

Not-so-Lazy studio tour

One <http://www.sportandtechnology.com/images/nl55viewfromed4.jpg> place that Kevin Miller's lucky socks enjoyed visiting recently was Iceland's capital city of Reykjavik, home of the children's television phenomenon LazyTown which promotes fitness and healthy eating for the young (see www.lazytown.com). *S&T* can tell you now, the LazyTown puppets were the only ones legless in Reykjavik that week with those alcohol prices! Yikes! It's a good job we've been teetotal since July.

S&T was in town to participate in the 'Playing the Game' Congress, which was all about anti-corruption and governance in sport, plus us speaking about technology in a random scheduling moment. The organisers kindly laid on an excursion to the famous geysers, as well as a beautiful waterfall and crater, among other natural delights. Well, apparently they are beautiful - it was hard to see much through the blizzards and/or while sliding down icy mountain passes to cries from the guide of: "Be careful, there aren't any railings; three tourists died here last week" and the like. Nice.

Because the excursion to LazyTown seemed slight less arduous and didn't ostensibly offer the threat of serious injury, and also because *S&T*'s nieces and nephews (and husband) had literally begged us to get lead super hero character Sportacus' autograph, we scuttled off to the set of the globally popular kids' show, with a slightly less scared spring in our step.

For *S&T* readers unfamiliar with the LazyTown concept, think Sesame Street meets Batman and Robin. Puppets interact with human characters (both good and evil) while munching on five portions of fruit and veg per day in a bid to motivate children into following healthy lifestyles. A carrot for example is described as 'sports candy' in the LazyTown Christmas Special that *S&T* watched purely for research purposes. (Note to readers: That Robbie Rotten is creepier than the Rat Catcher in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!; Parents, don't watch this alone.)

We were greeted at the state-of-the-art studios by Sportacus himself, aka Magnus Scheving, who also happens to be the creator, CEO and co-founder of LazyTown and was simply the most hyperactive, yet charming, chappie *S&T* has ever met. Scheving claims to have reduced childhood obesity in his native Iceland by 16%, through the programme, on which he works five days a week, 15 hours a day, all year around, and you can't help but believe him. Thank goodness his wife works there too else the poor dear would probably never get a cuddle. "It's dark when you get to work and it's dark when you leave, so recently we've started working on a higher floor than the basement so we can see daylight occasionally," explained Scheving, in between back flips and bounces (not really, although he did leave a Superman-like trail of mist when dashing between production rooms on our whirlwind studio tour).

A <http://www.sportandtechnology.com/images/nl55viewfromed3.jpg> moustached vision in blue lycra (while playing Sportacus at least; unfortunately he was wearing regular clothes when we met him), Scheving is twice a former European Aerobics Champion. He performs all his own stunts (which involve a lot of aerial somersaults), and is an ambassador for healthy living, often speaking at conferences around the world on the subject.

As for the technology, nothing has been done by halves by jingo, with the LazyTown studio being one of the most advanced High Definition Virtual Cinematography facilities in the world. "We built it within 43 days," says Scheving, who of course actually turns out to have built most of it himself, as well as his own house. And probably the majority of Reykjavik. And Iceland. A super hero who is both DIY-gifted and knows how to whip up a decent fruit salad as well. Swoon.

According to Scheving, high definition has never been used the LazyTown way before. The backgrounds to the sets can be changed immediately, whereas in most studios the backdrop is a green screen with effects being added in afterwards. "The camera positions change 13 times per day and we are the most expensive TV show in the world - costing \$600,000-\$800,000 per episode, but we are also the fastest-selling show in history reaching 96 countries within nine months."

That's one helluva baby he has created!

As *S&T* is now officially exhausted after remembering the LazyTown tour, we are heading off to wash our lucky socks and stock up on carrots in advance of the festive season. Well, if they are good enough for Sportacus.....Now where did we put that lycra catsuit?