

Game Nite

FREE

THE MAGAZINE OF TABLETOP GAMING

NOVEMBER 2017 ❖ ISSUE # 18



J. ALEX KEVERN
GAME DESIGNER

"THE 7TH CONTINENT" REVIEW

RAHDO
RUNS THROUGH

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Game Designer

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ISSUE # 18



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Whistle Stop © Bezier Games

Editor in Chief/Publisher:
Serge Pierro

Editor:
Eric Devlin

Writers:

Bill Braun
Kevin Lauryssen
Jeff Rhind
Tom Franklin
Steve Krause

Photographers:

Serge Pierro
Bill Braun
Jeff Rhind
Tom Franklin
Steve Krause

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Welcome to the first monthly edition of Game Nite magazine! We would like to thank all of you for your support and encouragement - it is greatly appreciated!

Hopefully there will be only a few bumps along the way as we make the transition to a monthly schedule. Please bear with us, as this is new territory and we are trying to find our “rhythm”.

As you have probably noticed, I have redesigned the magazine. Hopefully you’ll find it to be an improvement.

Be sure to check out two of our new features: The Interview Gallery and our monthly Top 10. This month’s Top Ten: the top 10 games from Essen Spiel 2017 that caught my interest!

In this issue:

Bill Braun reviews, “Witches of the Revolution.”

Tom Franklin reviews “Viral”.

Jeff Rhind’s column on Solo Gaming features, “SUPERHOT”.

Special thanks to J. Alex Kevern and Richard Ham for taking time from their busy schedules to share their thoughts with our readers.

Congratulations to Bruno Sautter & Ludovic Roudy, as well as Serious Poulp, for winning an Editor’s Choice Award for their amazing game, “The 7th Continent”. My choice for “Game of the Year”!

Congratulations to Vlaada Chvátal and CGE for winning an Editor’s Choice Award for their mobile app “Through the Ages” which captures all of the excellence of the board game and more.

Serge Pierro

Editor in Chief/Publisher
editor@gamenitemagazine.com

1

Merlin

Queen Games

Designer: Stefan Feld



2

Transatlantic

PD-Verlag

Designer: Mac Gerdts



3

Charterstone

Stonemaier Games

Designer: Jamey Stegmaier



4

Gaia Project

Z-Man Games

Designers: Helge Ostertag
& Jens Drogemuller



5

Santa Maria

Aporta Games

Designers: Kristian A. Otsby
& Eilif Svensson



6

Dragon Castle

Horrible Games

Designers: Lorenzo Silva,
Hjalmar Hach & Luca Ricci



7

Alien Artifacts

Portal Games

Designers: Mracin Ropka
& Viola Kijowska



8

Ta-Ke

HUCH!

Designer: Arve D. Fuhler



9

Azul

Plan B Games

Designer: Michael Kiesling



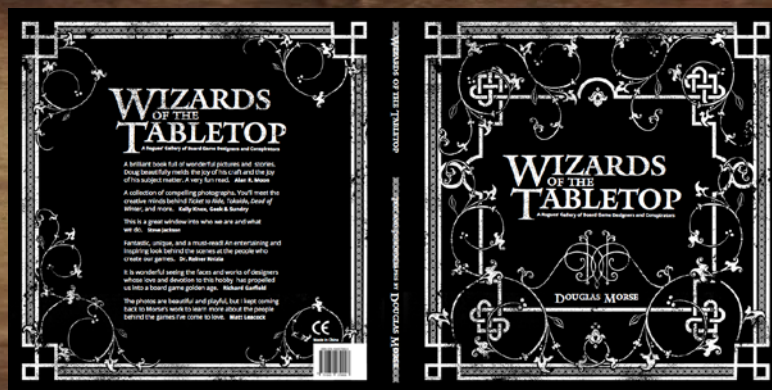
10

Alexandria

LudiCreations

Designer: Babis Giannios





Wizards of the Tabletop by Douglas Morse

In issue #2 of Game Nite we reviewed Douglas Morse's excellent documentary, "The Next Great American Game", and while the story of Randall Hoyt was interesting, I was more enraptured with seeing the industry personalities and the special bonus features. Morse has now extended his last offering by publishing an oversized book featuring photographs of industry insiders, along with succinct paragraphs about them and their games, thus making it a perfect companion for those who own "The Next Great American" DVD or for that matter anyone who is interested in the movers and shakers within the industry. While it is not a comprehensive overview, many of the top industry personnel are included.

The linen finished, hard cover book has 100 pages and measures 12" x 12". The book was designed by Randall Hoyt who was the subject of "The Next Great American Game", as well as the designer of "Road Hog". (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) The semi-glossy paper has a substantial feel to it and does a good job of preventing bleed-through of the other pages.

The general format of the book is to feature a person and a game associated with them. For instance, Antoine Bauza is featured in a two page layout that has a large color photograph on the left page and a black and white photo on the right. The color photo is of the pre-painted miniatures from the Samurai backing level on Kickstarter for "Tokaido". The black and white photo is a casual shot of Bauza himself. On the right page there are three paragraphs, two of which are devoted to background information on the designer and one that gives a concise overview of "Tokaido" itself.

The photographs in the book tend to be playful and capture the subjects in interesting ways. There really aren't that many "formal" photos, other than a perhaps a planned portrait shot, as most of them are somewhat whimsical and creative. Some of the standouts include a "dreamy" shot of Mary Flanagan with a shallow depth of field, a stoic black and white portrait of Tom Felber and the hilarious shot of Steve Jackson being "crushed to death" beneath an "Ogre Designer's Edition" box.

There is a special "Index of Games". This nine page section covers the games that were previously discussed. Each game has the following information: Title, Year Published, Designer(s), Artist(s), Spiele de Jahres winner (if so what year it won) and the pages on which the game is discussed. It was a joy to be able to scan the Spiele de Jahres column and quickly see what games won and in what years. This column also includes games that were nominated for awards, as well as Kennerspiel des Jahres award winners and nominees.

This book will appeal to anyone who is interested in the personality side of the board game hobby. While the information tends to be quite concise, there is just enough information to give the reader a broad sense of the subject matter. However, there were times where the thought process seemed to have been truncated, probably due in part to the page layout, and the resulting section seemed a little choppy.

The main draw of the book is going to be the photographs of the designers and industry personalities. A broad range of people are covered, including those who are not designers or publishers. These include people such as Scott Alden of Board Game Geek, the crew from Funagain Games and reviewer Brittanie Boe.

"Wizards of the Tabletop" is a perfect coffee-table book that you can have placed on a table and have guests leisurely peruse it and gain some insight into the hobby - perhaps enticing them to try out some of the games mentioned inside. Anyone who fancies themselves as a serious gamer will most certainly want to add this book to their collection and even those who have a casual interest in the hobby will be intrigued by many of the personalities contained within and the games they created. 🎲

Author:
Publisher:

Douglas Morse
Grandfather Films Press

RECOMMENDED

www.tabletopmovie.com

WIZARDS OF THE TABLETOP

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY DOUGLAS MORSE

WIZARDS OF THE TABLETOP

A Rogues' Gallery of Board Game Designers and Conspirators

DOUGLAS MORSE



Sample pages (pgs. 46-47) from “Wizards of the Tabletop”

TableTop

At age 14, Wil Wheaton was introduced to Steve Jackson Games' *Car Wars* (1980) and *Illuminati* (1987) and they helped improve what had been a difficult year. In 2011, Felicia Day was preparing to pitch the Geek & Sundry channel to YouTube and asked if Wil wanted to pitch a show for it. She said something like “You love to play games, how about a show where you review games.” Brainstorming, Wil thought it would be more intriguing if he played them – a cross between *Dinner for Five* and *Celebrity Poker*, but with nerdy board games. Wil said “We'll call it something like *TableTop*, but not lame.”

In 2012, *TableTop* premiered on YouTube with *Small World* (2009), a fantasy re-theme/update of *Vinci* (1999) by Philippe Keyaerts. The re-theme proved fortuitous, turning a niche game into an international darling which is still in print and features multiple expansions. Games featured on the show see their sales spike dramatically, a phenomenon industry insiders call “the *TableTop* effect.” The shows themselves often garner over a million views and their success is a testament to Wheaton's passion. In 2013, *TableTop* won the prestigious Diana Jones award for their first season.

***Takenoko* (2011)**

Here at Gen Con, promoting the show he hosts, is Wil Wheaton playing an oversized version of *Takenoko* (2011) with designer Antoine Bauza, John duBois, and Sasha Kinder. *Takenoko* involves strategically maneuvering a gardener who plants and irrigates fields while a giant panda is eating bamboo. As with many Bauza games, set collecting, special scoring cards, and limited actions guide play. The game was featured on the second season of *TableTop* in 2013. The table featured on the show, as seen at Gen Con, is the Emissary by Geek Chic.





Sample pages (pgs. 62-63) from “Wizards of the Tabletop”



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Toni & Ted Alspach

Ted comes to board game design and publishing from years in software development. Like many in the industry, a passion for gaming became an unexpected career, not only in design, but also in publishing. Toni is play tester prime and Ted considers her the key to Bézier Games' success. *Suburbia* (2012) and *Castles of Mad King Ludwig* (2014) are some of their best-known Euro style games with superb bidding and building mechanics. Notable Bézier games from other designers include *Subdivision* (2012) by Lucas Hedgren, *Terra* (2014), a party game from Friedemann Friese, and Tom Lehman's *Favor of the Pharaoh* (2015).

One Night Ultimate Werewolf (2014)

Ultimate Werewolf (2007) is Ted's take on the hidden role games *Mafia* and *Werewolf*. *One Night Ultimate Werewolf* (with Akihisa Okui, 2014) received a Spiel des Jahres Recommended award in 2015 and is the new standard for quick and easy plays. The game's success has led to innumerable expansions, re-themes, and spin-offs, including, with Rob Daviau, *Ultimate Werewolf Legacy* (2017).





Through the Ages: A New Story of Civilization

My favorite computer game of all-time is Sid Meier's "Civilization". So it should come as no surprise that one of my favorite boardgames is "Through the Ages". Needless to say that when it was announced that the board game was going to be coming to the mobile platform, I was quite excited. Although I've occasionally played "Through the Ages" online at Board Game Arena, they still use the older version of the game, so I was really looking forward to seeing how the updated game would be implemented on the app. Not surprisingly... it's amazing! Let's see what this "Editor's Choice Award" winner brings to the table.

The first thing that you are going to want to do is set up your profile. You get to choose a user name and a color to go with your avatar. From then on whenever you log into the game you are greeted with avatar/user name and various buttons, such as: Profile, Extras, Settings, Local Game and Online Game. All of these are self explanatory.

For many users, the Local Game is going to be of the most interest and it has several options. The most important one is the Custom Game. This allows you to play against 1-3 AI controlled opponents, each having three different levels of strength. The other Local options include playing Challenges and Pass and Play, as well as the game's Tutorial.

New players are going to want to use the somewhat extensive and long Tutorial in which "Ancient Vlaada" guides you through the intricacies of the game, all with a dash of humor. The tutorial is decent, but watching an online video couldn't hurt.

The graphics are gorgeous. From the opening screen to the main play area, everything is sharp and clear and nicely laid out. One of the nicer graphic elements is that your cards are displayed as actual buildings. Should you want to see what the buildings represent, you just tap on the screen and an overlay appears with the actual cards and the tokens that are on them. Watching the graphic representation of your civilization grow adds to the playing experience.

The buying track is cleanly laid out across the top of the screen and makes drafting cards effortless. One of the nice features is that the cost of additional Wonders is included in the cost currently displayed. In order to see what a card does, tap on the card and a screen overlay appears with a large display of the card and its text, as well as all of the options available.



Your important in-game stats are situated below the cards and show all of the important resources, both your current supply and how much they will produce each turn. Below the buildings is the area that displays the blue and yellow cubes of the game and the associated smiley faces and possible corruption.

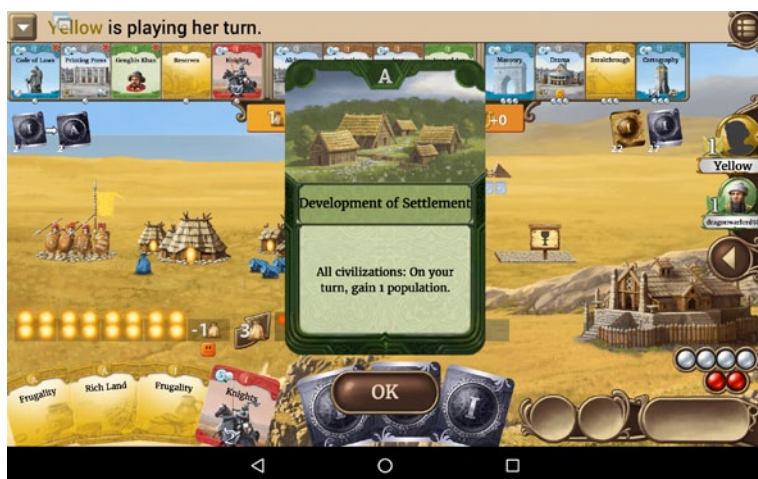
Along the right side of the screen is the area for the player's avatars, as well as the display of their Military strength. In the bottom corner is the Civil and Military action display and the "End Turn" button.

It was easy to toggle between my screen and my opponent's display by tapping on their Avatar and returning to my screen by tapping mine. All of the graphic features were available on their screens as well.

When the game ends the app displays the final Events, one at a time, and displays how each player did. After everything has been tallied, you are greeted with a screen displaying the final score. As a bonus, the final score also displays what Leaders each player used during the game, as well as each of the Wonders in play.

