities or developing a skill. On the other hand it gave me a career so I can't rip it completely.

The show both confuses and scares the hell out of me...Is its point to make children Healthy? I'm not criticising your work but ,well the villains face is just creepy with the prosthetic hah. Also how much does it add to your production cost to get everyone to iceland. WOULDnt it be cheaper to film in the UK for instance?

- We hear that all the time about Robbie. I feel both ways about it - my sons were never bothered by him when they were little but I've heard many stories, mostly from the live shows, that Robbie was a little too much for the younger ones. It's a crap shoot, you need a villain and Stefan doesn't try to play him "scary" per se, rather comically evil. As to cost, it's true that things are a bit expensive in Iceland but industry standards prevail in terms of salary. They do need to house foreigners and that can become prohibitive. But as the years have gone by, there are more and more Icelanders on the crew. Much of the cost goes into the way it's shot - we have puppets, green screen, computer animation, etc. I'm not sure what the costs are now but at one time we were doing a million bucks an episode.

reminds me of Snidely Whiplash also a fan, though i haven't watched in many years. any new exciting developments?

- Tons new gadgets, a lot more action. Stephanie is way more heroic, I hope the little girls in the audience like that. I agree with the Snidely Whiplash comment, it's impossible to not hear that voice on occasion when writing. Nya ha ha...

As an adult I'm more concerned about Sportacus than Robbie.

- How come?

My little brother used to watch this show, and I enjoyed the songs myself. Are you aware that the band Alestorm has covered 'You Are A Pirate'?

- You Are A Pirate has become a meme phenomenon that's for sure. The music is by Mani Svavarsson, the one-man orchestra who writes all music and the now-recognizable underscore for the show. The lyrics for Pirate were mostly written by Ken Pontac, a guy we brought in for a short time to help with a backlog. You might know Ken's work from "Happy Tree Friends."

| the level of pedobear rose so quickly, it took everybody by surprise Think of that. Now think of the lyrics and video to 'You Are A Pirate'. Yeah. [edit

- Yar har fiddle dee dee?

Wait, let me get this right. Someone watched a few episodes of Happy Tree Friends and went "yep, this is someone we want helping out on our kids show." Really?

- Well not really. You want people who are fast on their feet, can take a beating and keep on bleating. We only used Ken for the one episode, most of the first 35 were written by myself and Mark Zaslove, who also has a long pedigree in kids' tv. Over the years we've also done LazyTown Extra, they do live shows, and there may be a feature film in the works.

On the 10 scale, how high are you when writing lazytown?

- Hah. It would probably help on some level. Maybe many levels.

So.... 0?

- Yes, although working with Magnus can sometimes be akin to a rip-snorthing hit.

Why are you guys so awesome?

- Someone has to be.

I wish your show ran when I was a kid. My baby brother (2.5) loves it.

- Yeah, the younger kiddos really like the music and dancing, and it's a very colorful, active show - keeps them focused.

What is it about the production of your show in particular that makes it so expensive to produce relative to other children's shows?

- Like I said, it's really the high tech stuff. We work with puppets against green screen. Imagine shooting a cartoon with live actors in front of it, and also trying to watch for puppeteer arms in the shot. Plus we do a LOT of action in each episode plus a music video. Lotta bang for the buck.

Is there a specific reason for filming in Iceland?

- The show's creator, Magnus Scheving, is Icelandic. He was a fitness guru, he gave lectures and traveled a lot, saw an opening for the kid market. LazyTown was originally a live show that repeatedly sold out, so it was obviously something that resonated. He had chances to film in the standard places but he wanted to grow the industry in Iceland. Built a studio from the ground up.

How on earth did you get this job?

- A friend recommended me for consideration. I flew up in the dead of winter, no sunlight, lava fields, like going to Mars. Was interviewed and...didn't get the job. Then the guys they hired instead of me didn't work out...so I got the call. Sometimes the bridesmaid gets hitched after all.

Sounds like something out of a Bond movie. Had you worked on children's programming before?

What was your background?

- Started out an actor, hated it. Moved into production and lucked out with a job as production assistant with Steven Spielberg. Was there two years, and that was great because basically the whole world comes to Steven, you get to meet everybody and learn so much. Then I became a VP of Development for John Hughes, spent three years by his side learning the tricks of the trade from the master of all tricks. After that I decided to chuck the exec stuff and become a writer full time. Ain't always easy but much nicer than booking breakfasts, lunches and dinner schmoozefests. Not that there's anything wrong with it.

Wow, so you definitely made some key contacts along the way. Would you say that's important in getting a job writing for television? I've always wanted to break into that, but I've never had any idea how. If I've gotta start out by scraping gum off of Martin Scorsese's shoes, I'd better start putting money away now.

- Not really. Nobody ever winds up in the showbiz job they started out pursuing. You really have to just get the foot in the door and keep performing, never letting people down. You'll pick up a lot of intel along the way, who's hiring, who's a bastard, etc. And you meet a lot of people as babies in the biz who become players later. It's not as cutthroat as portrayed, there are a lot of good people in the business. The mercenaries are the ones who gain publicity.

you meet a lot of people as babies in the biz who become players later. this... why is so important to be friendly and have a good connection with everyone...

- There's so much at stake with every production, whether in TV or movies. Consider that a high-budget movie costs as much as the entire budget for some corporations. A success means the gamble

was a good one, and everyone associated with it benefits. So there's a tremendous competition to get the jobs that will be meaningful to your career. That brings out the worst in people. In LA, some folks not only want you to fail, they'd be okay if with it if you were dead. Also the stress of making a TV show can be enormous. You have networks expecting a finished product that will help their ratings, you have budget and schedule constraints, you have the human element on the set and off. So you want to spend time with people who are chill, who can extend themselves, who can help get you through a tough spot at three in the morning. I'm not saying be fake, that's a trans ploy that nobody likes. But if you like working with people and you are curious about what others are doing and can find ways to be helpful, you turn into that friendly person who can develop connections. Be a Good Guy Greg~!

Thank you so much for the , Is very interesting to see how it works behind the scenes, it sounds very stressful, when hiring actors, obviously that's something the casting director does but I figured you might know, do you look purely for acting skills, or does personality and that human element come into play ?. Thank you for doing the AMA.

- Sometimes you have a specific idea in mind for how it should be played, so you skew your actors toward that. In fact, probably most of the time. There are always exceptions. I wrote a low budget sci fi thriller called "Menno's Mind" - and one of the good guys who gets killed was played by Bruce Campbell (who did a cameo as a favor). I can tell you that was not who I imagined playing the part when I wrote it, but it was cool to see him in the role.

What helped you to decide that you wanted to write this show?

- Cliche alert here, but it was really the people in Iceland. Great to hang out with, welcoming. And they party their asses off in the downtown area in a way that can only be described as epic.

Are you a pirate?

- Everybody is at one time or another. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkvNgzey4KM>

What's it like working with Magnus Scheving? How has he responded to the widespread popularity of the show?

- He is the Blonde Tornado. He's involved in every facet - scripts, music, costumes, name it. He runs the show. I've been to different countries with him and kids recognize him, asking him to do handstands. He's always gracious with them. I think he sees each new success as a chance to try new things with it, push the boundaries. It'll be interesting to see where it is in five years.

Children's health is becoming a more important issue everyday (particularly here in Australia), people like Magnus will be critical in pushing positive messages like the ones on LazyTown. Thanks for the AMA!

- You're welcome.

Just came here to say my kids love the show. Keep up the good work.

- Thanks.

And I just want to say that I love that show. I was already a teen when it came out and it was the only show I could stomach with my little sister when she was a wee tot. ...I even found myself singing all the songs as I was walking around school. Damn things are catchy! Heck, I watched it even when she wouldn't. So, good on ya man! :)

After filming wrapped up, would Magnus whip out a Mars bar and order a pizza?

- Let's just say that, like everyone, he experiences a wide range of culinary delights.

