

SOCCKER AM Words ADAM THORN Pics TOM BARNES

**loaded** spends a day behind the scenes at Soccer am to see just how mad it really is. Answer: every bit as bloody mental as you always thought it was

# Morning Glory!



The set is actually tiny



"Hoooooo-way"

**C**arnage. As loaded is taken by Soccer am's publicist to catch a glimpse of the set, we're stunned at the sheer unprofessional chaos in front of us.

Peering around the entrance, we notice someone is trying to haul himself into an ill-fitting horse outfit, while another member of the crew jumps on the sofa. There's cats and dogs everywhere - weird, dodgy blokes in outfits that is - and, perhaps most significantly of all, a man dressed, or rather semi-dressed, as the pope. With a popemobile next to him, to add to the er, realism. The most bonkers thing of all? The show hasn't even started yet.

### welcome to the madhouse

Of course you've all seen Soccer am, it's now in its 18th year. The concept, at least how we envisage it, is pretty simple: after getting royally shitfaced on Friday night you stagger into your lounge the next morning, throbbing headache and taste of bitter vomit lingering in your mouth, and sit down in an attempt to clear that hangover.

But whereas other breakfast shows try to wake you up by thrusting pastel colours and inoffensive, personality-deficient presenters at you, Soccer am aims to keep the party going while setting you up to survive the ten hours until your next night out.

Most of the crew members double up as presenters with each encouraged to have as much screen time as possible. And yes, most of the jokes are utterly shit, and they are the same shit jokes every week, but that's almost part of its charm. Soccer am laid down the template for *The Inbetweeners* long before Briefcase Wanker arrived.

So when we were invited to actually spend a day going behind the scenes - courtesy of presenters Max and Helen - getting the gig of hosting our LAFTAS ceremony - we were keen to see how exactly they bottle this madness.

"Not everyone who applies to be in the audience or in our fans of the week gets accepted" explains a member of the crew mere minutes before the start of the programme. "They've got to be up for it,

**"We were so happy when Mr T came on. 'Cos that's the best we'll get from now until the end of time. I was starstruck by him"**



"I'm nervous, can I cancel?"



**"There was this one Wycombe fan who stank. The next season I said 'Thank God you don't stink like the last Wycombe lot'. It was the same group of fans"**

because if they are not, the whole show suffers." And everyone here is buzzing. Seconds before the show goes live, the floor manager tells the audience "Have a good time, and that's an order." After the opening credits roll the viewers at home are shown some footage of their Harlem Shake (which, as it turns out, was the madcap scene we encountered before we arrived) before Tubes is introduced to the front of the set (to chants of "Tuuuuubes" from the crew) and we're presented with our first sketch, basically showing the technically-titled assistant producer running through all of Sky Sport's different sets, causing all sorts of chaos in his bid to track down David Beckham, who he has spotted driving past.

The other people chanting for Tubes are the fans of the week, who today are Arsenal supporters, and they are berating or serenading every incident on the show. Despite arriving at the show for 7am, they looked primed for a big night out.

### ringmaster

But attempting to manage this madness is Helen (who has been at the helm for a staggering 17 years) and newish partner Max - a man who has pulled off the almost-impossible act of replacing Tim Lovejoy and making the show his own. We ask them later how they keep things under control, especially those rowdy fans. "Well sometimes we find out about their previous convictions and have to hastily change them," jokes Max. "We put them up in a hotel the night before, so normally they're too hungover to move. Ask Helen about the smelly Wycombe fan."

Er, OK. "There was one Wycombe fan that stank, and stank bad," she giggles. "Whiffed out the whole corridor to the studio. When the next lot of Wycombe fans came on the show the following season I said 'Thank god you don't stink like one of the fans we had last year' and they all cheered and pointed to this one bloke - it was the same bunch of fans." Back to the show and a huge green sheet is flung from over the top of the set, to create a giant virtual news studio. "Ref sews up his pocket," shouts producer Baby Elvis as he presents a clip of a referee rubbing his red card on his shorts, to giggles from the audience. "and where's wally in the crowd?" he adds as some poor ten-year-old wearing red stripes is spotted in the stands. The jokes seem rapid fire when you're watching it on the television but things



Another day in the office



"I've got a day job, don't you know"

## Best bonkers breakfast shows



### THE BIG BREAKFAST

This anarchic show launched Johnny Vaughn and Chris Evans - but don't hold that against it



### SM:TV LIVE

Along with Cat Deeley, Ant and Dec took the piss out of their audience of kids with games such as Wonky Donkey



### LIVE & KICKING

The show's glory years were hosted by Zoe Ball and Jamie Theakston with comedy support from Trevor and Simon



### DICK & DOM IN DA BUNGALOW

Dick and Dom's morning gameshow saw kids compete for booby prizes such as bottled water or cakes made of carpet



### THIS MORNING

This ITV staple isn't bonkers, you say? Well you're forgetting Richard Madeley's impression of Ali G, aren't you now



move at an even more alarming pace when you're there. Over the years the show has got shorter and is now just two hours long. Out the window went many of the sit down interviews, but the comedy skits and regular features have all been squeezed in. While this means utter carnage, we soon realise this is, in fact, exceptionally well-organised mayhem.

That best-mates-like banter doesn't stop, something that again stems from the hosts' chemistry. They've been together for five years now, so we wonder what's their best moment?

"Well we didn't see it," recalls Max, "but seconds before we were coming back from an ad break our boss screams down our ear that Mel B has just left to get a Nando's despite the fact that Dev in the office was pleading with her to stay while dressed as Jason Lee with a Pineapple on his head. I love that image.

"And I guess randomly mentioning my clarinet to Amy Macdonald and two weeks later playing it at the Hammersmith Apollo to 5,000 people. That was pretty random.

"Oh and I loved training with Bolton when they were in the Premier League - everything I hit went in. They even asked if I could play in a reserve game."

"No they didn't," interrupts Helen. "Actually

the Rafa Benitez show was amazing, just amazing. He answered his questions perfectly on air, then told us the truth when we went to the commercial break! And no, I'm not telling you what he said."

As the show goes on, there's trouble for star guest Sebastien Bassong. His former Spurs stay doesn't go down too well with those Arsenal fans, who sing "You've come to see The Arsenal!" Credit to him, he takes it in his stride, though the defender makes a lovely little gaffe when he tells Max and Helen that it's often "boring at the back".

### the soccer a team

Talking of guests, Max has his favourite. "We were so happy when Mr T came on. 'Cos that is the answer from now until the end of time I was starstruck - and I've only ever been starstruck by Karl Kennedy from Neighbours - so Helen had to ask all the questions."

They can't all have been great though? "Jeremy Piven was a great booking and one of my favourite actors. He was polite, but he didn't really get the show, and after telling us in the interview that he was really hoping to take in a live 'soccer' match somewhere on the



Sunday, he then asked to leave early because he had a flight to catch."

The show now drawing to a close, the production team have a favour to ask. In this morning's Third Eye, viewers got to see a photographer falling over and continuing to snap while following a goal celebration. Enter *loaded's* very own Tom Barnes, who is asked to recreate the incident for their end of programme competition to see how many goals can be scored in the garden. It's a challenge he pulls off perfectly - except for the bruising he gets.

Before we leave though, we have just one question left for our 2013 LAFTAS presenters - what happens if the duo actually win the award they're nominated for? "Well I'll guess we'll have to run to our seats very quickly and then look shocked and hug people next to us who we don't even know," jokes Max.

"We aren't going to win," laughs Helen. "If we did, you would have to get one of those crook things to get Max off the stage. He'll thank his parents. And Dion Dublin." ■ **loaded**

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