[Continued on next page>](#)

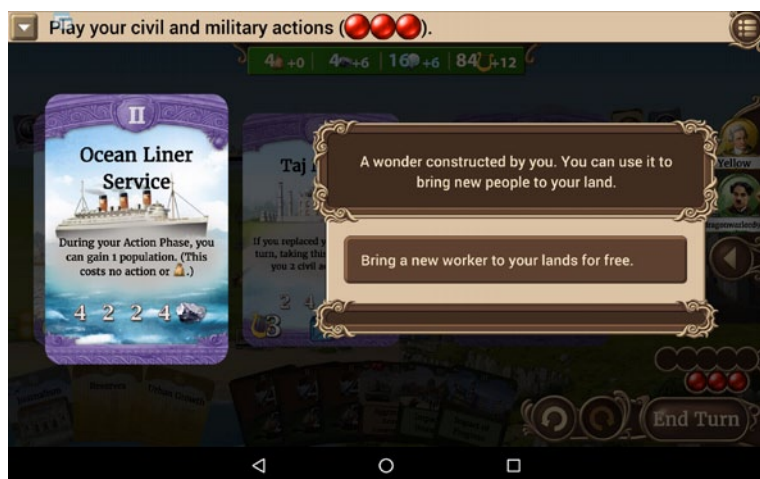
Mobile Review (Cont.)



Overall the game is solid and very enjoyable. Even on the easy level the AI makes decent choices. I don't ever recall seeing it take a "bad" card or doing something that wasn't associated with the strategy that they were apparently pursuing. Though it did seem to be a bit "shy" as far as engaging in a Military strategy, especially when I made no effort to increase mine. However, in games where I did pursue a Military strategy it adapted to my moves and played more aggressively.

The app captures the game play beautifully and is actually more enjoyable than the actual board game, this is due in large part to the app taking care of all the "housekeeping" elements, as well as the fact that the game plays much faster than it does in real life.

The user interface is a pleasure to work with and kept everything moving along smoothly. I appreciated that the app would question you in certain situations, such as at the end of your turn when you're going to take Corruption, and ask if you wished to proceed or redo elements of your turn. Another welcome feature was the inclusion of an undo button, as I hate inadvertently touching the screen and being penalized by not being able to undo the "move".



In a year in which several games have received impressive apps, “Through the Ages” has climbed to the top for me. It’s an excellent implementation of a great board game and it’s a joy to play, as well as having the opportunity to play it anytime - online or offline. I’m sure that many fans of the board game picked this up upon release, but if you’ve never played it before, perhaps now is the time to purchase the app and find out what makes this game is so wonderful - you’ll be happy you did! 🎲

Version # 1.2.4
Price: \$9.99
Devices: Android and iOS
Developer: CGE Digital

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

www.czechgames.com



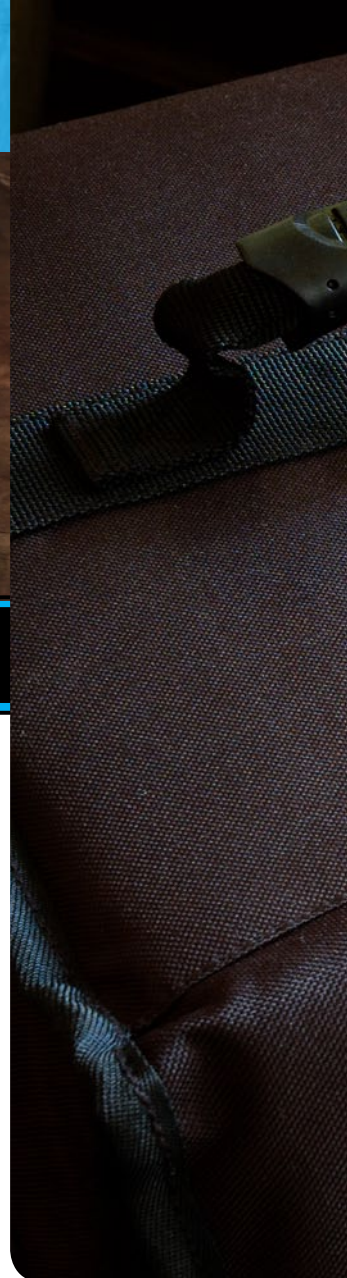
Game Haul : Game Night

In the past it was not unusual for a player to bring one of their games to game night in a plastic shopping bag. Eventually they found themselves transporting 2-3 games and they switched over to a cloth bag. Nowadays it's not unusual for players to invest in a dedicated bag for carrying their games - especially ones that hold 4+ games. Top Shelf Fun offers two such bags in their "Game Haul" line of products. We will be taking a look at their smaller model, the "Game Haul: Game Night Board Game Bag", which holds four 12" x 12" x 3" game boxes.

The bag arrives "folded" inside a thin, plastic bag. When removed from the bag and unfolded the bag takes on an impressive appearance, as you quickly become aware of the various features that were hidden while still in the packaging. When it is fully opened it measures 13" x 13" x 13". The bag is constructed of a nylon/polyester blend that has reinforced stitching and has 10mm padding on each of its sides.

The top of the bag features a black plastic handle that is attached to the top via a nylon strap. I tugged vigorously on the handle to try and rip it off the top, but it is securely sewn on and made me feel confident that it would be able to support the weight of the games.

The bag is front loaded and has a large flap that tucks inside the bag when the bag is folded for storage purposes. The flap has padding inside of it, as well as a large velcro tab along the top. Each side of the flap has a black, metal zipper that goes from the top to the bottom of the flap. The flap itself attaches to the top of the bag by the aforementioned velcro strip that connects with the matching strip on the hanging flap at the top of the bag, which also features the name of the bag printed in white.





Each of the bag's sides has a different feature. One side has a 9" x 5" x 3" zippered nylon bag attached to it that is suitable for accessories, as well as smaller games. We were able to put a copy of "Herbaceous" in it with no problem. The bag sports a black zipper across the upper edge. The other side of the bag has an open mesh netting that is 7 inches tall and is suitable for carrying a beverage. It has an elastic band across the top to help keep the container secure. I put a wine bottle in it and it was securely held in place and I also tested a bottle of water, which sat somewhat loosely in it, but was more than effective in carry it.

The bottom of the bag features four, 3" x 1 1/2" rubber pads that each have 18 rubber "spikes" arranged in a 3 x 6 pattern. These elevate the bottom of the bag approximately a half inch off of the ground and can potentially avoid any damage to the bag or boxes in a shallow puddle of water, as well as providing a means of traction for preventing the bag from sliding around.

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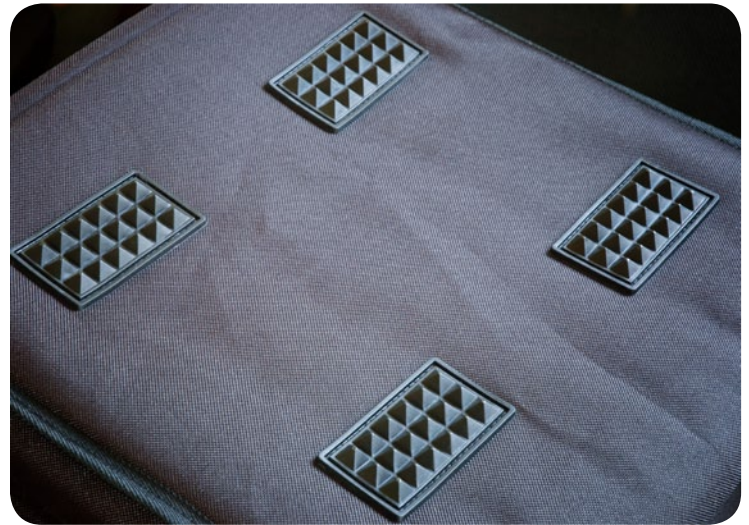
Accessory Review (Cont.)



Besides being able to carry the bag by the handle, there is also a detachable shoulder strap. The strap has black metal clips at each end and attaches to metal connectors attached to the bag. The strap is adjustable and features a padded shoulder pad to help alleviate some of the discomfort on your shoulder.

I found the bag to be a pleasant way to transport games and I had no problems while using it. The square boxed games fit snugly inside and there was no movement when the front of the bag was zipped up and the velcro strips attached. It also carried smaller boxes with no problems other than the boxes shifting about. Foam or another material could be used to stop this if you consider it a problem. I generally preferred to use it with 2 or 3 “big” games and a couple of smaller ones, depending on weight and size. The handle was preferable for short distances, but the shoulder strap was better for longer distances.

The bag itself is quite light, even with the padding and plastic/metal components, however, when fully loaded with four large games, stuffing the side pocket with another game and accessories and a full bottle of wine, the bag is quite heavy and even with the shoulder strap it was a bit



uncomfortable to carry. Of course I would not normally fill it with that amount of stuff, but if you are thinking of doing so, there is a weight factor to consider. Of course the weight factor is due to the games and has nothing to do with the bag itself. The company states that there is a weight limit of 20 pounds.

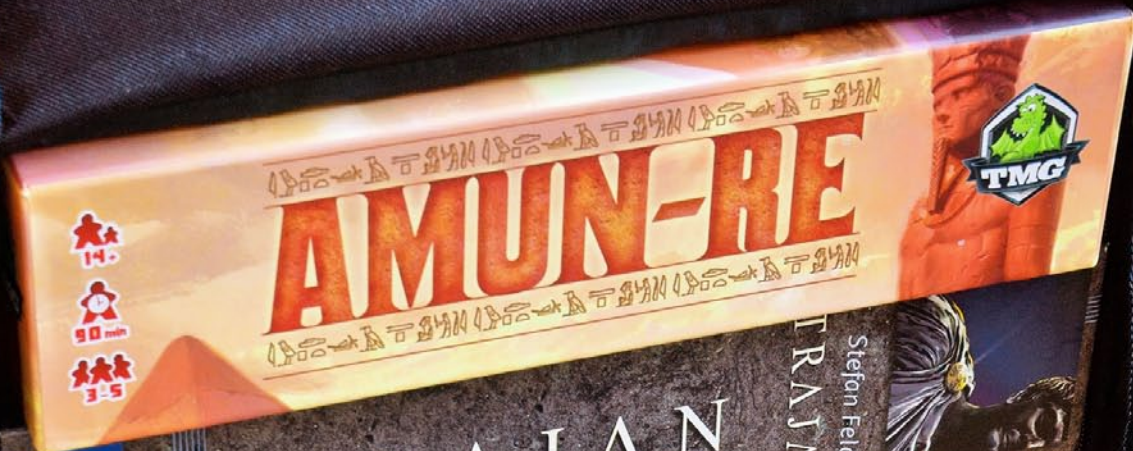
My only complaint is that I would have preferred to have two shoulder straps, similar to those found on a back pack. The company does offer a larger product (Game Haul Bag) that has this feature, and if it was implemented on this bag, it would be perfect. Not surprisingly, the weight distribution is a bit awkward, as the weight of the bag is off to one side.

Even with the uneven weight distribution, this is currently my “go to” bag to carry games in. It is a pleasant design that offers durability and an attractive black design. What makes it even more incredible is that the current price is only \$29.99, which is certainly an affordable price for a product of this nature. If you are looking for a bag to transport your games, then this is one that you should seriously look at. 🎲

Manufacturer: Topshelf Fun

RECOMMENDED

www.topshelf-fun.com



The Climbers

By Serge Pierro



A Simply Complex Abstract Game

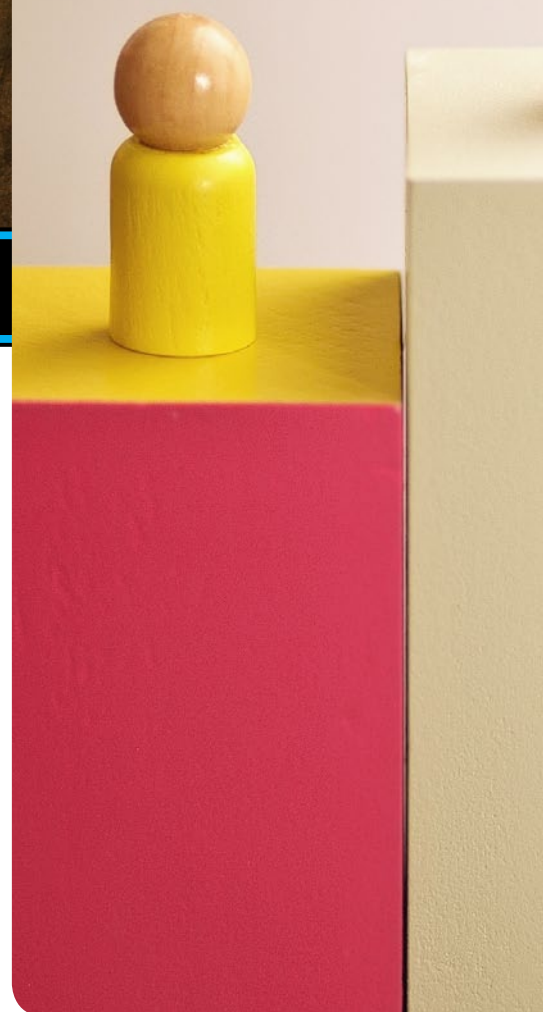
One of the most eye-catching games in recent memory is Capstone Games' "The Climbers", which is part of their Simply Complex line of games. The components of this abstract game are all made of wood and the rules are quite simple, yet it delivers a very satisfying gaming experience, as players race to the top of an ever-changing stack of blocks.

"The Climbers" comes in a 6" x 11" x 3 1/2" box, which is a bit heavy, due to the fact that all of the components are made of solid pieces of wood. Upon opening it you are greeted with the various wooden blocks neatly arranged in the box with only 1" of free space at one end for the storage of the Climbers, Blocking discs and the Ladders.