Sorry toddler attack while typing! Should have read my kids don't understand why they can have sports candy but not candy,

- That was Magnus' idea -- and I think it has resonated with a lot of s, sorry it didn't work out in your house. We always say on the show, there's nothing wrong with a soda, just don't make it your only

drink. All about balance.

What is your opinion of this video? I remember being absolutely baffled when it came out (back when LazyTown memes were more popular) that someone would actually take the time to make this.

- I remember when that came out and I agree, it was amazing to me that someone would take the time. Now there's been YouTube poop and all other types of repurposing if that's a word. There are some serious fans of the music out there. All credit to Mani, whose music is so infectious. We actually had a song climb to the number 4 position on the UK charts.

Do you bathe in lava?

- That sounds like a secret agent's opening line.

have you ever or thought about ever including hidden subliminal messages in your writings?

- Honestly, no. However...it is fascinating to see meanings assigned to the dialogue that completely escaped me. Example: I had Robbie drinking out of an enormous coffee cup with a map of Texas on it. No particular reason, it just sounded funny within the context of the show. He also disguised himself as a bush in the episode, so naturally some people took that as a diss against George W. during a presidential campaign year.

What did you do before you wrote for LazyTown?

- Rugrats, Back to the Future, huge projects for Disney. The life of a freelancer.

Wait, you worked on Back to the Future? Which ones?!

- It was about the 1904 World's Fair...don't know the name!

What was your contribution?

- Script.

Rugrats. Sir, I love you. Now, have you seen All Grown Up?

- I was around when that was being planned. Meh.

They're actually all cartoon characters who don't exist in real life. Sorry I had to be the one to tell you that.

- I understand why it was attempted, just wasn't crazy about the result.

Ooh! Any specific examples of what you contributed to the Rugrats?

- I only wrote one episode (Gimme an A) but I was Story Editor for years which meant I was the exec in between the network and the writers. So they would pitch ideas for episodes, we would make approvals and then the writing process was overseen. I had lots of shows at one time - Hey Arnold, Thornberrys. I was the first one attached to Spongebob at the very very beginning but left because they needed someone on CatDog. Seems like a career misstep but actually it turned out better for me for many reasons.

For some reason now I have the image of you being a king sitting on a huge throne in a giant hall with little servant boys running up to you giving ideas for shows and the entire world's source of laughter is on the line based off your decision.

- This is why I love Reddit.

just came here to ask for a job.

- When can you start?

as early as today. However I require money and not gum as payment.

- Ah well, now you're making demands.

sir, these are not demands as they are requirements. here is a taste of some of my work. a moose comes to lazy town on a caboose. There is a song called a moose on a caboose. the caboose falls away from the train during the song and it prompts them to say "the moose on the caboose is loose" and we can go from there upon my arrival. This scenario can get as wacky as need be.

- But did he drink juice? You see, we need to answer the key questions before we can continue.

I'm gonna bogart this impromptu fake internet interview and say yes, he did. He did drink the juice.

- Fine. They he's hired. No...wait -- he's fired.

How many of the songs are forever stuck in your head?

- They stick until Mani writes the next one, and then that one sticks.

That sounds aggravating.

- It's a pleasant annoyance. :)

What's your favorite kind of salad dressing?

- Marzetti's Asiago Peppercorn.

I have no idea what LazyTown is, and frankly don't really care. But thank you for being one of very few people to do a good AMA in a long time. You actually answer things. That alone helps your image and what you are promoting tremendously. It's crazy what this website can do (even just temporarily) to someone's image when they come on here and do an AMA, just to plug their crap and never answer a single thing, or answer with one word answers every time. Also, it's just a really nice thing to do for your fans. Respect =)

- Thanks - I always enjoy reading them and my sons kept after me to do one, so here we are.

I agree, I hate it when people just come here to advertise their crap, and treat the AMA like it's just free publicity for said crap. Makes for boring AMAs.

- I understand Woody Harrelson will be doing a guest role on LazyTown soon. Kidding.

I'm just going to come right out and say when my little cousins (4 & 5) want to watch tv, LazyTown is one of my favourites. Why is it more expensive than other shows?

- Explained earlier but essentially it's the tech. Those shows will look as good as anything looks for the next twenty years.

that's interesting because in the uk, the picture quality is weird, like it's been de-interlaced a couple of times

- I've heard about those problems. Not sure how they can fix it. There's also the decompression when they feel the need to run end credits at max speed on half the screen.

I love lazy town!

- YAY!

Whose idea was "sports candy?" It wasn't a good idea. Candy is candy.

- That is a time-honored ploy used by anyone who wants to re-cast the definition of something in the minds of the public. Back in the day, they used to call bombs "peacekeepers." So yeah.

Confession: Lazy Town and Looney Tunes are the only two shows I enjoy watching with my children. Strong work! Great characters, plots, and the show makes my girls get up and dance! Ok, ok! I dance when Stephanie dances, too. Added that, since this is a confession.

- Good - keep doing that, the songs are eminently danceable ~

Other than LazyTown are you writing other tv shows, or planning to write new stuff or you just busy with LazyTown ?.

- Freelancer Life = always getting your next gig. At the moment I'm working on three kids shows, a

feature spec script, a reality cooking-themed show and a web-based project. When I started out, it was an enormous chore to simply finish one spec script. Now it's standard to juggle as much stuff as comes my way. You never want to be in a position to tell someone you can't work on a project, you never know which one will turn into a long-term job.

is it really a piece of cake to bake a pretty cake?

- If the way is hazy ~ Thanks a lot for putting that song back in my head...

Is Robbie really the #9 hero who was mentioned before Sportacus came to town?

- Nope. That whole number thing will be answered in the feature film.

When's the film due? Not that I'm anxiously waiting or anything...

- I've written one draft that I don't think will be used, and we keep talking about all kinds of approaches. Honest answer: I have no clue but I hope it's soon.

I have been waiting for the answer to this question since I first ran across this show a few years ago. I kinda liked how never mentioning the previous men again added a dark underbelly to the show.

- That's interesting, it kind of hit me that way too. There's this whole thing out there that informs what we're seeing now...but we can't know what it is...but it's there...

Exactly, the first couple of times I saw the show it drove me mad that no one seemed to know or care what happened to #9. Then I started coming up with my own (very twisted) conclusions.

I love Lazy Town and all the songs! I can't help it! And Magnus Scheving is totally hot! How is he in real life?? I had no idea the show was still going on! I nannied a few years ago and showed the kids the "Spooky" episode and the little one was so scared of Robbie in the dinosaur suit he cried for 20 minutes.

- Sorry about that...don't want to make the kids cry. We probably wouldn't do something like that today. Magnus is a normal guy, he's got kids, loves cars. He's also pretty charismatic. Like every boss, he pushes things forward when he has to. He lives a fast life, always on the go.

Oh it still makes me laugh to this day! I'll never forget his wide eyed face! It was like he was so terrified and yet couldn't look away at the same time! It's a good memory for me! However he did love the Spooky song!

- Mark Zaslove wrote those lyrics. Great song.

What's the reasoning behind using puppets for the show?

- Early on they decided against animation and so had to make a choice between finding kids to play the parts or some variation. You know there's a sense of hyper-reality to the sets and backgrounds, the visual style is unique, the buildings and props are Suess-like. The puppets work well with that visual style, although it can be difficult when we write scenes with many characters in the frame at the same time. The puppeteers are first-rate and they are also adept at finding punchier ways to say things as they rehearse and move more toward shooting the scene. I had never worked with puppeteers before, and I was at first concerned that they might not be as expressive as actors. But I never give it a second thought now, they're really good at what they do.

Are you a very rich man today by writing this show? Were you wealthy before?

- Writers rarely get rich on the showbiz rich scale. It's a nice living and the fact that I enjoy my work is a bonus that I do not take for granted.

I like to write songs/sing and came up with a few kids songs. What do you think would be the best way to pursue that? It would be cool to have my own tv show.