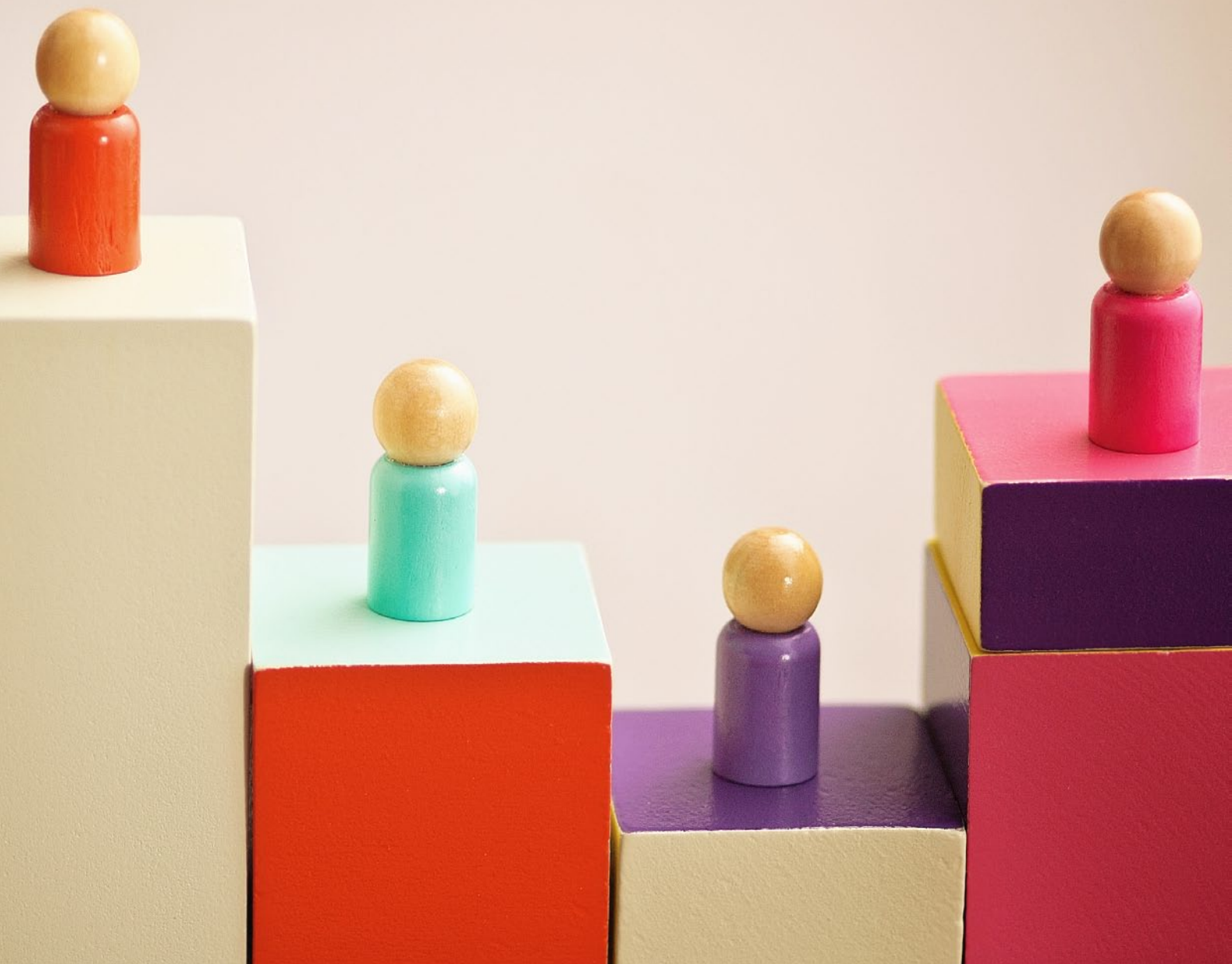
The Climbers are the player pieces of the game and they are composed of two pieces: a spherical natural finished "head" and a painted cylinder body. The heads are glued onto the body. The Blocking discs are cylinders that are essentially half the height of the Climber's body. Each player will receive a matching set of a Climber and a Blocking Disk in one of the five player colors: Orange, Pink, Blue, Yellow and Purple.

The other non-block components are the 10 wooden Ladders which are nicely made and come in two different sizes, short and long. Players will receive one of each size at the start of the game.

The main components of the game are the various blocks. Each of these solid wooden pieces have a different color painted on each of their six faces. The blocks come in four different sizes and feature opposing colors on each side. The sizes are based on cubes and are as follows: half cube, cube, double cube and triple cube. It is worth noting how the blocks are arranged, as this will save you time when putting the game away.



The setup for the game is quite unique. The two, neutral colored, triple-sized cubes are placed vertically in the center of the play area. Then all of the players will place the remaining cubes around them until they are completely covered and there are no cubes left to place. Needless to say, the random nature of this type of setup structure should grant a fresh starting position for each new game.



On a player's turn they can do the following: Move a Climber, Move and/or rotate an unoccupied block, Move a Climber and optionally place a Blocking disk.

Move a Climber: Climbers may only move on blocks whose surface matches the color of the Climber or on neutral colored blocks. Climbers may only move on the same level or climb to a higher one, however, they are not allowed to move to a lower level or move diagonally. In order to climb to the next level, the Climber must be able to "see" over the block they are moving to (a "half cube" block), otherwise they must use one of their Ladders.

Ladders are an important strategic element of the game, as each one can only be used once and then it is removed from the game. The short ladder will allow you to climb a 2 level cube, while the long ladder has a reach of 2 to 4 cubes. Of course, the matching/neutral color of the landing block must still be taken into account.

Move a Block: Players may either rotate a block in its place or take a block and move it elsewhere. The moving of the blocks is the main strategic element of the game, as they allow you to help position yourself to climb to a higher level, as well as being moved to hinder

[Continued on next page>](#)

The Climbers (Cont.)

your opponent's progress. Players are not allowed to move a block that the previous player just moved.

Move a Climber: After moving a Block, the current player may continue their movement, if legally possible.

Place a Blocking Disk: Like the Ladders, the Blocking disk can only be used once and is then discarded. When placed on a block, that block can't be rotated, moved or occupied. On the player's next turn they will discard the Blocking disk that they had placed and remove it from the game.

Bonus movement: Players have the option of moving their Climbers upward at the end of a player's turn, if they are legally able to do so.

The game ends when all players are unable to move up a level during a round. The player who is at the highest level wins. In the case of a tie, the player who first arrived at that level wins.

Although the wooden components are the first thing that capture your attention, it is the simple, yet, strategic game play, that will captivate you. This game will appeal to a wide spectrum of players. I found that gamers and non-gamers enjoyed the game equally and that it was a game that could be brought to a family gathering, without them feeling as if it was "over their heads".

The three one-time items enhance the decision making process, as determining when to use them is one of the more important decisions that players will need to make during the game, particularly the use of the Ladders.

The only downsides to the game are that some of the edges are not perfectly squared off and that the paint can get chipped from pieces banging together, either during the game or from moving them about. Both of these are minor issues and don't affect the playability of the game at all.

I'm happy to say that this is a game that will be hitting the table quite often in the future. From the uniqueness of setting up the game and the growing tower of blocks, everyone who played it was engaged and thoroughly enjoyed it. This would be perfect for players who enjoy strategy games with a spatial element. 🎲

Designer:	Holger Lanz
Publisher:	Capstone Games
Players:	2-5
Mechanic:	Abstract
Ages:	8+
Length:	45 Mins.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

www.capstone-games.com



Whistle Stop

By Serge Pierro



All Aboard a Winner!

One theme that has been proven to be popular over the years is that of trains. Perhaps this is due in part to many gamers having model trains as a child or our fascination with the means of transportation of yesteryear. *Whistle Stop* takes an interesting approach to the genre by combining the mechanics of *Tsuro* with those of a “pick up and deliver” Eurogame and presenting it in a way that proves to be both challenging and enjoyable.

Whistle Stop comes in a 11 3/4” x 11 3/4” x 2 3/4” square box and has a cardboard insert that has two long wells in which to store the components.

The 8 page rulebook measures 8 1/2” x 11” and is laid out horizontally. The rules are straightforward and concise and the setup guide is excellent.

The starting “board” consists of a four piece jigsaw puzzle-like frame that will contain the hex tiles. The board and tokens arrive on eight, large punchboards of standard thickness.

The game’s other components include 25 wooden train meeples in five different pastel colors, 60 wooden cubes in six different colors and 5 wooden scoring disks.

The rulebook will have you up and running in no time. After setting up the board, players will take the appropriate amount of Trains and Coal tokens based on the player count, as well as one Whistle token.

On a player’s turn they may spend one Coal to move one of their trains along a route until it comes to a Stop, thus ending its movement and collecting the resource or using the Stop’s ability. If a Train should reach the

end of a tile and there is no Stop, they may choose to play a tile from their hand and continue along the newly placed route. Players may also use the rarer Whistle token to move their Train, allowing them to move up to two Stops, but they ignore the effects of the first Stop. The actions are tracked on the personal player board which has spaces for the Coal and Whistle tokens.





The Trains will be picking up and delivering common and rare resources, each of which is made up of three different colors/types. These will be traded in for scoring points and purchasing Upgrades. Points are scored by landing on a Stop that offers points and paying the relevant resources. If you land on a Town Stop, you not only receive the points, but also a Stock token which is used for endgame scoring.

Upgrades provide special abilities. My favorite, “Caboose”, allows you to spend one Coal and gain the benefits of the same Stop that one of your Trains are on. And while that is a powerful ability, the caveat of Upgrades is that other players can also buy them from you! The cost of buying an Upgrade from another player is; pay the original price and then pay one rare resource to the player from whom you are purchasing it. This helps prevent one player buying the “best” Upgrade

[Continued on next page>](#)

Whistle Stop (Cont.)

first and having the other players miss out due to turn order or such, as well as adding another strategic/tactical element to the game.

While players are picking up and delivering resources, they are also trying to be the first one to get their set of Trains across the board. On the left side of the board are the End tiles, which are high scoring tiles that allow a player to remove their Train from the play area and place it on the Resource track and taking the associated bonus listed on the space. The Resource spaces are unique, so it's "first come, first served".

The game ends when either there aren't any Coal tokens to distribute at the start of a round or if all of one player's Trains have been placed on the Resource track. Then the endgame scoring with the Stocks takes place, with majorities receiving 15 points. Upgrades, along with the remaining Resources and tokens are also scored. The player with the most points wins.

Whistle Stop immediately caught my eye due to how the board was built and its *Tsuro*-like movement. But it also piqued my intellectual curiosity with its "pick up and deliver" mechanic and various scoring methods. I'm happy to say that it is one of the more interesting games to come out this year. The design is clean and elegant and players enjoyed the ability to build the board as they played, as well as moving their Trains along the winding paths.

If I was going to find any fault with the game it would be the color of the trains. While this might appear to be a somewhat petty complaint, I felt that the pastel colors made it look more like a children's game.

Another fault would be that some of the Upgrades are clearly better than others and this led to situations where a player was able to exploit one of them before another player was "forced" to buy it from them in order to "reel them in". Of course the person who owns the Upgrade at the end of the game receives the scoring bonus, however, it was a little troubling if the player was able to exploit it and then receive an endgame bonus as well.

This is currently one of my favorite games to bring to the table. Everyone who has played it has really enjoyed it. There's some interesting, strategic decision making made throughout the game and managing the routes of your trains is essential to a winning game plan. The pace of the game will be dictated by the players involved, as some players liked to race across the board and take advantage of the Resource track, while others tried to "slow play" it and accumulate stocks and resources to be cashed in later. With all the fun we had, this game will clearly be hitting the table often in the future. 🎲

Designer:	Scott Caputo
Publisher:	Bezier Games
Players:	2-5
Mechanic:	Pickup and Deliver, Tile Laying
Ages:	13+
Length:	75+ Mins.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

www.beziergames.com





Richard Ham - Game Run-throughs

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with our readers, can you tell us a little something about yourself?

My name is Richard Ham and I'm 47 years old. I'm an Aries. I used to be a video game designer. I did that for almost 20 years and worked on a lot of really big, successful video games, like the *Syphon Filter* series, *Fable* and *The Sims*. Nowadays, I live in Malta and I am on YouTube filming run-throughs of board games, because I love board games.

Were games a large part of your childhood, if so, what games did you play?

Yes, games have been a big part of not only my childhood, but my life in general. I mean it was a big part of my professional life for the last 30 years or so. In my childhood, in the '70's, I remember playing a lot of *Pong* which was the first video game I ever played and it was so important, because it was the first thing in my life that I was ever better at than my dad. So it had a strong impact on me. I

also remember playing those old Mattel sport games, you know, *Mattel Football* and *Mattel Baseball*, I had a bunch of those. I absolutely loved them even though I hated sports. I've hated sports my entire life, but I really enjoyed those little Mattel games.

I also played *Checkers* with my family, as well as *Scrabble*. When I went to stay at my aunt and uncle's, my brother Ryan and I would play *Monopoly*. I played a lot of Pinball. Growing up in high school in the '80's I played a lot of arcade games. I played tons and tons of games... too many to count.

What is your favorite board game of all time?

That would be *Pandemic*.

What is Jen's favorite board game of all time?

Either *Dungeon Petz* or *Roll for the Galaxy*.

What is your favorite mechanic?

My favorite mechanic is dice drafting.

What is your favorite theme?

Honestly... trading in the Mediterranean. I love dry Renaissance or medieval era, euro economic simulations. That's probably my favorite. You show me a new one of those from a cool euro designer and that's probably going to get me more excited than anything else.

Who are your favorite game designers?

My favorite designer is Stefan Feld.

What games are you currently playing?

As of today we just started playing *Charterstone*. We just played our first two games of it and I'm going to be trying to go through it for the rest of the week, in order to get the whole thing finished, so that I can do a run-through of it. Before that we were spending a lot of time with *This War of Mine* and *7th Continent*. I'm always playing games. Every week I play three or four games for the first time, because I'm constantly having to film more stuff for my YouTube channel. Jen and I have probably put in over 100 hours on *Gloomhaven*. So, *Gloomhaven* has just been completely devouring any time we have to play games. It isn't just for Rahdo Runs Through.

You have stated on numerous occasions that you like "care bear"/no conflict games. Have you ever come across a game with conflict that tempted you to want and play it?

I'll go beyond that, yeah, there's plenty of games that we've played and enjoyed that have player

conflict. What bothers me more isn't so much the "Oh, I punch you, you punch me", I have no problem with violence in games, I'm totally fine with games with lots of gunfire, shooting, killing and all that, but what I don't like doing is being put into a situation where my best move is to stifle your ability to play to the best of what your opportunities are, to slow you down, to hurt you. Direct conflict games where the only thing I do when I hurt you is to transfer Victory Points from you to me, I'm totally fine with that. That doesn't really bother me at all, you losing points is the same as me gaining points, so there are plenty of games that work well under those circumstances. But games where you've spent the last ten minutes working really hard to gather all these resources you've gotten and you're about to make the big move to build the thing you want to do or complete the objective, and then I come along and say "Ha, ha, I'm just gonna steal half of those" or "I'm going to destroy the thing you were going to use to convert those into something else", that's the kind of direct player aggression, me reaching across the table and screwing with your ability to have a good time. That's the kind of aggression that I tend to stay away from.

You must read a lot of rule books. Do you do a lot of reading outside of boardgaming? If so, what are your favorite books and/or authors?

You know what, I used to back in my younger days, from when I was 10 to around 23 or 24. I was a voracious reader. I read so much when I was growing up, due in part to growing up on a boat and I didn't have a lot of social action, there weren't any other kids, so I spent all my time reading all of the books that my parents had when I was 10, 11, 12, so I was reading a lot of John Steinbeck books and I can't tell you how many times

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I've read *Catch-22*, Ken Kesey books and what not. Then all through high school I was just constantly reading because I was a quiet, withdrawn, introverted nerd that was reading non-stop lots of science fiction anthologies and lots of Ray Bradbury, lots of Star Trek novelizations. And then into my early adulthood I got heavily into Stephen King, I read tons and tons and tons of stuff. But as soon as I started to work full-time, all of that disappeared because first I was working for 20 years in the video game industry and that meant that I was working 60-80 hours a week, I didn't have time to read. And I figured that once I was finally done I'd have more time to start reading again. My wife Jen is a voracious reader. I read a lot, but now it's all board game manuals. I probably read on average, ten of them a week.

The previously mentioned authors are among my favorites because they came to me off the top of my head, but I did read a lot of comic books over the years and I love Alan Moore and Garth Ennis. John Irving is probably my all-time favorite author, at one point I read everything he wrote. Though Steinbeck would be up there also.

While it is well known that you had previously worked in the video game industry, can you tell us about what you did and what games you worked on?

I worked on the *Syphon Filter* series, *Sims* for the console, *Pitfall: The Lost Expedition*, *Shark Tale*, *Fear & Respect*, and *Fable: The Lost Chapters*, as well as half a dozen other ones that you never heard of or saw the light of day, because projects get cancelled a lot.

"I read a lot, but now it's all board game manuals. I probably read on average, ten of them a week."

I was a lead designer, creative designer type, the closest equivalent would be in the movie business as the equivalent of a Steven Spielberg or a movie director. It was my job to hold the vision of the title and make sure everybody in all the departments were moving in the same direction and to try and make it as high quality as possible. It was a very creative and fulfilling job, but more than anything else it was a cheerleader job, making sure that everybody's spirits were high and everybody felt like what they were doing was going to work out well. That was my job, I was a 20 year professional cheerleader.

What are your all-time favorite computer/video games?

My number one game would be a little Nintendo DS game called, *Elite Beat Agents*.

What do you think of the trend of porting board games and card games over to the Android and iOS mobile systems?

It's fine, but it's not for me. Jen and I have played a few of them. The only electronic edition of a game that we

put any time into was “San Juan”, and that’s because we had it on our iPhone 4’s, and it worked really well, and because for a while we were transitioning from England to Malta and we just didn’t have much time to play games, we were on the road a lot and it was a real easy game to play, just passing the phone back and forth. But, that was a special circumstance, we weren’t like “Oh my gosh, this is so awesome to be able to play a board game on our phones”, we just did it because of the circumstances we were in. I think it’s great. Anything that draws more eyes to the hobby is fantastic, it’s just not necessarily for me. I still want to sit at a table and hold physical things in my hands.

What was the impetus to start doing a YouTube channel on playing through board games?

Basically I saw that there was somebody on Board Game Geek asking for a video of *Helvetia* and nobody was doing it, and I had a copy, and I had an iPhone, and I figured “What the heck” I can give it a try. I had recently retired from video game development and I was looking for a hobby. I was looking for something to pass the time in my early retirement. I was able to retire in my mid-forties because my wife and I live a very frugal lifestyle and I knew that going into an early retirement meant that I couldn’t continue to afford paying \$5,000 - \$6,000 a year on board games like I had been doing up to that point. That’s because I was a hardcore junkie and wanted to play all the new coolest stuff and I figured, “Hey, you know what... Tom Vassel seems to be pretty popular and publishers send him copies of games”. Jen and I worked it out financially that we were going to limit ourselves to buying one game a month and that

would have been our frugal lifestyle. For some people that’s still pretty extravagant, but I figured, “Hey, you know what, maybe if I do a show and it gets popular I could supplement that a little bit” and it turned out to be more popular than I ever thought it was going to be. That’s the honest truth as to what got me started.

Can you give our readers a summary of how you go about taping a walkthrough of a game? Preparation and such.

Well, my wife and I play the game a few times, usually no more than twice, sometimes three time, sometimes only once, if it’s really simple. Then I just setup the game as if I was going to play with another person, but instead of sitting down another person and getting ready to teach them how to play, I just sit the camera down and start, though if it is a really big game that fills

“... but I figured, “Hey, you know what, maybe if I do a show and it gets popular I could supplement that a little bit” and it turned out to be more popular than I ever thought it was going to be.”

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up the whole table, then I just hold the camera in my hand and film while looking at the view screen. If it is a smaller game then I just setup the tripod and just start recording and playing. I don't do any prep at all. I don't stack the decks to make sure certain things will happen. If I haven't played the game for awhile, maybe I'll just do a quick peruse of the rules. I don't really spend much time on it all because I think it's one of the strengths of my videos is that there is a spontaneity, there's kind of like an electricity, it's like they are alive, they feel more like somebody sitting down and really playing a game. They're not rehearsed, they're not over-prepared. They don't have a script, I'm flying blind because my videos are all about trying to replicate the experience of actually playing the game, so it's not a perfectly orchestrated series of cuts where you go "I'll do this and I'll do this now and now the game's over here's how we do the final score", to me that's not capturing the spirit of what it's like to play the game. When you play a game you stop, you think, you hem and haw, you take it back at the last minute and try something else - that's the reality of the game, that's what I'm trying to capture. So me preparing would actually work against my stated goal of trying to make the game come alive, and from a first-person perspective let you have the feeling of what it would be like to play the game so you can decide for yourself whether it's worth picking up. Because my opinion doesn't matter, I have very strange tastes, so you shouldn't care about my tastes, you should completely ignore my subjective personal opinion and watch the run-though and decide for yourself if it looks like it's fun.

"... I'm flying blind because my videos are all about trying to replicate the experience of actually playing the game..."

You have built quite a following, what is it about your show that you feel attracts your audience?

Actually I think that more than anything else it is what I talked about previously. It's weird that there are a lot of other people doing run-throughs now. The reason I chose the format, which is different than the same format that most people do, which is the format borrowed from Scott Nicholson and popularized by Tom Vasel, which is the whole talking head let me introduce a game, give you a brief rundown of the rules, showing you what the components look like and then tell you what I think. I could have done that but I did what I thought would be the most useful which is putting you in the headspace of somebody playing these games and the thing that shocks me is that nobody else does this. There's a lot of people doing run-throughs and they do really cool, more professional, heavily edited/scripted things, but to me as a viewer I get less out of the game because I think the number one thing that people don't talk about is, what's going through my head. I don't just focus on the raw mechanisms of the game, I spend 80% of my time talking about how do I make that choice, because

that's where the game is. The game is not in the cube pushing of moving stuff from here to here so you can get other stuff, so you can play this card to get these points, that's besides the point, the game exists up in my head and the back and forth between me and you is what I try to focus on. I don't think anyone else does that or very few people do. To be fair there are some folks who are turned off by my videos because they find that I'm too scatterbrained, I don't come to a point, I agonize over moves while some viewers want me to move on so they can see how the game works, but the part of a game is agonizing over those choices.

I also think that I have a bit of an advantage because as I said earlier I was a cheerleader for 20 years and it was my job to get people excited and moving in the same direction and communicate in an enthusiastic way that pulls people along and gets them going towards a stated end goal. In high school I was trained to do vacuum cleaner sales, I spent several years doing customer service when I was with Nintendo talking as a game counselor every day. So, I've got a real background in communication. My major in college was scientific and technical communication. I mean everything that I've done before in my life has kind of prepared me for this job, and again, my product isn't for everybody. But, for people who enjoy it, I think it's a combination of all those elements.

How much of your day is devoted to playing games, either with your wife or to prepare for a video?

All of it. I would include how much of my time is spent reading rules, how much of my time is spent answering questions on YouTube, Board Game Geek, Facebook and Twitter. I used to be on Reddit, but I eventually walked away from it because there's just too much negativity there.

As an aside, I know a lot of people totally misunderstood why I left Reddit. I just said one day "You know what folks, you're all too negative. I would rather be around positive people. I'm going to leave - bye, bye. No offense, have a good time". Everybody thought that I felt like I was being personally attacked. It wasn't like that at all. I just don't like begin around negative people so that's why I left.

So literally, Rahdo Runs Through is a full-time job. If I'm not filming videos, I'm playing games for the sole purpose of learning how to play the game so that I can film the video. Yes, they're enjoyable and I have fun with it too, but it's a job and that does rob some of the joy and some of the fun of playing games that I used to have when I played them 100% for fun. At any given time I've got a queue of 20 or so rule books that I have to read so that I can evaluate whether I want to take a review copy of it to do a run-through for, because I don't want to spend my time or my wife's time time playing a game we won't enjoy, so I spend untold hours every week reading rulebooks and nine times out of ten saying, "No, you know what, I'm sorry this game isn't for me I'll have to pass on filming it". If I'm not doing that, I am doing upkeep, answering questions, talking to

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people, etc. At this point I would say it is easily over 40 hours a week, but in terms of actual game play it depends on my wife's schedule, as she has her own job as a talented glass artisan. I'd say in an average week we probably spend 15 to 20 hours playing games.

As someone who has made video games and reviews of board games, what do you consider essential for an enjoyable, playing experience?

Gosh, that's so big and broad. It's hard not to give a trite answer. You have to provide a fun experience, that's the answer, so you have to drill down, what does that mean, what is the definition of fun. It means players have to be engaged in the activity that you have presented to them and they have to find it compulsive and compelling, and they have to feel rewarded when they do well and they have to feel like they have the potential to do well. Because more than anything else that's what drives fun game play. Human beings want to do things that they are good at. It triggers the pleasure centers in their brain to pull something off and say "yes, I have done something, I am good at this and therefore I feel good about myself". That is, in my opinion, the bare-bones kernel of what drives game play, in particular solo play and video games. The second kernel is the social aspect, I'm interacting with other human beings, because human beings are social animals, it's hardwired into us, it's how we rose up and became the dominant life-form on the planet. We are more social, we work together and we have empathy for each other. So if you can create a game that fires that low level primitive brain, must be interacting with other people, and you can do it in a way that makes me feel good about myself, because I'm achieving and I'm doing things, that's what make

for a fun enjoyable game experience. Themes, rules and everything else is secondary to those two core principles.

The interesting thing about solo games is that it's still a two player game, it's just that the player is playing against me, the designer, because I have created a world and have created a set of rules that represent me in this gaming simulation that you are playing against. So even though there's a "social aspect", you are maybe talking to me, but as a designer I am thinking about you all the time, especially if I am a good designer.

"...players have to be engaged in the activity that you have presented to them and they have to find it compulsive and compelling, and they have to feel rewarded when they do well and they have to feel like they have the potential to do well. Because more than anything else that's what drives fun game play."

What advice would you give to someone who was interested in doing game reviews, previews, walkthroughs, etc.?

The exact same advice I give to people who to this day ask me for advice about getting into the video game industry. Do it, make stuff, get up every morning and start creating. Back when people were asking me how can I get into the video game industry, I would say make video games, there's nothing stopping you from doing it. There are so many tools that allow you to make really cool/amazing levels in 3d. Pick a 3d shooter, there's an editor for it and start making content for it. Learn how to do it and put it up there. Take any feedback you get and get better at it until you make a portfolio that will get you a job. That's how you get a job. And if you want to do the same thing board game reviews, then make it, keep making it. Listen to what everybody says and keep producing it. Note that if you make something that doesn't resonate with anybody, change it up, find something new.