- Definitely online. You have a chance for your work to be seen in every country on earth overnight. Scour the net and find the best way to showcase what you do - make videos, upload to multiple places. Just remember, when you put yourself out in the public you risk hearing what people think. If



you can't stand that or you're not ready to hear negative stuff, even unfair criticism, then wait and build up your armor. Why don't you post them on Reddit when you're ready? What better community to give you some constructive feedback?

Do you have any next plans, like a comedy or drama?

- My next next project (as opposed to my next next next ones) is a feature spec script I'm writing with a partner. It's an action comedy (we sold a spec script to Dreamworks a few years back and we're clawing our way back into the market) so we'll see what the future holds.

Have there ever been any horrible accidents with the lava field? Maybe like a kid falling in or something?

- Not that I remember. The hard rock (cooled) lava is really sharp though. You could cut through the bottom of your shoes walking on it. The ride from the airport to town takes about 40 minutes, and you drive past the lava fields, looks just like what Curiosity is motoring past on Mars as we speak.

I'd just like to say I loved the Double Trouble episode. Oh god, the nostalgia.

- Thanks ~ I got to use the word 'indubitably' in the song.

What do you like to do in your free time in Iceland when you are not writing for the show?

- Ah if only. When I'm there, I'm really there for the gig. I work seven days a week, and pretty long hours. I have toured the country a bit, seen incredible waterfalls, geysers. There's a place called the Hotel Budir that's out in the countryside near a glacier, it's one of my favorite spots. I've played midnight golf in the summer with the sun beating down. Sometimes there are parties - both related to work and not - but my schedule keeps me pretty busy.

And I was going to ask if I could buy you a beer since I'll be in Iceland for 6 days over New Years. Guess you'll be working.

- I think you'll really enjoy it - I can't imagine anyone visiting Iceland and not coming away feeling impressed. And the New Year's celebration is epic. Throughout the year, they purchase fireworks with the proceeds going to a service that rescues hikers, I believe. And then on New Year's everybody shoots them off - at home and downtown. It lasts forever and it's quite a sight. You can even watch them live on the Internet from some streaming site.

Have you listened to Sigur Ros? This question is only relevant because they are a band from Iceland. If not.... you should.

- Very definitely.

How much do you exercise?

- Magnus likes to take the crew outside on nice days for a quick pick-me-up workout routine sometimes. I usually hide from those until I know they're done. But I've recently joined a gym and I have to admit that working out gives me more energy. It's also a bit of a motivator to be some place with Magnus in public. You have to give it to him, the dude's in good shape for being nearly 50.

Does Magnus have ADHD, or does it just seem that way?

- I don't know about that but he definitely has more energy than the average guy his age.

It has literally been my life-long dream to write for a children's television show- any tips for someone wanting to break into the business? I'm about to go into my senior year of college and would love to get a head start in pursuing my dream!

- On a personal level, I can offer you some feedback if you care to send me something you've written. Why don't you tackle an existing show, write your version of it, any show you like. I can at least let you know how close you are to industry standard. Otherwise, you have to just park your butt and start typing. It's something that must become a daily routine. Think of it like this: every working writer knows how to do X, so X is the minimum you must know how to do. On top of that, you should develop a personal style that people will recognize and learn to ask for. Maybe you're great

with dialogue, so become that person. Or you're really good with sweet and tender moments, the more emotional stuff. Or you know how to construct phenomenal action sequences. All the better if you can teach yourself all of this stuff. Just remember that with kids shows, it's important to keep in mind the underlying "mission" of the show. Not that we always hammer the health stuff on LazyTown, but if we didn't at least include it as an important theme, we wouldn't be true to our brand. That reminds me, as crass as it may sound, you must think of your work as a brand. If a producer has one slot for a writing staff member, when he or she thinks of your name, what will they recall about your writing? Are you the writer who comes up with clever jokes? Great with word play? Also, immerse yourself in what's out there right now. With so much online stuff available there's no excuse to not know what Disney is up to, or what Nick Jr is focusing on. And explore film markets like MIPCOM (there's one happening in early October in Cannes). Get Google news alerts about your favorite company/network/tv show. All of this will help to keep your writing sharp and your database current. And I was serious about reading your work - whenever you feel ready to have someone take a look you can forward it to me.

Just want to say this is the best answer I've ever seen on an AMA. Thank you! (BTW, my kids loved the show when they were younger - we still listen to the soundtrack on occasion!)

- Thanks - and there are 13 new songs coming this season, hope the fans like them too. It was really cool to get back into the studio with Mani and write some new lyrics for his music. Definitely a bonus to the job.

Wow this is a really incredible response. I really appreciate all the awesome information you've armed me with, and I'm going to get down to business and start writing my 'version' of an existing show (I had never thought to do that before!) Thank you, thank you, thank you! And expect to be hearing from me soon!!

- :) And when you win your first few Emmys or Baftas, pass it on~

i also want to say this is one of the most productive AMA's ive seen ... you seem very honest, straight forward, good sense of humor yet professional.

- Thanks for that -- it's interesting to share the inside baseball stuff.

What do you guys have planned for when the young actress on your show simply becomes too old for the role? a replacement?

- We just did that! Chloe Lang has taken over the role of Stephanie. She really lights up the screen, I hope the Julianna fans give her a chance. I think they'll be happy with the new direction.

Ah I always wondered how you guys would deal with that. Thanks for the and the entertainment you've provided for the past few years for my nieces and nephews. You're a true gent.

- Why thank you.

Did you ever think you'd end up making content for kids? Are you geared for making kids' shows or was it just an opportunity for you that you had to adapt to? I'm a filmmaker myself and I just got my first job for a teen audience, something I never thought I'd be doing.

- It was never on my list of goals. As a writer I started out selling comedy scripts. It was right after I left working for John Hughes, and high concept comedies were still selling on the spec market. He was an inspiration, he would walk into an executive's office, basically tell jokes for five minutes and walk out with deals for three movies. Incredible. My outlook changed after I started getting TV movies produced. You put in the same amount of work whether you're writing for the feature market or the TV movie market. The difference is that, if you sell a TV movie script, it has a greater chance of being produced. I love writing feature specs but it can become an expensive habit if none of them get made. One contact led to another and I became a series writer.

What were some of the challenges of starting to write for kids? What was easy?

- The biggest challenge: every different piece of showbiz has its own culture, rules and hierarchy. I had already learned the rules for the big budget studio feature world. In kid TV none of that applies.

New honchos, new 800 pound gorillas. So you have to know the players and what they do. You may meet a producer, think wow, I could work with this person. Then you talk about them to someone else and they say stay away from that guy, he's radioactive for whatever reason. Somehow you have to get that foot or a toe in the doorway. When I was a Story Editor at Nickelodeon I read sample scripts from new names all the time. Rarely called them because their work was off-model. I don't want to hire someone only to have to train them. If they couldn't watch my shows and figure out how to write one, they weren't ready. Also writing for kids means you can't dwell in the land of snark, you have to be comfortable being sincere on paper. It's a fine line between sincere and trite, I can't always control how my stuff plays out and sometimes I've crossed the line. I've written for Barney and I can tell you it's virtually impossible with that brand. Not knocking it, they've been wildly successful. Just sayin'.

Whatsup with the main dudes fuckin chin? Why is that thing so big?

- That's what she said. I don't know the answer to your question but I do know it takes a really long time to glue that sucker into place every morning that Stefan shoots. It has caused us some trouble in the past, the glue gets tacky, and can irritate his skin. We created a character for him that had a beard once because he couldn't use the chin that week.

Where do you get inspiration for some of these stories? My toddler and I are literally watching this right now. She calls her veggies "Sports Candy."

- We go through a LOT of ideas when we are brainstorming for new episodes. I came up with LazyTown's New Superhero when I thought we were working Magnus into the ground during season one. What if we made him take a vacation? That grew into a two-part show.

I don't mean to sound rude, but kids shows these days, especially Lazy Town, sound like they were written on hallucinogenic drugs or by mentally distressed people. Dose anyone at work fit this stereo type?