I was doing Rahdo Runs Through for almost two years before it really took off and a big part of that was I got lucky and "Penny Arcade" mentioned me in one of their daily blogs, so I got a huge amount of hits from that because I did a run-through of some Kickstarter game they were thinking of backing. They said, "Hey, I watched this video and it really helped me decide whether to back this game". That got me a huge amount of hits. My other big breakthrough was I was the first person to do a run-through of "Robinson Crusoe" and mine was the only video for like a month when it first came out. Those two things are kind of what elevated me

"If you produce content that really resonates with people, so that they click on the subscribe button and decide to come back, and slowly over the course of time, like I said, years, not days, not weeks, not months - years you'll have to put into this before you find out if what you're doing will resonate."

My other bit of advice is: get lucky! That's the same advice you're going to give anybody who wants to go off to Hollywood and be a movie star or any industry where there's just a huge amount of competition and an endless supply of incredibly passionate, talented and motivated people. That is now fast becoming the reality for trying to do game videos. I mean that's already true in the video game industry, there are plenty of people who make their living just talking about video games. Board games aren't big enough to really be successful at that. There's only a handful of us in the world, but you know that the industry is building, so there will be more opportunities for more folks. If you produce content that really resonates with people, so that they click on the subscribe button and decide to come back, and slowly over the course of time, like I said, years, not days, not weeks, not months - years you'll have to put into this before you find out if what you're doing will resonate. More than anything else: have the presence of mind to stick to it and get lucky. ☑.

The 7th Continent

By Serge Pierro



Game of the Year?

In an industry that thrives on creativity and imagination, it is somewhat surprising to see a steady stream of products that offers little originality or innovation. Every once in a while we witness the genesis of a new genre, such as deck-buiding, with *Dominion*, but for the most part, the designs are tweaked iterations of previously established mechanisms. However, every once in a while we are treated to something so original, that we can't help but marvel at it. *The 7th Continent* is one such game. A game that is so unique, so ambitious, so addictive, that we're awestruck at the time and effort that went into conceiving and designing it. Let's take a look at one of the most interesting games of this year... or any other year!

The game comes in a 8 3/4" x 12 1/2" x 4" black box that has a "tribal" image on the front and minimalistic text on the sides and back and is somewhat reminiscent of a shoebox. Inside you are greeted with three cardboard storage trays that will be used to hold the cards and two-black foam blocks.

The 24 page rulebook is the size of the box and printed on a high-quality paper stock. The book is well organized and does a good job of explaining all of the game's concepts. However, with a game that is this ambitious, there is always going to be a need for clarifications on specific cards, so you should expect to visit Serious Poulp's site or Board Game Geek, to keep up with the latest rulings and such. The book contains numerous illustrations and has several examples of key elements.



Four high quality player aides are included. These are double sided and feature a linen finished, cardboard stock. One side features the iconography of the game, along with an explanation of the



action symbols, while the other side addresses the turn sequence, action icons and resolutions. These will prove to be useful for your initial play-through of the game.

The base game comes with 962 cards. They measure 3 1/8" x 3 1/8" and are made of a decent card stock. The majority of cards are never shuffled, however, the Action cards do get shuffled repeatedly and are prone to having the corners get chipped or worn. I would recommend sleeves for the Action deck.

Although the game includes cardboard standees with plastic bases, many players are going to opt to use the plastic miniatures. These come in a plastic sleeve and contain sculpts of all 7 characters as well as 4 campfires. On average, the minis measure a little under an inch tall and have a decent amount of detail for their size.

Eight black dice are included for the tracking of the stats on the Item cards and are not rolled during the game.

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The 7th Continent (Cont.)

One of the nice touches is the inclusion of a plastic magnifying glass to aid players in their search for clues that are printed on the cards.

The last component needs to be assembled and it is a card holder for the discard pile. At first this would appear to be just a nice perk, however, the back section of the holder is double sided and each of the sides has an effect that is available to players to use throughout the game. So even the discard holder has an influence on the game play and replayability of the game.

It is recommended that the first Curse you play is “The Voracious Goddess”. In order to start the game you choose your character card and their miniature. Then take the character’s associated Action cards and shuffle them into the main Action deck. Take the Curse card and the 4 “Death is Lurking” cards and shuffle them into the Action deck. Take the Terrain tile listed on the Curse’s clue card and place it on the table and place your miniature on it. Place the correct number Exploration cards around the Terrain card and you are ready to begin.

Terrain cards will often have Roman numerals along some of their edges which will indicate where the Exploration cards will be placed. On a player’s turn they may choose to explore one of the Exploration cards (which represent a “fog of war” element) and resolve it, do an action that is listed on the Terrain or move to another Terrain tile.

To pay the cost of an action, cards are drawn from the Action deck. Each of the Action cards has either a star, a half star or a “7” on it. When you are trying to complete an action, “X” amount of cards are turned over and the number of complete stars are totaled. Any Curse cards revealed are counted as zeroes. If the number equals or

exceeds the number on the card, the action is successful and the beneficial action is resolved. If the action fails, then the bottom of the card is used and the usually negative action is applied.

Each time you draw cards for an action, and after the action has been resolved, you get to choose to place one of the drawn cards into your hand. This is the main means of obtaining cards throughout the game.

While exploring can be fun, dying isn’t, so you will need to figure out how to efficiently manage the Action deck. While there are cards that allow you to shuffle discards back into the Action deck, hunting and fishing will be the primary means of doing so, and not surprisingly, being prepared for such opportunities is important. One of the more interesting and thematic things about food, is that if it is cooked, the number of cards shuffled back into the deck is larger.

Should you exhaust the Action deck, the discard pile is shuffled and placed back into the discard holder. When you need to draw cards for Actions you will draw from this pile of cards. You automatically lose if you should draw a Curse card.

The game ends in a distinct fashion and it will be clear when you have completed the quest. Considering there are multiple Curses for you to try and solve, this gives you the opportunity to explore the continent again and see what mysteries it will reveal to you this time.

The 7th Continent is a tense undertaking, from the exploration of an unfolding continent, to the managing of the Action deck, there is a sense of wonder and suspense that lurks behind every move in the game. Be prepared to spend hours delving into the mysteries

that the game has to offer. And should you die, and you will, you'll want to immediately start the adventure again and hope to have learned from your experiences. The last time I had this much fun/interest in a game was with Sid Meier's *Civilization* line of games, where you just wanted to make "one more" move before going to bed and then find yourself still plugging away hours later. It's that good!

One of my favorite aspects of the game was the search for small clues printed on the card, or perhaps, camouflaged on the card. Every Terrain card is scrutinized, not only for the obviously printed actions, but for subtle clues. I can't tell you how many times I just smiled upon discovering something and then laughing out loud at the brilliance of the design!

The variety of play is also something that should be noted. Many of the cards numbers have multiple cards, so each time you visit an area it can be completely different than before. Just knowing that this is part of the game provides an additional sense of suspense and tension as you were never sure what was going to happen next.

There were times where the game reminded me of *Myst*. This was due in part to some of the puzzles that are scattered throughout the game. Some of these were fairly easy, while others were a bit tougher. However, so far none of them have been so complex that they bog down the flow of the game.

From a spatial/tactile point of view, the growing of the map was an impressive sight to behold and the Terrain artwork by Ludovic Roudy is just wonderful in both its rendering and the atmosphere that it provides. Players who intend to leave the game setup on a table will find

"The 7th Continent is a tense undertaking, from the exploration of an unfolding continent, to the managing of the Action deck, there is a sense of wonder and suspense that lurks behind every move in the game."

it necessary to have a table big enough to handle the sprawling map and even then they might have to use the Save mechanism and reset the position.

One of the in-game currencies is that of Experience. There are many opportunities to gain Experience, for those who are prepared to encounter a variety of situations. Accumulated Experience can be later spent to obtain the more desirable Advanced Skills cards. Although these cards have many useful abilities, the primary benefit is that there are more "7"s on the cards and that you are adding more cards to the Action deck, thus increasing your chances of survival.

For all of its plusses, the game does have a downside, when you lose a game you have to sort all of the cards back into their boxes. After spending 7 hours on my second attempt at the game I had accumulated a large pile of cards in the "Banished" and "The Past" piles and although I really felt like immediately starting over again, but once I was done sorting the cards and putting them back into the boxes, I just said, "I'll give it another

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The 7th Continent (Cont.)

shot, later...". Though admittedly if you choose to often use the "Save Game" feature, you will have less cards to have to sort and put back in the box.

After spending 16+ hours completing "The Voracious Goddess", I was euphoric at the conclusion of the adventure. Never before had I experienced anything like it. Even video games paled in comparison, as this game was full of surprises and took you places that weren't immediately apparent on the surface. You can go back to a previously explored area and find that there is something totally new there or you can make an "intelligent" decision and find yourself lost for hours in another part of the world. The game can be brutally unforgiving, and yet, intensely rewarding!

There's so much more that I'd love to mention, but I don't want to ruin the experience for anyone who is currently playing it or is considering it. This is easily the best board game experience I've ever had. This is a keeper that I will be interested in revisiting again in the future, using new characters and exploring new situations. And while I have to get to playing and reviewing other games, I now have a separate tabletop designated for the game and I will be continuing to explore and play this game "on my time". And to think that I still have three expansions to take a look at...

This is a must play game that will reward you with an experience that's not like any other game you've ever played. Very Highly Recommended! 🎲

Editor's note: This currently has my vote for "Game of the Year"!



Designers:	Ludovic Roudy & Bruno Sautter
Publisher:	Serious Poulp
Players:	1-4
Mechanic:	Exploration, Deck Management
Ages:	14+
Length:	1,000+ Mins.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

www.seriouspoulp.com

DISCARD PILE

Choose the side you want to use before you begin or continue.

A thought for those who died
on the first expedition
When a grave can be seen
on your Terrain card:

1 1 1
A discarded character may discard any number of cards
from their hand and/or inventory.
If discarded this way, randomly take 2 cards from
the deck and shuffle them back into the Action Deck.

666

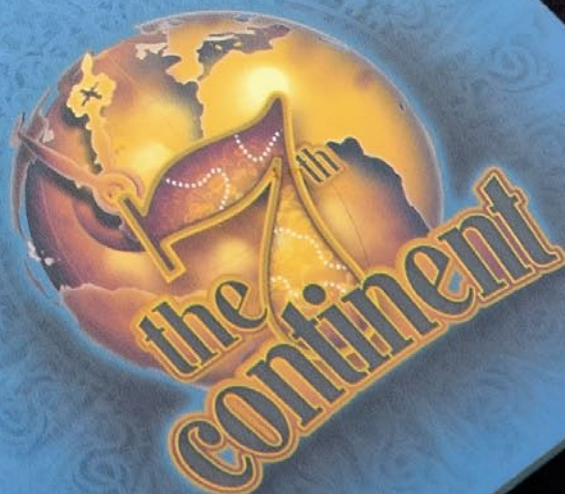
the continent

EXPLORE. SURVIVE. YOU ARE THE HERO!

Blowpipe



vigilance





History Rewritten

History was never my strongest subject in grade school. I must have either fallen asleep or missed a few days of class when the American Revolution was covered. I never realized the critical role a coven of witches played during that particular period in time. Thankfully, Atlas Games explains this important piece of history with their newest deck-building game, *Witches of the Revolution*.

Developed as a cooperative game, 1-4 players take on the roles of witches determined to see a “fledgling nation achieve freedom from tyranny.” You are tasked with recruiting powerful allies, utilizing potent relics, overcoming perilous events and fulfilling crucial objectives before time runs out. The notion of witches helping to write our history is an interesting theme, but is it enough to stand out from the multitude of deck-building games that continue to hit the market?

Gameplay

Taking note of the latest deck-building trend, *Witches of the Revolution* adds a game board to the set up. Serving multiple purposes, its primary function is to help players keep track of the various ways they may lose the game. The Liberty token is placed on the starting point of the Liberty track. If it ever reaches maximum Tyranny, the players lose the game. Event cards are added to the Event line and move closer to

the designated losing space determined by the number of players. To make things even more difficult, the Moon token moves up the Moon Track, consequently increasing the number of required magic icons needed to overcome individual Events.

Additional set-up includes preparing the 40-card event deck, randomly selecting and placing four Objective cards and their associated tokens and preparing the Recruit deck, inclusive of additional, more powerful Witch cards, Blessing cards (of which there are only ever three), and Relic cards (obtained from the Recruit deck for free). Each player is also each given 15 basic starting Seeker cards that are shuffled together, from which a starting hand of 5 is drawn. Players win the game by completing the four, randomly drawn Objective cards. If successful, their overall victory score is determined by the final location of the Liberty marker on the Liberty Track.

On a player's turn a new Recruit is added to the line-up, pushing any other previously available Recruit cards to the right, eventually into the Recruit discard pile and out of play. A new Event card is added to the Event line, similarly pushing any other Events to the right. If an Event card fills the space marked as a loss for the number of players, the Revolution fails and the players immediately lose. Some Event cards will also have a “When Flipped” effect. When an Event card with the



Events that have been overcome provide a bit of breathing room for the players by temporarily freeing up a space on the Event track. More importantly, players may also choose any marker from one of the four Objective cards that matches an icon from the

Continued on next page>

Witches of the Revolution (Cont.)

completed Event card, taking them one step closer to victory. These tokens remain with the player and may be used as magic icons as though from a Witch card or to reduce the cost of a Recruit card for a different player.

Players end their turn with the option to discard any number of cards from their hand and draw back up to a full hand size of 5. Players cannot draw fewer cards than would fill their hand. This is where *Witches of the Revolution* as a deck-building game stands out among so many others that have come before it. If there are no cards left in a player's deck to draw from they must shuffle their discard pile. However, doing so moves the Moon track marker one space up which increases the difficulty of the Events, as well as automatically adds another Event to the Event line. Because adding an event is the second step of each player's turn you can see how this could quickly spell disaster. This poses one of the more interesting deck-building conundrums that I've experienced. Most good deck-building games offer opportunities to thin a player's hand, allowing them to quickly cycle through their cards. *Witches of the Revolution* is no different, but it comes at a rather significant cost.