- Well, what can I say, we're a lively bunch. :)

I don't really have a question, but just wanted you to know that my daughter (19 months) will stop everything she's doing, even from the other room, and watch Lazytown. She sings and dances and has the brightest smile for 30 minutes straight. Thank you and the rest of the crew for an awesome show!

- Thank you for your kind words.

FINALLY, my chance to ask this ... Do you personally do the cooking by the book?

- Men make things up as they go, you know that.

I saw this picture of Robbie Rotten a year or two ago. It looks extremely depressing. Is there a story behind the picture of just a candid shot from behind the scenes?

- That's just Stefan eating lunch in the cantina. He must be early or late, there are usually many more people there at lunch time. I see some familiar faces though.

Whats it like competing with phineas and ferb?

- I never think about the competition. I do pay attention to ratings and I read all the reviews and articles. Especially if I hear about another show that focuses on areas that we are emphasizing.

im sorry if i upset anyone enough to downvote it. i was just kinda messing around phineas and ferb is ment for an older audience it seems anyways. btw im 17 and i watched your show when it came out because my sister liked it. it was a well done show and the characters had great personalities.Keep it up!

- Thanks.

Are you a gamer?

- Was from the earliest days (quarter machines at 7-11) but at some point around the days of Halo I

drifted away because I found it too difficult to master the controls and have satisfying game play. Probably stuck at the Wii level now. Guitar Hero was my last hurrah.

I actually had the opportunity to work with Stefan (Robbie Rotten) on a Disney shoot. Extremely nice guy, and very talented actor. Do you have any advice on maintaining work as a writer? I've written for a few little projects, but I'm having a hard time getting MORE work. Any words of advice would be helpful!

- It's always hard, as you know. But if you keep writing even when you don't have a gig, then when something does come up, you have something nice to show as a writing sample. You can't ever be caught without a sample as a writer. Pick a hot show and write a spec script for it. It won't be produced by that production company but at least people will have something to compare it to. Just don't give up. The day people give up is the day before they would have made it.

Thanks for the good words! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtlHz9PZS-8> - Here's a link to the I've written for/worked on. Check it out, you might like it.

- Wow, Aquabats are way cool. You're right about in the same sweet spot as LazyTown in terms of bizarre ~

Icelander here. I was just wondering, how aware the American viewers are about the fact that the show is Icelandic? Is the show in any way good publicity for Iceland? Or could it be used better as such?

- Oh definitely it's good for Iceland. And you know Magnus is buddies with the President of Iceland, they team up for promotions in lots of places. I have heard people wondering what kind of accent Magnus has (most people think it's French), but I'd say nearly all of the articles people have written about him mention the fact that our show is produced in Iceland. They always mention Bjork too. Icelanders have probably become bored with LazyTown, it's been part of your lives for so long. And there's the merchandise at the stores and TV news stories, etc. It's easy to take something for granted when it's always there, but honestly, it does bring a certain level of cultural awareness about the country.

320.000, I'll have you know!

- Bjork!

Is it really a piece of cake to bake a pretty cake? 'Cuz I tried and that shit turned out crazy.

- Did you make a messy recipe? That might be where you went wrong.

Well I didn't do the cooking by the book. Could that be it?

- We won't know for a while. Try piling on the candy in the interim.

So, did you write this song?

- I write lyrics, Mani writes the music.

Just wanted to say good work, my kid loves the show. He's 3 and is looking forward to starting football(soccer) this fall and eating his sports candies (orange slices) at half time.

- That's cool. We're shooting a football episode this year.

Can I get a guest appearance on the show?

- Are you a puppet?! Seriously, we've only had one outsider I think...we did a genie episode and brought in an Icelandic actor.

There was also Rottenella, played by an Icelandic dancer.

- Doh! You are correct. And little Sportacus.

My 3 and a half year old son always wonders, if no one's lazy in Lazy Town, how come it's called Lazy Town?

- That was my first question too. The place used to be lazy until Sportacus showed up, and Robbie Rotten is always trying to get rid of him and make LazyTown lazy again!

Magnus seems like a nice guy, does he like children specifically or does he just care about encouraging kids to live healthy?

- He's a dad, and I've always seen him take extra time with kids when they approach him. I think the main thing is, he was a fitness guru, he saw trouble looming with the obesity problem. So he developed this vehicle to promote fitness, now it's become something bigger than that.

So he developed this vehicle to promote fitness, now it's become something bigger than that. Now it's on Nick, which generates its revenue by planting seeds at a malleable age to direct the current and future consumption of children. Aren't most of those ads for junk food? I've asked this question in every AMA by someone from Nickelodeon and I've been completely ignored every time. What are your thoughts on the morality of targeting ads at young children for profit?

- As a father, I find it irritating to say the least. And I'm sure you've noticed that the most sugary, expensive cereal items are at knee-high level so kiddos can see the characters and demand those. But networks really do listen to the audience - every angry letter or email represents thousands of viewers to them. So whether or not you believe your protest may have had an impact, it has. I think things would be far worse if s hadn't started voicing objections.

Because of you, this is what my Daughter talks about all day to everyone. I love hearing when I come home, "Daddy, on LazyTown today, Sportacus...". Is Magnus ever planning an Live Tour?

- They have live tours in the UK and Latin America frequently. When we start airing the new shows they will probably do some publicity tours and there's always a fair chance that Magnus will play Sportacus. Most of the time, though, he is played by other actors in the live stuff.

In regards to Julianna's career choices (very adult leaning indie film) after Lazy Town was over for her. Do you feel "child actor" shell of a world veered her towards breaking out of her adolescent stage as severely as she did? I can't remember the name of the film, all I remember was the horrible trailer going "Stefanie! Why are they treating you so badly! Where the F is Sportacus!"

- I liked the movie, it was a chance for her to show off a different facet. Of course anything like that would be jarring for her core audience, but it wasn't a slasher film or anything, just mature subject matter.

Did you know that your show is the most pant shitting, creepily disturbing thing to ever be put on television? Is it a commentary on the plasticity and fakeness of the people of our modern society?

- Heh heh...

do you prefer curly fries or straight fries?

- How can we know these things for certain? How do we measure these truths?

I find that most kid's shows these days are just painful to watch, even some of the one's I enjoyed as a kid, but Lazytown seems to have a rare quality to it. Kids can enjoy it on one level and older people can enjoy it on a totally different level. I only find this to be true with Lazytown, Adventure Time and Spongebob. Do you write with this goal in mind or is it just a happy accident that your sense of humour and writing style work like this?

- I don't know, to me funny is funny. You set up a situation and pay it off comedically, the equation doesn't change. For younger kids you have to be sillier, less verbal word play. And I think our actors help to "sell" the humor pretty effectively. I have been told by people who've known me for a long time that the show has my sense of humor. But Magnus is also all over those scripts, so maybe we're trying to amuse ourselves.

Thanks for the AMA, Mark. Glad to hear the show is back! My girls have always loved it, and thankfully our cable system now offers some episodes on demand to sate their need for Lazytown. Glad also to read that Magnus is as gracious and genuine as he appears to be. Please thank him for

me for making 8:08 the official "Bedtime of No Dispute" since that's when Sportacus goes to bed. And kudos to Stefan, the best actor on the show. People don't realize how difficult it is to play a character like that and actually make it live a little bit, especially with all the prosthetics. Now, my final point, the most important point, the point on which I can tolerate absolutely no ambiguity at all, **WHEN IS THE NEW TOY LINE AVAILABLE?** Seriously, don't hold out on me here, Mark. Not after all these years. We have birthdays and Christmas coming up and at least one of mine would step on your throat for a real Stephanie dress and wig. I need you to deliver on this one.

- Ha ha...oh man...I would say plan for something in 2013... Because the shows are still being shot, that means that the props and specialty costumes that they might recreate as toys and clothing are still in the R&D phase for retail. We have new gadgets, some really cool ones. And vehicles for Sportacus that I think will be cool for kids. But moving them into the store shelves, yikes. I have no idea how long that will take. You would have better luck booking a flight to Reyjavik and taking a tour of the studio! But thank you for the kind words.

How was LazyTown pitched? I get that it works after seeing it, but the concept must have been... hard to grasp.

- I wasn't around for that part but I've heard that Magnus went all around the world pitching it himself. So that must have been entertaining, I wish someone would have captured it on video.

I know you're expecting Jack to answer, but he was brought in after the show was pitched to Nickelodeon, and it's a very interesting story that Magús has told a few times. He basically went in as Sportacus, doing flips and handsprings, while talking about the show's premise, and showing them some clips from the original plays. Not just to Nick, but also Disney and a few other companies in various countries, including Canada and the UK, and only Nick picked it up, liking that this show would encourage children to eat fruits and vegetables while getting outside for play and exercise.

I recall television playing a huge role in my childhood. Do you think about that while you're creating the shows? how many children will look back on it one day when they're older and have a deep sentimental attachment to it?

- Absolutely. Very important to get it right.

What do you think resonates most with children? What features do you try to incorporate in your episodes?

- I believe in sentiment in my stories. Kids are affected much more strongly by something if they can be moved emotionally. Same goes for learning life skills. So I try to give them honest moments, things that get to the core. That said, you can't do much, you have to keep the ball rolling. But it's important to focus on how kids really feel.

Hey. Here's something I have always wondered about the show. The only human characters are Sportacus, Stephanie and Robbie, and everyone else is a puppet. Why did you guys choose to make only these three characters people? Other than that, I love the message of your show and your AMA has been awesome.

- I wasn't privy to those early discussions honestly. But I would guess that Sportacus and Stephanie have to be human because they do a lot of things that would be hard for puppets to do. And Robbie could never be played by a puppet, Stefan Karl's artistry is too valuable to the show. It wouldn't be the same. I would like to see a cartoon version of the show some day, but that's not my call to make.

Why do you advocate cooking by the book? I think deviating from the recipe is nice!

- You need a rule in order to make an exception ~

Does the cast eat healthy in real life?

- They serve healthy food at work, and they have a lot of fruits and vegetables available throughout the day.

What's your take on the children's programming scene currently?

- Way bigger and more complex than ever before. Whenever people smell money they tend to congregate. And the success of Nick and Disney etc. have demonstrated to financiers that kid TV is a viable market. It's so densely packed. You could pitch the greatest shows in the world to the networks now and they barely have room for anything new. They actually start new channels to contain some of the newer productions. Dreamworks is starting their own channel soon.

I am a writer as well. Can I get a job? Pllllease?

- You will get a job some day. Make it so ~

First I would like to thanks you for this Show, my little 3 years son LOVE Sportacus. Sadly in Quebec we only have the first season in french. Do you think we'll get other season soon in french in Quebec ?

- I believe that's up to the local affiliate. We supply script and show, with music underscore. But I believe it's up to each country to partner with the show and produce the translated versions.

The Wikipedia page says the shows original run ended in 2007. How are you still writing?

- We've started up again!~

I'd like to say thanks for making a show that was a big part of my childhood!

- When the show comes back on in 2013 you can watch it again but with a sense of irony. :)

Love the show and totally respect you as a writer. Great job. I'm currently getting my MA in screenwriting. What are some suggestions and hints you can give to new writers? Also: I am taking an 11 day trip to Iceland starting next Thursday. Anything in particular I NEED to do?

- Wow. If you're into nature, there's no end to the opportunities for cool activities. Take a snowmobile to a glacier, tour a volcano, hike into an ice cave. It's also a very literate country, lots of interesting plays and indie cinema. Just ask someone to point you toward the main shopping street, there are cafes and bars, then follow that to where the serious bars are. A grownup's version of Disneyland ensues until the wee hours. Try the Black Death but bring a friend who can get you home.

Not a question, but just wanted to say when I took my twin boys to buy trainers one wanted Marvel Heroes ones, and the other picked Sportacus shoes! <http://imgur.com/X1xn6> He was ever so pleased with them. You guys are obviously doing something right, my kids think Lazytown is great, and eat all their fruit and veg because Sportacus does. Keep up the good work!

- Thank you~

1. If I suggested that the educational content of your show is kinda weak and that it was more about style than substance, how would you answer the charge? 2. How about that Mister Rogers? That was solid children's media. Agree? Disagree? Why? thanks - love your show -

- 1. Agree. It's more about inducing kids to start thinking of healthy alternatives than it is about teaching them something explicit. It's tricky because the minute you start lecturing kids about being healthy, they tune out. So we have to sneak our messages in sideways, and make being healthy more fun and routine. 2. Loved Mister Rogers, don't think he'd get his show out of the starting gate in today's market. That is a shame but it's true. Blue's Clues was a modern version of it, and that show had visual and audio bells and whistles and music to hold the viewers' interest.

Wanted to compliment on how thoroughly enjoyable this AMA was to read. What do you find is your biggest struggle in working on the show?

- Thanks - this AMA has given me the chance to do what writers do best - procrastinate whilst on Reddit ~

Why do your show's characters look like their going to kill me at night?

- It's a trick of light and shadow.

Is it true that Quentin Tarantino visited the studios where you shoot to get tips on shooting HD?

- Don't know if he had that agenda but he did visit. And then he went on a Very Excellent Adventure downtown.

1. Have you ever thrown an uncooperative intern into the lava field? 2. Are you a pirate? 3. What makes it the most expensive children's show? I assume the puppets are at least part of it, though from what I recall some of the sets are pretty elaborate, too.

- 1. No interns...any longer. 2. No, I am a scoundrel. 3. All the high tech gizmos that make the picture so pretty.

Does Sportacus also travel around the set solely by flipping and doing cartwheels? I refuse to believe that the man simply "walks" anywhere.

- Aw come on, you don't want to lose the magic, do ya?

I is a was huge fan of that show, still am! Question, was there any other languages 'Stephanie' learned besides Icelandic for the show?

- I don't believe so, but I was really impressed at how quickly she picked up such a difficult language. I've been there off and on for eight years and I can't speak it, I can only understand it partially.

How do you guys feel about YTMND.com's obsession with your show?

BoredJedi rules!!!

<http://stephaniecigarette3.ytmnd.com/>

- I thought it was great, we used to search for the new ones back in the day.

What are your thoughts on the LazyTown memes that have popped up from time to time? Also, there was a rumor awhile back that Julianna was in a relationship with a girl. Any truth to that?

- Love the memes, imagine being part of something that tangents into those places. It's cool.

wikipedia says the show ended a while ago, is there a sequel or something?

- 13 new shows are being filmed as we speak.

How did you find such creepy actors? Also the puppets are creepy as well. Was this a design decision? Or did it just happen.

- One man's creepy is another man's Rondo Hatton. It's all in the eye of the beholder.

I just want to say how grateful I am. My little sister is 7 and she's been diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy since she was 6 months old. She recently started watching LazyTown and she seems so much more... active! She says she wants to be able to do all those things she sees Sportacus doing, she wants to jump and run and to walk on her hands. She's now a lot more enthusiastic when it comes to her rehabilitation. It makes everyone very happy. So, yes, thank you and everyone else from the crew. You're awesome! (:

- Wow, that's so great to hear. Send me a PM and I'll get some personalized stuff for her.

Do you know any one of your co workers that hates their job?

- If they do they don't say. We all bitch about the long hours at times. It can be grueling and the work load seems ginormous at times. But really it's fun to do and the people are great.

I love Sportacus. Tell me what it's like to work with Magnus.

- It's everything you can think of. Challenging, satisfying - he's on the go a lot so it can be hard to track him down. I have followed him to London, Frankfurt, Mexico, Denmark Beverly Hills, all to get time with him so we could do story stuff. It's like dealing with the head of a country. In '04 we did 35 shows. I still can't believe that. It's an incredible number. I don't know how we survived.



Am I a pirate?

- If you are, it's all right with me.

My roommate and I used to get really stoned and watch this show in college. So, thank you for being part of some of the most unproductive and entertaining hours of my university life.