Players continue to take turns, working together to defeat the various Events in order to obtain the necessary Event tokens that ultimately unlock the four individual Objective cards. As soon as an Objective is completed its benefits are immediately granted, generally providing a good variety of boons to keep the players alive and in the game.

Theme and Components

Witches of the Revolution attempts to keep the colonial theme strong throughout the game. Many of the cards include appropriate flavor text and the images lend themselves to an old, sketched-illustration feel. But, at the end of the day players are working to match symbols and colors as a means to overcome Events and obtain new Recruits. After the first few minutes of the game the theme dissolves and player conversations devolve into discussions about needing "purple icons", "cup symbols" and "enough stars to buy a recruit".

Although the card stock is a bit on the flimsy side, the cardboard chits and tokens, as well as the game board, are all solid and functional. They were nicely cut and popped out smoothly from the individual punchboards. It's also worth noting that the game box insert was designed to enhance the overall time it takes to set-up and tear down, as well as accommodate for any expansions that may be in development. There are individual spots for each of the nine tokens and room for sleeved cards.

Final Thoughts

There are a lot of deck-building games already on the market, with many more on the way. It is a board game mechanism that I doubt will fade away anytime soon. *Clank!*, *Tyrants of the Underdark* and *Web of Spies* (see *Game Nite* issue #7 for my review) all added a game board to great effect. *Witches of the Revolution* also adds a board, but more so as a means to help the players keep track of the gameplay and rules . . . and little else.

Witches of the Revolution is a solid game. It works well as a cooperative deck-builder, but it does little else to push its way to the front of the pack and stay relevant. While not yet saturated, the market is getting crowded. This may be a great problem to have for the player, but it remains an ongoing challenge for the developer. ☐

Photo : Bill Braun

Designer:	M. Craig Stockwell
Publisher:	Atlas Games
Players:	1-4
Mechanic:	Co-op, Deckbuilder
Ages:	13+
Length:	30-60 Mins.

WORTH TRYING

www.atlas-games.com

TURN REFERENCE: (1) Add a Recruit (2) Add an Event (3) Act and



Cost as Printed

If A



+1 Tyranny

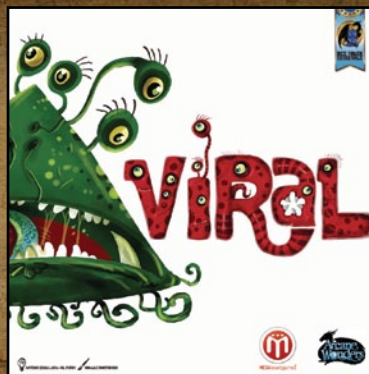


Banish
a Recruit



+1 T

Game Time Issue #18



Infectious Fun!

In *Viral* you play one of five different viruses that infects a single patient. Your goal is to strategically spread your specific virus throughout the patient's organs while outnumbering your opponent's viruses. Over the course of six rounds you want to gain not the most Victory Points, but...wait for it...Viral Points.

Trust me: it works under the circumstances.

Players start with a set of virus tokens representing the color of a virus and a set of similarly colored markers that are placed on the Scoring, Tie-Breaker, and Research tracks on the board. In addition, each player receives a player board that explains all of the notations on the cards players will use to plot out their actions during each turn.

These cards – initially identical for each player – indicate the choices you will need to make in each of the two phases of your turn: (a) which organ you're choosing to infect and (b) which type of action your virus can take in that organ. The two cards that are used in Round One, Turn One (one Organ and one Action Type) are set aside and cannot be used in Round One,

Turn Two. More importantly, none of these four cards from Round One can be used in Round Two at all.

On the board, there are six organs to choose from: The Brain, Heart, Lungs, Liver/Pancreas, Stomach/Small Intestine/Large Intestine, and Kidneys. At the start of each game there are six Zone tiles which are chosen at random and assigned to each organ. Some zones are, of course, worth more Viral Points than others. Some are worth more or less Research points than others.

Viral Points awarded move you up the Virus scoring track; Research points add up over rounds until you reach five Research points. At this point your virus has been so active in the human host that researchers have been able to discover a cure for your virus. As a result, all of your virus tokens are wiped off the board.

Another way your viruses may be removed from the board is through an organ Crisis. If an organ has too many viruses on it, a Crisis is triggered. Towards the end of the round viruses in Crisis organs are removed and Viral Points are rewarded – two VP for the player with the most viruses, one point for each remaining virus type.



Photo courtesy of: Arcane Wonders

Viruses can also (depending on the Action card chosen) move between organs. This takes place between arteries or veins or sections connecting the Liver/Pancreas and the Stomach and Small Intestines.

A typical round starts with each player choosing one of their available Zone cards indicating which organ is to be attacked, and one of the available Action cards. These cards are placed face down to the left of the player card. When all players have done this, the first player for that round reveals his cards and takes the appropriate action in the indicated organ.

After all players have done this, the cards just played are moved to the area just above the player card. Each player then chooses another Zone and Action card from their remaining cards and places them face down to the left of the player card. After these two cards have been played they are moved to the right side of the player card where they will remain until the end of the next round. Only then will they become available to play again.

Actions include the ability to Infect any organ, removing a virus belonging to another player in any

Continued on next page>

Viral (Cont.)



1



INFECT - Place one virus from your player board in any organ. The virus must be placed with the front side up (no Shield).



CRISIS - Place the lowest-numbered Crisis token available on any Organ. An Organ can only have one Crisis token at a time.



ATTACK - Remove one virus that belongs to another player from an organ. You must have at least one virus in that organ.



MAGNET - In an Organ where you have at least one Virus, you may pull a Virus from an adjacent Organ into your Organ, or push a Virus from your Organ to an adjacent Organ.



ABSORB - Choose one of your Viruses in an Organ: place all other Viruses in that Organ under your virus. In step #6, release all absorbed viruses.



SHIELD - Flip one of your Viruses so the shield side is up.



MOVE - Make one Virus movement.

2



Photo courtesy of: Arcane Wonders

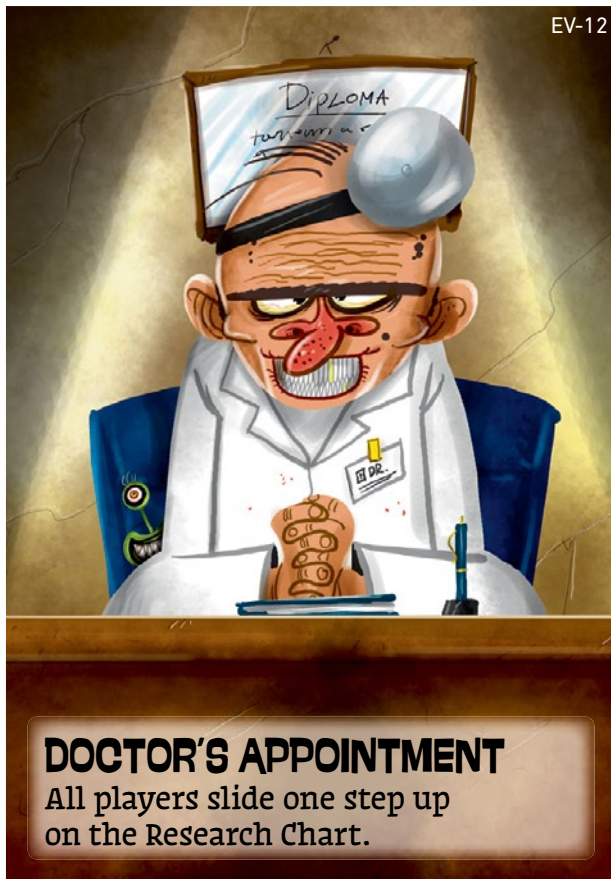
organ you have a virus in, moving a virus from one organ to an adjoining organ, or flipping one of your viruses over to expose a Shield which will keep it safe from a Researcher's cure. (Other, advanced abilities include pulling a virus away from another, connected organ, temporarily Absorbing a virus to keep it from scoring Viral Points, or randomly placing a Crisis token in an organ)

Viral Points are then awarded to the player with the most viruses in each Zone. (If two players are tied, the order on the tie-breaker track decides who wins the points. The order on this track is in reverse order on the scoring track) Viral Points are awarded based on the Zone tiles which also award Research Points.

Each Round is also governed by a specific Event Card. These range from Mind Control to Pollution to No Smoking to Sneeze to Multiplication to Are You in Love. Each allows players to either score extra points for individual organs or allow for special actions/events in specific organs.

Now the Immune Response kicks in. Crisis tokens are resolved, with Viral Points awarded to the player with the most viruses in the organ as well as to those remaining. All viruses in Crisis zones are removed from the board and returned to their respective players.

Researchers' cures are then applied and any player whose virus has reached the topmost marker on the Research track has all of their viruses removed from the board.



Photos courtesy of : Arcane Wonders

Additional Action cards are available to players as they progress along the Viral Points track. After scoring four, eight, and twelve points, players are given the choice of available Advanced Mutation cards. Each new card has a balance between an extra mutation ability and/or additional points at the end of the game.

One of the things that makes *Viral* such a fun game is the way players are limited in the cards they can use over turns. By taking the four cards you play this turn out of consideration for your next turn limits the number of times you can add new viruses to the board or move your viruses either towards a higher scoring zone or away from a Crisis area. In all of our games we each decried this rule as interfering with our nefarious plans

at patient domination, but also appreciated the rule for both the balance it provided and the way it forces you to plan out your moves one turn ahead as best you can.

Zone tiles have a good balance between Viral Points and Research points. Randomizing these is key to making each game feel different so no individual zone or sets of zones continually dominate the game.

The 16-page full color rulebook explains the game clearly, with examples of each action and a description of all of the major cards. The board and virus tokens are all made of thick, sturdy cardboard.

[Continued on next page>](#)

Viral (Cont.)



The artwork is difficult to miss. There's something of a Mad Magazine-like quality to the viruses and the organs. At first, I wasn't sure if the cartoony artwork meant the game was more of a light, filler than one with some substance to it. We all quickly came to appreciate the light-heartedness of the art and liked how it all but fooled us into thinking *Viral* was an easy game.

After our first play-through of *Viral* one of my group insisted we play it again. Right away. We all agreed. *Viral* presents an enjoyable set of challenges that have made it a welcome addition to our weekly sessions.

Note: I am eagerly awaiting a minor expansion that includes special virus traits, additional mutation cards, and more event cards. (Hint, hint) 🎲