- Did you play the drinking game? Wait for Sportacus to say "Someone's in trouble!" then chug your beer.

are you familiar with Secret Agent 23 Skidoo? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gukC5bCUMOW>

- I'm afraid not. Mani Svavarsson is the one and the only guy who will provide the music tracks for LazyTown. He's been there longer than any of us besides Magnus.

I remember doing a school project on lazy town back in 03/04 when i was in year three/four in primary, my teacher at the time said she knew someone high up in the show, do you know anything about this? The teachers name was Pam Heartly (i think), the primary school was Thwaites primary (Cumbria, UK) and the project was to make an episode of Lazy town with puppets which we made, then we were to send the scripts to Iceland. Please comment to this because I really thought she was telling the whole class a lie. Thanks!

- I'm sorry but I don't remember anything like that. It may be true, but if scripts came into the studio they probably went to the PR department. We had people on the crew from all over the world, many from the UK. I'd believe her!

Thanks for doing this! How did you get to where you are today? What were the major milestones?  
Thanks!

- Just making the decision as to what you want to do with your life is the most important one. And the earlier the better, because having that kind of a goal can pull you through the most difficult parts of school and your early working career. Gives you something to dream about and to aim for.

My little sister found the show in 2006, she loved it and showed me it. Thank you for it.

- You're welcome, glad she liked it.

Did you write the theme song Stephanie sings about dancing? Because if you did, my three year old has tortured me with it for a good year now and it would make me feel all warm and fuzzy inside to know that you know I'm giving you the finger right now.

- Of course not.

I looked and didn't see this answered anywhere. Why do you write under the names of your sons?

- They were little at the time and I had to leave them in the States to work on the show off and on. So giving their names to the scripts made me feel a little closer to them and gave them a kick when they saw their names on screen. Now they are much older so I'm going to take my credit back :)

I'm from México and this seemed like the right place to thank that show for my 5 year old's fruit preference over candy. He just loves apples, and calls them by the name they got in the show "Dulces sanos" (healthy candy). Thank you.

- Magnifico :)

Just wanted to give my opinion.... I am an adult and when I see the show on... I will sometimes watch it because I kinda like it. However.... the strange guy in the blimp character is incredibly lame. Especially with his jumping around shtick, strange accent and odd mustache. He is too goodie-goodie. I much prefer the character Robbie Rotten. He is much more fun (and his acting is ten times better). btw... what is up with the flying frenchie guy? Did he create the show or somethign? Because his character is so lame that I figure the only way his character has stayed on the show is that he created it or is juiced in somehow.

- Well. We try to have something for everybody in the show, so I'm glad you like Robbie.

Will OP deliver proof???

- Done so already but here's another:<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0884131/>

My youngest son was scared of your show for some reason. Even cried for us to turn it off once. Older brother got a kick out of taunting him with it and would hide the remote.

- The show is loud and fast, maybe that was the problem. It's also longer than most shows for the younger kids. They may not have the attention span.

why did you choose puppets over real actors? i guess it gives the show that extra thingy, but still, why? also, what are the special topics you have to include and avoid in a kids television show?

- When I worked for Nickelodeon we were encouraged to avoid the word "magic" because that was considered a Disney word.

So, say someone like me, wants to make a kids show and get it in front of execs. I have my pitch, my pilot shot, but how to get it seen? Advice? Thank you in advance!

- Every year for the MIP Jr. convention thingie they publish a list online of current network buyers, the exec's name/phone number, what they're looking for and how to pitch to them. I don't have the link but it's really helpful.

When you started on this show, did you ever imagine the show would become the success it has become? Ans what exactly made it the popular show it is today? (I know of the show, but never seen it because I was too old when it started)

- Having been on a few truly hit shows I had a feeling we would do well, and I predicted that we would premiere at number one, which we did. But now that it has become kind of a cult hit as well as a popular hit, I think it's fair to assume that it has a few different levels of fans. The youngest for sure, and then there's just the habit forming behavior of older kids who just sit and stare at the TV. But older kids watch with a sense of irony, and we even hear from adults who like it. I do know you can't predict this kind of thing, you have to prepare for it.

Going to ask you the question everyone gets in Iceland. How do you like it?

- Love it.

Have you worked personally with Joe Eigo (the stunt double who does all the flips and impressive tricks)? I've heard he can be difficult because of his ego - any truth?

- I have been on the set while he was working but had no interaction. I do know those guys work their asses off, stunt after stunt for hours on end.

I just wanted to say that boyfriend and I LOVE this show. Golly gee, that sounds childish. But, we love the songs, the strange puppets, the awesome lessons, etc. My question: Does Mr. Scheving work out/do gymnastics on set? That guy is ripped. Keep up the good work! This show will be syndicated one day and our children will watch it!

- Thanks ~ Yes, Magnus does work out, there's a gym inside the studio which we can all use, as well as a sauna. He takes his preparation pretty seriously.

Hey man, just saying, I have a little girl and I love your show. It is very very good, well written, well produced, and the writing is great. I love how healthy things are reframed, fruits being "sports candy" and whatnot. Great job.

- Thanks ~

Have you ever seen the episode of Angel involving puppets and children's programming? Did you enjoy it, is it true to life, give you nightmares, etc.? :)

- No but I do have a secret desire to do a LazyTown episode where the characters play with puppets. Inception.

[deleted]

- Purely happenstance. Mark Zaslove was on board, and we needed a writer to fill in some work for us. Mark knew Ken, recommended him. I interviewed him over the phone and had him flying to Iceland I think within 24 hours. He only wrote the one script for us but he was a colorful addition to the scene for a while.

[deleted]

- Yes, mostly.

Thanks so much for your work and your AMA, Mark. I love Lazy Town, I just wish it was out when I was younger and truly able to experience the magic of it.

- Thank you ~

Where are you from originally, and how do you like living in Iceland? I'm seriously considering leaving the states in 8-10 years, depending on certain life events. Mind expounding a little bit more on the +s and -s of life in the region?

- I'm from the Midwest but spent many years in LA. I can recommend Iceland very highly - with the only caveat being that you need to have a job because it can be expensive. But everyone speaks English (though you should do your best to learn some of the language, it's only polite), there's a lot to do, people are friendly. Plus you're within striking distance of Europe proper for easy trips. Can't say enough about it.

Just wanted to say I don't know much about your show (other than the infamous lil jon vid) but reading through this thread definitely shows that you're a pretty stand up guy. I'm glad you're the head writer for this awesome kids show. So good on ya bud.

- Thanks a lot ~

Im currently 20 years old, and I have to say I watched your show as a teenager quite often. This is one of the best AmA's that ive seen, kudos sir!

- Thank you.

how are u able to keep making episodes as teh star gets older

- We have a new actress in the role~!

How much LSD do you take before sitting down to write?

- There are only sl s.cig gjape;kasc slkcg asfnmjs=a...

Is it true that Sportacus is like the 10th Sportacus and Steph will be the next one?

- I've pitched that scenario, just one among many possibilities.

Yeah! Right at the top of the comments for me.

- Hey everybody, I have to hit the road for a while now -- I'll check back later and answer any last questions that may arise, but I want to thank you all for your kind words! This was a blast ~

First off, I just took a trip to Iceland and that show is a serious mark of pride for your wonderful country. I was in a group of like 40 foreigners and I was the only one who knew what lazy down was. And I'm a 27 year old dude. Second point, it's always great to see a children's show that's all about good values and crap and not about blowing things up. And finally, question time: I'm curious what it's like to work in Icelandic media? I can't imagine it's as cutthroat as it is here in the US. Did you have to work your way up? Do you get state funding? Your country has an amazing cultural heritage, and Lazytown is definitely a big part of it. I've read all the sagas and you should definitely incorporate them into the shows.

- Funny you should mention the sagas, we do try to sneak some references into some things at times. We will probably do a Viking episode soon. The media in Iceland is like elsewhere, but one thing that impressed me was that I could open the newspaper and see an ad that featured a model who was

actually one of our secretaries. Or hear a radio commercial voiced by a guy in business administration. People multi-task in Iceland, no joke.

It's so nuts how 'insular' the culture is there. Everybody knows everybody. I thought it was a joke. I told my tour guide that I was going to meet a friend afterward and she was like 'oh say hi for me'. Turns out they went to high school together.

- Most definitely. They can check an online web site to see if they're related to the person they're dating.

Why are all the characters either, creepy as hell, or look like lolitas? That is a serious question

- Maybe it's the European sensibility as opposed to a US one???

Could we...Get a tour of the production stage sometime? (I'd like to see that lava field too haha)

- I do think there are some photos of it online, and somebody put together a Youtube video of behind the scenes photos.

I don't mean to be offend you, because I think the show is pretty cool, but it moves at such an extreme, almost ADHD pace. Ever think about slowing it down? Great AMA btw

- I prefer longer dialogue scenes because I like to write comedic banter. But others prefer faster action, so we try to strike a balance.

Why do most TV shows have tons of writers when books and movies usually only have one? I've always wondered this, especially since TV shows are usually much simpler.

- We are doing 13 episodes this season. Each script goes through 20 or 30 drafts. So it's not just writing 13, it's writing dozens, juggling them all, etc.

I am an adult who has seen most episodes and has a ton of the music on my ipod. My friends and I used to watch this together when it was a relatively new show and I have great memories of that. Why do you think this (and My Little Pony, I guess) resonates with adults so well when most modern children's shows don't?

- It's the same thing as the Brony phenomenon. The show is well produced, hopefully the writing holds up and I know the performances are solid. I look forward to the feature being produced and seeing how many adults like it. Might be a bit much on the big screen, who knows?

What are the perks of your job?

- International travel, job satisfaction, great new friends. When working from home there is the joy of typing in a robe.

Wow, I actually saw your show for the first time a few hours ago. I had the afternoon off today and my four-year-old wanted to watch it. She seems to love it, so great job putting together a show that appeals to your audience. I found it a bit creepy initially. The mix of human and non-human characters seemed strange to me, especially so because the humans were themselves somewhat non-human. The effect wore off by the end of the show, but it was jarring at first. Is this reaction common? The visual style is striking. I'm not surprised that the show is successful as it looks like nothing else out there. Anyway, great job.

- Totally common reaction, same with me when I first saw it. But it does grow on you. I felt the same way when I first saw the Rugrats' animation. I was used to the smooth Warner Brothers style, and Rugrats was definitely different from that. Glad you like the show.

Awesome job on this AMA Mr. Valenti!!

- Thank you Mr. Gratop!

I'm a little baffled at why there isn't more discussion in this AMA about the music. I wouldn't have noticed LazyTown but for the viral nature of "You are a Pirate." I think every mid-2000s high schooler had a little moment there where it became their anthem. But where "Pirate" caught my eye,

I stuck around for the whole soundtrack. I didn't do much research so I'm only hearing about Mani for the first time, but the whole approach to the music seems to be foundational for the show. Where in the process do you start writing lyrics? Are they an afterthought? A jumping point? Also, the feel of the music has a late 90s early 2000's techno vibe—does that have any traction? Thanks for everything you do. The show really is remarkable. And (how cool is this) wonderfully ironic. Build for kids. Adult sensibilities. And thanks for the AMA.

- Each song needs to address and enhance the theme of the show. So once we know pretty much where the story is going (which will either take the form of a first draft or a detailed outline) then we let Mani know what it's going to be about. He'll start to think about the musical style, he'll talk with Magnus about how he sees it. Then when we arrive at what moment in the show the song will appear, we nail down specific things we need to say. Like maybe we stress teamwork or surprises or whatever. Then Mani creates the temporary version of the music and he starts to play around with some dummy lyrics, some of which may eventually wind up in the actual song. Sometimes he just gives me silly words to fill in the meter so I know how he intends the song to sound. He'll record an MP3 version and I just play it over and over (hence the songs become stuck in my brain!) until I start to find a way to say what we want the song to say. We go back and forth a few times until Mani is happy and then we present to Magnus for his approval or request to try something different. Once everything is ready, we record it and then lip sync on stage.

Can you answer once and for all what her second line is in this video? Thank you!

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk\\_BIS8jzAg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk_BIS8jzAg)

- Have you got a friend who'll stay? Kind of awkward lyrics.

How do LazyTown puppets work? I saw a video a while back of how they were created, but they look pretty complex to maneuver. Thanks for all your great work on the show! It's one the best children's shows out there!

- The puppets are fairly complex. I had always thought of puppets as being fists in a sock, but those days are long gone.

Don't really have a question, just want to say my son and I love this show! It is definitely one of the best kids shows out there

- Thanks!

No question. Just wanted to say that you, sir, know how to do a good AMA. Thanks!

- You're welcome~!

Hi there. I've always enjoyed Lazytown. Wonderful show with great songs. I became familiar with the program back when Lazytown was airing on CBS on Saturday mornings but then later when it shifted to airing on Nickelodeon it seemed like Nick hardly ever aired the program. U.S. fans were often frustrated because it appeared that Nick had little interest in promoting the show (even when ya'll were still producing new episodes several years ago). I was curious about the new Lazytown episodes that are currently being filmed. I had heard about the new actress being picked to play Stephanie, but there's no other information at all about the new shows. I hope Magnus can get Entertainment Weekly to write a piece about the new episodes! 1. Are Magnús and Stefán both returning to play Sportacus and Robbie Rotten? 2. Are any new characters going to be introduced? Will Stephanie, Robbie, and Sportacus continue to be the only characters played by human actors? 3. How many new episodes are planned? 4. When might the new episodes begun airing in the U.S. and the UK? I had heard "late 2012" but like I said there's no info online at all, not even on the official Lazytown web site. Thanks for answering any of my questions! I look forward to seeing the new episodes!

- 1. Yes. 2. A new actress is playing Stephanie. There might be someone new coming... 3. 13 for now, maybe another 13 soon. 4. I don't believe it will be on until 2013, but that is a decision I am not privy to. Thanks for your interest.

Are you guys high when you write? Seriously. That show, although awesome, is messed up. My

little cousins love it!

- These kinds of questions come up a lot but no, you couldn't possibly do our job while in an altered state. Watching the show, however, is up for grabs.

What is your response for all the fanfiction this show has produced? Especially your take on the Sportacus and Robbie shippers (those who put them in a romantic relationship). Do the actors know? How do they feel about it?

- We hear about pretty much everything that goes on in the world outside of our bubble. It's okay, some of the fan fiction is terrific, some not so much. But that's their thing, as long as it's all done in fun nobody minds.

A lot of s will actually watch your show/kids shows in general with their kids. Besides the advertising between each shot, how much of the adults entertainment/perspective is taken into account when writing a show? There are some who say that it's best not to write a "kids show" but a "show that adults and kids can enjoy". Is this a philosophy you agree with? It it a philosophy you've encountered but disagreed with for practical show-writing?

- I absolutely agree with it. In fact, I learned that lesson from John Hughes, who wrote Home Alone when I worked for him. He had small kids at the time but couldn't bear to go to movies with them, considering the standard kiddie fare. So he wrote a movie he would be interested in seeing, and it became the number one comedy of all time (at the time).

What are your favorite episodes and why?

- I have favorite scenes really, not shows. I like when Robbie was stuck on a billboard, I like when Ziggy thought Stephanie was going to leave town forever. I like when Robbie and Sportacus were both wearing Sportacus' uniform. For me it's more like home movies, I remember the week we shot those episodes, what was going on off the set, etc.

Do you never get frustrated with writing a children's show? After doing it for years, is it not difficult to go into the mindset required? Wouldn't you want to write more mature things?

- I do though. I always have a bunch of things going at one time. Otherwise yes, it's possible to become a bit baked.

Hey Mark! I am a college student and I definitely want to get into writing for television (probably not children's shows, but we'll see what happens...) What would you recommend as far as picking a major for someone interested in writing for television?