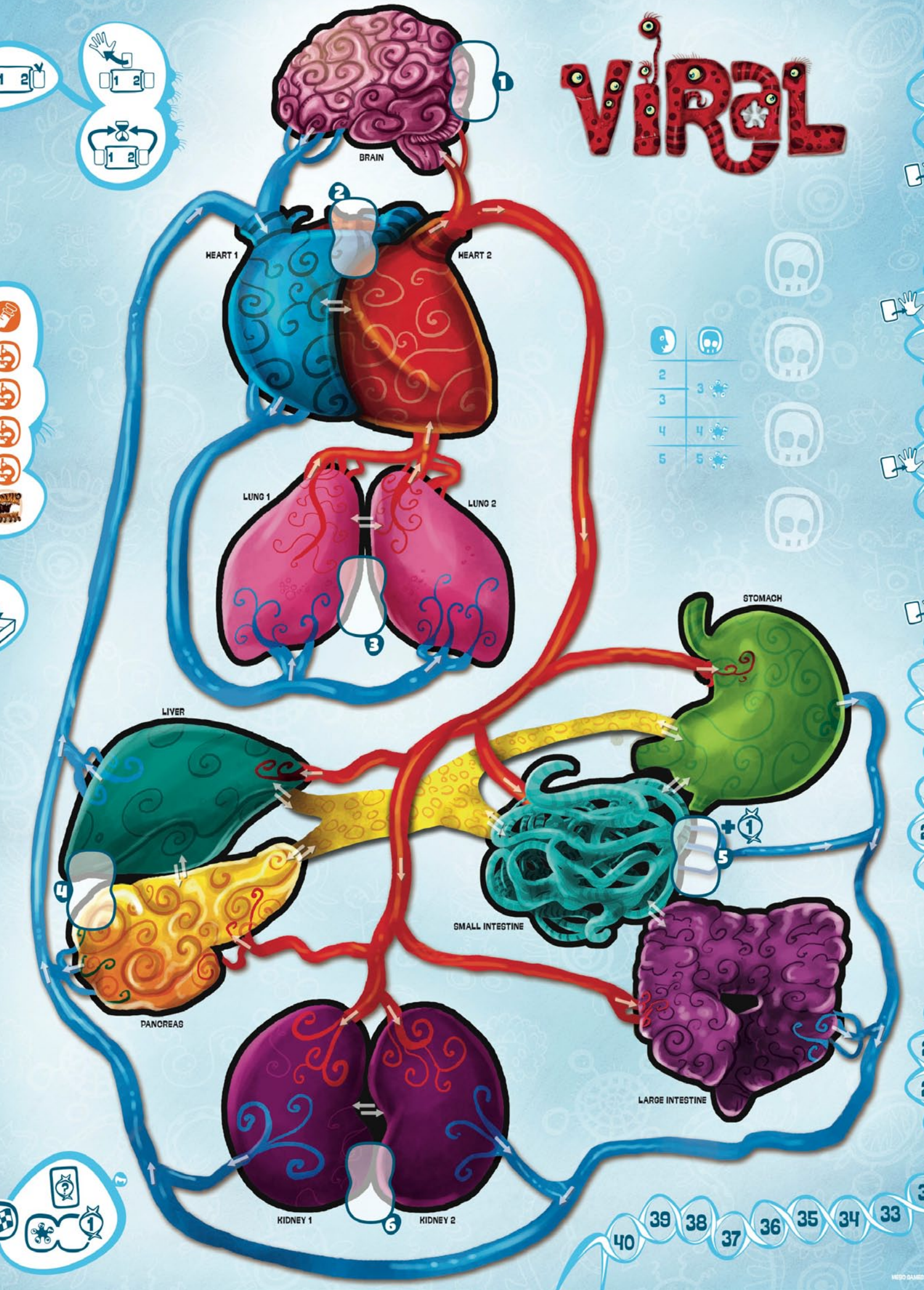
Photo courtesy of: Arcane Wonders

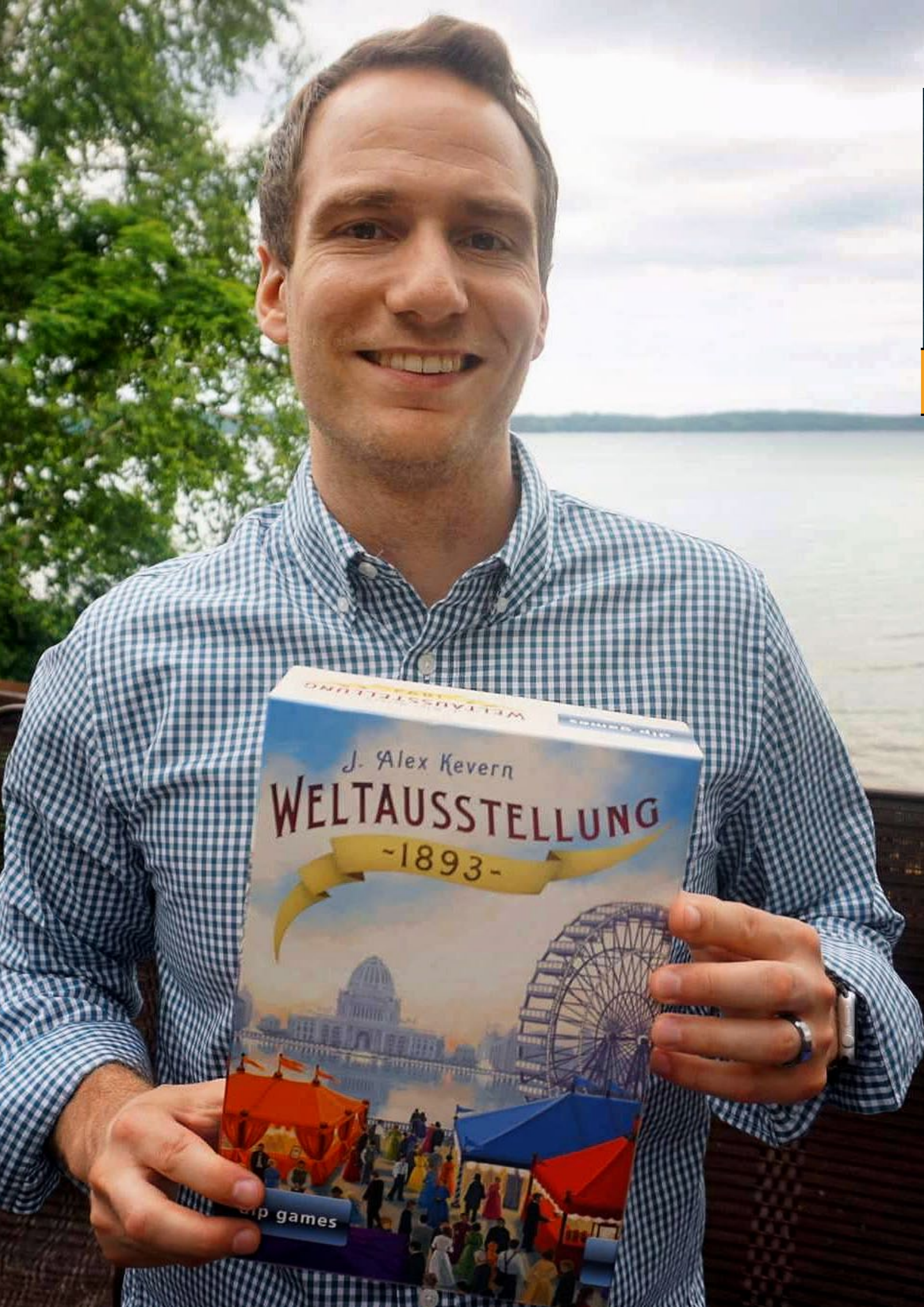
Designers:	Antonio Sousa Lara & Gil d'Orey
Publisher:	Arcane Wonders
Players:	2-5
Mechanic:	Area Control, Hand Management
Ages:	12+
Length:	60-90 Mins.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

www.arcanewonders.com

viral





J. Alex Kevern
WELTAUSSTELLUNG
-1893-



ship games



- World's Fair 1893
- Gold West
- Daxu
- Sentient

J. Alex Kevern - Game Designer

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with our readers, can you tell us a little something about yourself?

Thanks for having me. I'm a board game designer currently living in the greater New York City area, best known for games like *World's Fair 1893*, *Gold West*, and *Sentient*. I love accessible games that don't overstay their welcome and offer decisions that keep you thinking about strategies long after the game is over.

Did you start designing games at an early age? If so, do you remember what your first game design was like?

I've been playing games since an early age, but I did not catch the design bug until my mid twenties. I definitely remember my first design - it was a resource management game, in space, on a board made up of an interlocking set of gears. At the time I thought I had invented pick-up-and-deliver and felt very proud of myself. Then I quickly realized I had a lot to learn.

What games over the years have you enjoyed most, from both the point of personal enjoyment, as well as those that influenced your growth as a designer?

There are a handful of games that have been pivotal influences for me as a designer, and are also some of my favorite games to play: *El Grande* for its concise use of area majority, *Quebec* for its combination of worker placement with area majority, *Ra* for the variety of set collection it provides, and *Castles of Burgundy* for its use of incentives that drive players' decisions. Two of my other favorites are *Keyflower* and *AquaSphere*. Or maybe I just like compound words.

When the opportunity presents itself, what games have you currently been playing?

I always try to play a mix of old favorites and new games to stay current. Some of my favorite games that came out this year include *Yokohama*, *Century: Spice Road*, and *The Quest for El Dorado*.

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Interview (Cont.)

Who are your favorite game designers?

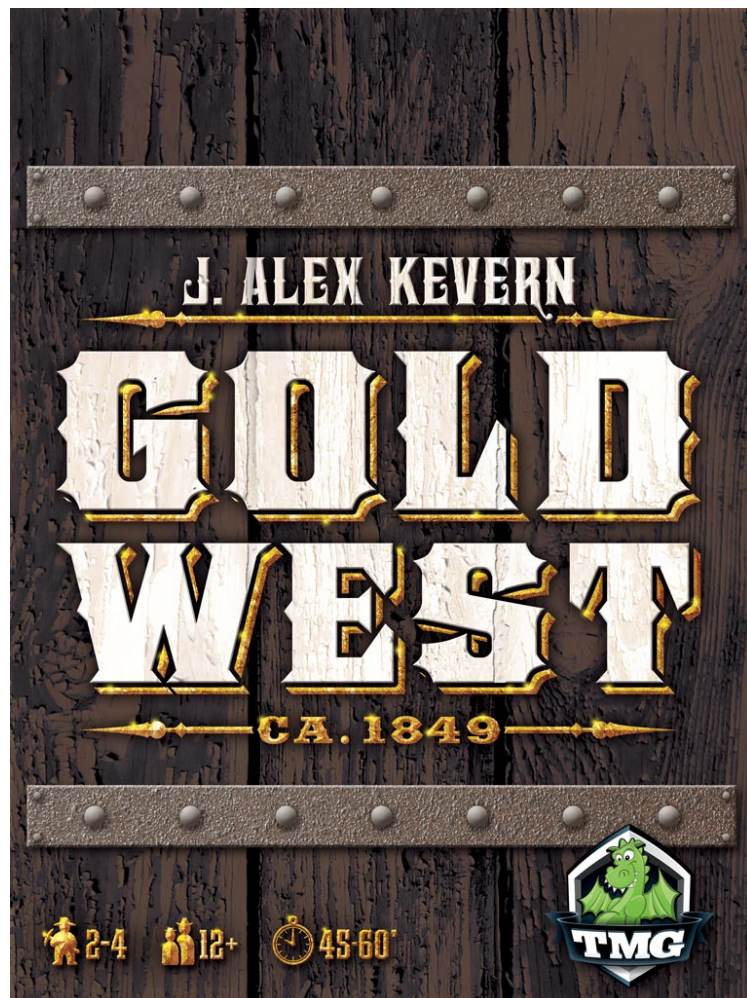
Stefan Feld, Phil Walker-Harding, and Reiner Knizia

Is there a particular designer that you would be interested in collaborating with? If so, what type of game would you be interested in making?

Adam McIver (designer of *Ex Libris*, *Coin Age*) have been playtesting each other's prototypes for years, and we've discussed formally collaborating for a long time. We complement each other well, I tend to focus on the game mechanics and he's very good at evoking clever themes, so I'd be interested in making a game that combines our two strengths.

When starting a new design, do you start with a theme or a mechanic?

Almost always with a mechanic. I generally keep a list of themes that I'm interested in, and when I get far enough with an initial mechanic that seems to work and is interesting, I'll think about different themes and how the game could potentially make sense in each of those contexts. I am much better at designing that way because when I am still "finding" the design I don't have to make everything fit within a pre-determined theme, giving me the flexibility to change the mechanics based on what serves the gameplay best.



What is your daily design/playtest schedule like? Do you work on games everyday?

I consider it a form of “punctuated equilibrium”: quick bursts of activity interspersed by periods of apparent stasis. I think of my design schedule a bit like that. When I come up with an idea there will often be an avalanche effect when one idea leads to another and then all of a sudden I’ll have a game. I’ll quickly make a conceptual prototype to make sure things work, but there will inevitably be some problems with the initial concept that I will have to ruminate on. Following that will be a week or two of playing the game in my head and troubleshooting problems I foresee. Eventually there will be a new idea for a solution that works in my head, and then the next flurry of activity and testing happens. That process more or less repeats until I am happy in the game, after which I’ll then bring in some other players to playtest. But maybe only third of the games that start through that ruminating process make it through to the end.

What do you think defines your “style” as a game designer, is there a specific mechanic or rule set or... ?

Mechanically I am primarily focused on giving players interesting trade-offs. I try to give players a handful of things to choose from, but with each of those choices having layers of implications. For example, in *Sentient* players have 4 cards to choose from. However, choosing a card affects other things too - it determines which investors you can influence for end game scoring, how your dice are adjusted, and the potential scoring of your neighboring cards. So ultimately it becomes several different implications built into a single choice, which hopefully makes each one interesting.



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Which one of your games do you consider your best design, and why?

This is the question I struggle with the most, because I'm proud of them all for different reasons. But, I'll narrow it down to two: *Gold West* is the game I most enjoy playing myself, and *World's Fair 1893* is the game I most enjoy teaching to other people. I really enjoy the spacial elements in *Gold West*, and I imagine I will revisit those map based mechanics in a future design. For *World's Fair 1893*, it is my family's favorite, and it's one that has appealed the most to more casual gamers, that level of accessibility means a lot to me.

You are a former National Champion at "Settlers of Catan". Do you feel that your tournament play has influenced your game design? If so, to what degree?

It certainly has shaped the way I think about games and design. When designing a game, I try to think to myself, would this game work in a tournament format? Why or why not? That helps me think through cases where there may be potential loopholes that could be exploited, if there's too much downtime, and assess if there is enough variety in the gameplay to keep players engaged game after game. It was a good experience to have in terms of going that deep into one game, because it helps me better assess if my own designs can hold up to that level of scrutiny.

You are perhaps best known for the 2016 Mensa Select Award Winner, "World's Fair 1893" (see issue #9). Could you tell our readers how you developed this game over time?

It actually started as a game about trading amber in central Europe. The basic mechanism was there, where you place a piece of your color into an area to take what's there, and that piece will help earn you area majority later on. Once Foxtrot Games signed it, we developed the game around the more engaging World's Fair theme, which proved to be the right decision. A lot of wholesale changes happened in the development. As just one example, the cards that are now in the final game used to be tiles drawn out of a bag. The cards proved to be much less fiddly, and also allowed real estate for the wonderful artwork in the game.

Beth Sobel's artwork on "World's Fair 1893" was outstanding, as usual. What's it like to see one of your games come to life when someone as talented as Beth puts "a face" on one of your designs?

It is one of the best parts of the whole process. Beth's artwork is incredible, and I was fortunate enough to have her illustrate another one of my games, *Atlas: Enchanted Lands*. To see talented artists make your vision come to life is such a treat and it makes the hard work worth it.

"Gold West" (see issue #6) uses a mechanism that is reminiscent of a Mancala. Did Stefan Feld's use of the Mancala mechanism in "Trajan" serve as an influence and how early in the design process did this appear?

It did. When I first heard about the mechanism *Trajan* used, I envisioned it being similar to what ended up in *Gold West*. But once I learned how *Trajan* was played, I realized players never actually used the mancala stones, it was simply a (supremely clever) action selection mechanism. But ultimately it was the initial mechanism that sparked the development of *Gold West*. I wanted to give players a way to use the resources that emerged from the mancala, which was reminiscent of a gold mining sluice box.

In "Daxu" (see issue #10), the playing of an action card determines who will receive the cards and the scoring mechanism rewards close play compared to excessive majorities. Can you give us some insight into how these ideas developed?