- Any major that requires a serious amount of writing. It's a habit like anything else, you have to build up your writing muscle so that writing a twenty page paper becomes almost easy. Or major in something that gives you a fallback position like business but then make sure you write for pleasure every day. Everybody can type, but writers park their asses and write.

I worked at a particular licensed toy company in NYC (2004) that worked with you guys. I got to watch a lot of this show. Thanks! Question: This show got a lot of flak for a lot of innuendo type of situations - was any of that intentional or just lots of situations out of context?

- Never intentional and that's honest. It would be like career suicide to do something like that on purpose. But you can never stop others from taking it there, that's just the way the world goes.

No real questions, but you did a fantastic job of ing to posts. I'm not sure how familiar you are with AMA's but you probably got to about double the norm. Anyhow, glad that you have such a fantastic gig on what I see as the most bizarre show out there, but that's probably just because i'm older now. I suppose I watched some crazy stuff too when I was little.

- Thanks ~ Give a writer a chance to write and you get a lotta words.

Must be great to be known for something so popular, and yet not have any of the downsides of fame...

- I think it would truly suck to be famous. No offense to the famous out there.

(FYI: Avatar: The Last Airbender is tied at \$1,000,000 USD per episode) Anyways, who's idea was it to put a production stage...next to a lava field? What if the lava field starts...erupting?

- The lava field is long since dormant, it's all rocks now. And they cover the majority of Iceland.

You don't have to specify if you liked them or not. But are you aware there is a Ton of YouTube poop about your show?

- Absolutely.

Do you ever get worried about competition from other shows? Do you consider them friends, enemies, or do you just not pay much mind to it?

- A lot of us know each other, we hire each other when we can, etc. The competition thing is probably the way baseball players feel, they go from one team to the other.

Well shit... I've been reading the hell out of your comments and I've gone to film school and write myself but am working a restaurant job and getting nowhere so my question is... Is there a PA or grip and electric or any kind of position that you could give me a reference for? If I've learned anything from film school and student projects it's that it really is all about having an in somewhere. I work REALLY hard and I am a reliable, intelligent, 28 year old. (Not too young and not too old) I would do freaking transpo for a TV job in Iceland!

- They are always looking for good people up there but I'm not scheduled to return until October, and they're already wrapping up the first 13. They are supposed to start shooting again in February, so if you will remember to ask me like in January I promise I will talk to them about it, okay?

Hi! Do you still make new episodes of lazytown? I used to watch it in like 5th grade wondering " why arent her eyebrows pink too?" i wasnt the smartest.

- We are making new ones now!

Have you ever met Bjork?

- I've seen her many times but never said hello. However, I did meet this guy up there:

<http://i.imgur.com/1UXVC.jpg>

God, I feel so old. As a 15-year-old, I actually grew up watching the early 2004 Lazy Town with my sister. The "it's mine" kid pissed me off (and still does), and I had a crush on Stephanie. A few questions, if you don't mind: • Is there a certain order to the personality of the puppets - such as the certain blend of personalities creating a sustainable plot and teaching a lesson? • What are key points to scriptwriting a children's show? • If you could go back to 2004 to when you first started writing the show, what would you tell yourself? It'd make my week if you answered this. LazyTown played a huge part in my childhood and I used to be so excited to watch it - even if it played when I was in school, haha.

- There were times when we gave fewer lines to one character or another, and actually failed to give some characters any lines at all. It's a tightrope walk, you have to feed the main story line but try to include everyone in a meaningful way. Sometimes we failed but we always tried.

Mr V, its Evan, one of Noah's old friends from like 1st grade. We eventually moved, so i doubt ya'll remeber me but just have to say that every time the Lazy Town credits we scan it and point every time we see Noah/Zach's name. Just wanted you to we still watch the show.

- I do remember you Evan, hope things are great for you in Texas :)

few questions... 1: How goods the pay, and do you get paid per season or show or what? 2: Do you oversee post production and have a say in the edit and stuff 3: I'm sure I've seen some of the shots on this show and thought the effects (especailly on blue/green screen) look a bit botched/rushed, what kind of money is spent of post? 4: Are you one of those writers that feels your not a writer and is waiting for someone to come along and reaveal you as a fake?

- 1. Writing is a good living if you can find steady work. The contract depends on your level of

experience and the talents of your attorney. 2. I'm invited to watch rough cuts and offer suggestions. I rarely do because editing is a very specific discipline and I only feel moved to say something if a particular plot point was missed or something like that. 3. I don't know the post budget, but I've always felt they do a good job. 4. Once a person moves past the wish-for-it stage and actually does the heavy lifting and work involved in writing, I think that 'fake' thing goes away.

Suppose I wanted to pursue a similar career to yours - what should I do for university?

- Find classes that spark your imagination -- to me that's the most important requirement for a creative job. And just write like a madman.

I heard that some of the visuals are made in the Unreal Engine, is that correct?

- This is correct.

Why is it the world's most expensive children's show ever? Ridiculously high wages for its writers?

- Um...not so much.

Do you know what the 10 stands for on Sportacus's chest and back? Also thank you for creating such a wonderful kids program both my son and daughter love it. In fact the Bing Bang song will make our daughter stop crying immediately and gives her big smiles when she is unhappy. (We have it on repeat alot). Also I get weird looks at work when I walk around singing all the songs!

- I can't tell you, not trying to be coy but a lot of this feeds into future story lines.:) Glad you like the show and the songs.

I can't tell you how excited I was too see this IAMA. I'm not even a kid, but that show was a highlight for my family and I. Plus, my sister and I thought Sportacus was cute, so that might have had something to do with it. I still want to live in a blimp someday, that show was so inspiring... Do you enjoy working with the cast and crew, I mean was it as fun for you as it was for the viewers?

- For sure. We were from all over the globe, we had crew members from all over Europe and the states, plus meeting the Icelanders was cool. The work is so intense, it's like anything you do with a group of people that's difficult -- if you survive, you've kind of become family.

I thought "In the Night Garden" was the most expensive children's show?

- All I know is what Wiki tells me.

I think I'm too old to know much about this show. But I'm very familiar with writing and producing. What inspired you to get into this field?

- I am a TV fan, always have been. In fact, I still own the black and white Magnavox TV box I watched as a kid. It's right next to my desk. I know TV can be pedestrian, it panders, etc. etc. But it opened a world to me and I just knew from an early age that I wanted to be part of it. If writing hadn't worked out I believe I would have tried some other way in the door.

How did you get into writing?

- I've always written, from grade school on. It's not a requirement but most of the writers I know have generally started no later than high school. It's a compulsion/hobby that can actually turn into a career.

Have you ever thought to yourself "Why the hell is this place called Iceland."?

- I think it comes from the Icelandic word for island. Not sure about that though.

My son must have really liked Sportacus. He had a Sportacus costume kit that came with quite a few stick-on mustaches. He ran out of them.

- Tell your son we run out of them sometimes too.

As well as including content for children, do you ever slip in jokes / gags only more mature audiences would understand? Obviously I'm not referring to out-right sexual references, but jokes



that would pass by kids, but be understood by adults? Aply it's very common.

- I don't do it on LazyTown because part of its demographic is younger kids. And while they probably wouldn't get those references, it would still feel creepy.

You and your co-workers were a massive and important part of my son's childhood. He was sportacus for Halloween not just one year, but two. He loved to dance to your show. It was one of the few shows that I didn't mind him watching because he never sat still. He would have to be up and moving. Loved it! Just had to tell you :)

- Thanks ~

Taken from the reddit.com chatwebpage:

[http://www.reddit.com/r/IAMa/comments/yr31z/iama head writer for the worlds most expensive](http://www.reddit.com/r/IAMa/comments/yr31z/iama_head_writer_for_the_worlds_most_expensive)

*My name is Mark Valenti but I write for the show under the names of my sons, Noah and Zachary.*

*I've been with the show since '04. We shoot on a production stage in Iceland, next to a lava field.*

This document was put together by LazyPooky