The concept for *Daxu* came out of a desire to create an incentive to keep majorities close and contentious. Many games where you are rewarded for majorities can lack a sense of tension if margins are not closely contested and victory in an area is a foregone conclusion. Awarding more points for winning a closely contested set (and penalizing you for winning by too much) helped keep majorities close and maintain that tension.



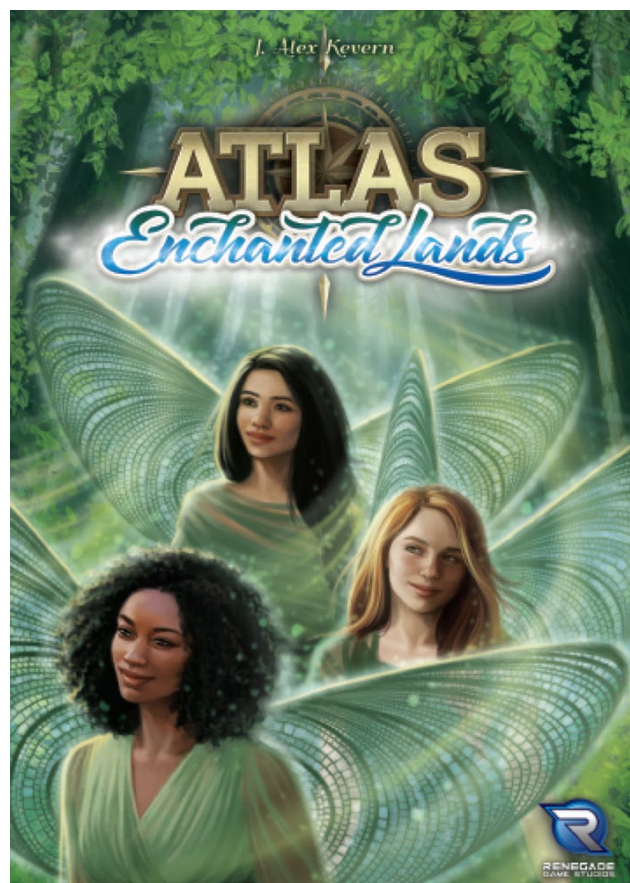
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How early on in the design process of *Sentient* (see this issue) did you come up with the idea of the Area Control mechanism for the acquisition of the Investment tokens and did it change much over the course of the design?

The mechanism where the cards plug into your network to adjust the dice was the founding element of *Sentient*, but the area control came second. I usually try to build in a secondary element to the choices players make in most of my designs. In *Sentient* I knew players needed an display of cards to choose from, so I liked having an area majority element tied to that choice. I liked how the investors that sat in between the cards mirrored how the cards sat between your dice on your player board, so that ended up as a natural fit.

The versatility of *Sentient*'s Assistants is an interesting aspect of the game. Were they originally designed to be used for both the area control and Calibration phase from the start, or were they added as the design progressed?

When first introduced they were only used for the area majority, and the decision was mostly focused on when to put them out with your Agent. In the first few playtests, it became clear there were too many instances where the scoring on your cards would break down at no fault of your own, usually because of the luck of the draw. Allowing players to use their assistants to block the card effects helped give them the flexibility they needed, but at the potential expense of controlling majorities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, that trade-off was interesting to me, so I kept it as part of the game.



Are there any plans to bring any of your games to the mobile platform for iOS or Android?

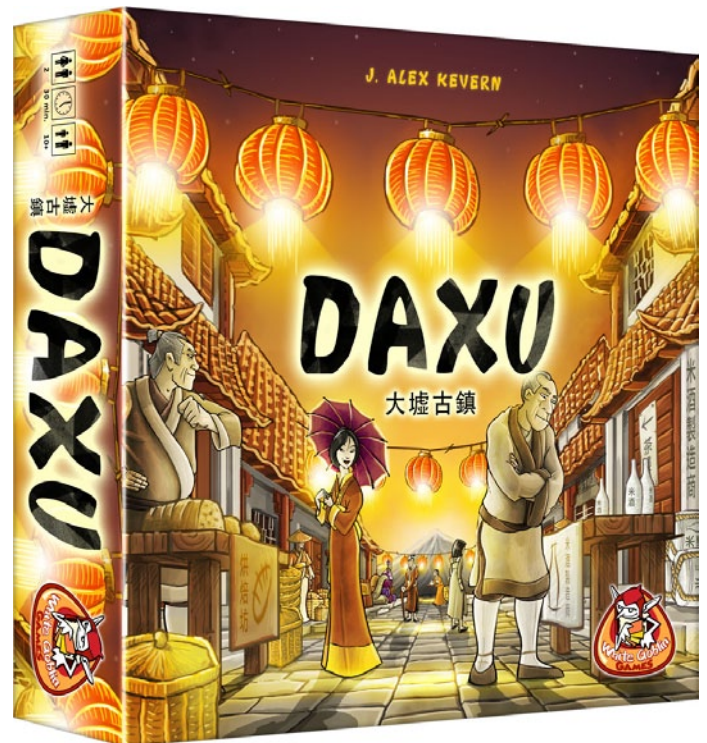
I hope so. I am not aware of any imminent plans, but I do try to make games that would be amenable to the platform.

Are there any other upcoming projects that you are at liberty to discuss or announce?

There should be an announcement coming soon about a 2 player game that will be released in 2018. It's one of my favorite and most played game designs. Needless to say, I am very excited for it.

What advice would you have for aspiring game designers?

Make games that have a point. In an environment like today's where we have so many games, the best way to make your game stand out is to be able to clearly articulate what the point is, and why it should exist. Does it use a unique mechanism never used before in this way? Does it fill a certain niche, in terms of length, or player count, or social situation, that is underserved? If it doesn't have a point, even if it does get published, it will be harder for people to find a reason to want it. If you're filling a need, it becomes much more difficult for them not to. 🎲





Create the Future

I initially became intrigued by the designs of J. Alex Kevern when I first played *Gold West*. Since then, I've kept an eye out for any of his latest releases. Having enjoyed *World's Fair 1893* and *Daxu*, it was becoming clear that his star was rising. Needless to say, when *Sentient* was released I was interested in seeing if his streak of quality designs would continue. Let's find out.

Sentient comes in a 8 1/4" x 10 1/2" x 2 1/4" box that features spot varnishing. Inside there is a custom, three well cardboard insert with two shelves.

The 12 page rulebook is profusely illustrated and devotes 2 pages to the card's icons. There are examples for both in game and endgame scoring.

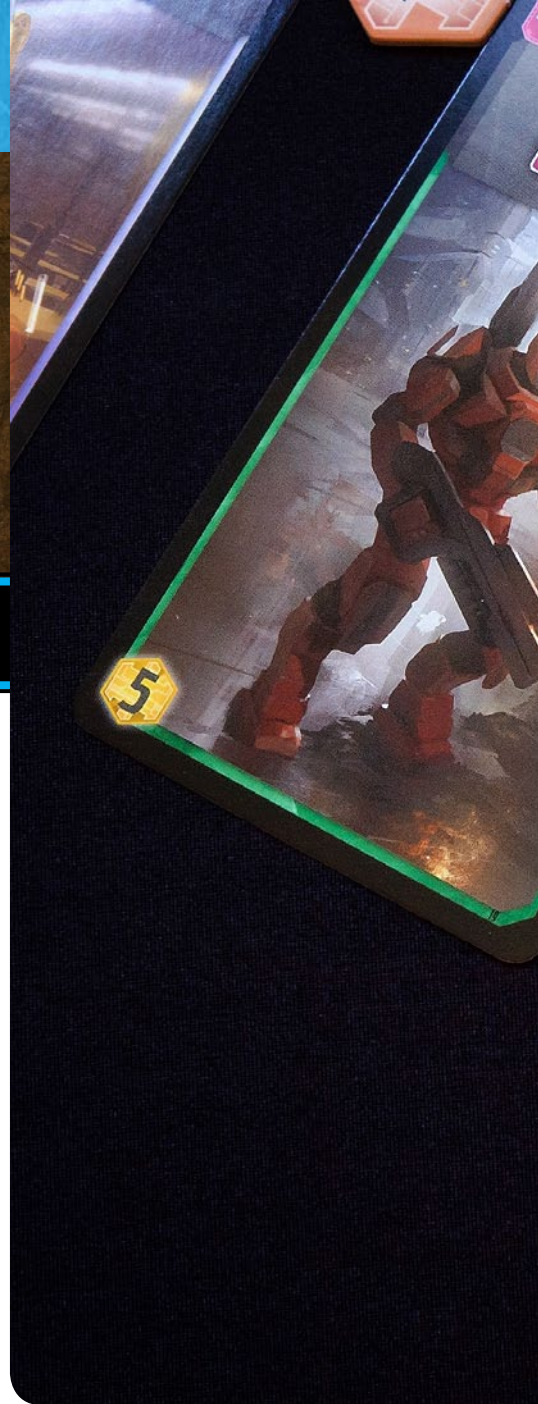
The tarot sized cards are of a good card stock and shuffle nicely. Due to the cards only being shuffled to randomize the draw, sleeves aren't needed.

The cardboard components are all of a sturdy cardboard stock. The individual player boards are made up of two pieces that are loosely held together with a joint.

The wooden player pieces come in four colors, red, yellow, white and gray.

The standout components are the custom dice. Each face is engraved and filled, as well as a unique, graphic element for each number.

To start the game players will roll their dice and place them on the appropriate squares on their player board. The Factory area is a cleverly designed system that displays the cards and uses Investor and VP tokens.



There are three rounds to a game. During a round players will place one of their four Agents into the Factory area above the card that they are interested in, as well as placing any number of their assistants at the same time. This is an important element of the game, as the Investor tokens are claimed by winning the area control battles with the Agents and Assistants.



After a card is claimed it is placed into one of the empty areas in the player's Network and the adjacent dies are Calibrated. The upper corners of the card show how to adjust (Calibrate) the numbers of the dies. Numbers loop around, when appropriate. Should a player not want to Calibrate one of their dies, they may place an Assistant over the card's effect to cancel it.

If a player doesn't want any of the cards in the Factory, they can place their turn order token on to the space for the next round and clear the area of all the cards and replace them. This ends their turn. The first player to do this will go last on the next turn, which is an advantage, because of the area control.

[Continued on next page>](#)

Sentient (Cont.)

Play continues until each player has placed all four of their Agents and then scoring commences for the round.

In order to score, each card's requirements must be met. The amount of points is listed on the card. Example: if the adjacent dies are odd, score 3 points. There are various scoring requirements and each card type features a specific variety.

After the final round there is endgame scoring. Each of the Investment tokens are worth 1 VP per corresponding card they collected during the game. Example: a player obtained 2 Military Investment tokens and 3 Military cards, for a score of 6 VP's. If they had 3 Military tokens, they would have score 9 VP's for the 3 cards.

After all of the Investment token bonuses have been tallied, they are added to the previous victory points and the player with the most points wins.

Although *Sentient* appears to be a fairly simple game, there's a lot going on. On your initial play you'll probably be focused on acquiring the Bot cards and Calibrating them, on subsequent plays you'll start to pay more attention to the area control battles and how many and what type of cards you are collecting. This seems to be part of Kevern's style as a designer, as the strategic thought process is similar to *World's Fair 1893* (though the games are very different) as you are torn between the "obvious" play and yet at the same time, trying to balance the strategies involving the area control and set collecting.

I really enjoyed the puzzle aspect to the game, as there are times when you have to weigh the decision of breaking up a previously established scoring situation in order to gain some more points with the new one and how that might effect your other cards. There are also times where you wind up taking a card for only the "+", "-", or "=" in order to Calibrate a previously set up card.

Assistants are an interesting aspect of the game due to their ability to be used as a unit of force in the area control battle and therefore helping to obtain Investor tokens, as well as being able to manipulate cards during the Calibration process. I love the fact that you can use two Assistants to block both effects of a card during the Calibration phase, however that leaves you with two less Assistants to use in the area control battle. It's these types of strategic choices that makes the game so fascinating at times.

The main downside of the game was that the left halves of the player boards were identical, other than artwork and name. I would have liked to see something similar to "Small World" where asymmetrical combinations would yield different experiences, even if they were small bonuses such as "1 additional point for every 3 Transport cards". It would have gone a long way to adding another layer to the game, as well as increasing the replayability.

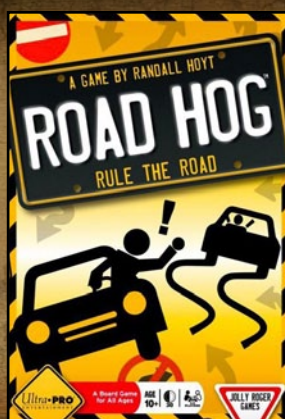
Overall this is another fine effort by J. Alex Kevern and it has me looking forward to seeing what his next game is going to be like. Players who enjoy puzzle-like games, area control and set collection, should find this to be a very enjoyable game. 🎲

Designer:	J. Alex Kevern
Publisher:	Renegade Games
Players:	2-4
Mechanic:	Dice Manipulation, Area Control
Ages:	12+
Length:	30 - 60 Mins.

RECOMMENDED

www.renegadegames.com





Road Rage - Indoors!

Long time readers of Game Nite will remember that in issue #2 we reviewed the documentary, “The Next Great American Game” by Douglas Morse which featured the story of Randall Hoyt’s attempt to get his game *Turnpike* published. *Road Hog* is Randall’s tweaked vision of *Turnpike* brought to publication. Let’s take a look at how the game turned out.

The game comes in a glossy 6 1/2” x 9 1/2” x 2” box that features a custom cardboard insert that has two wells for the components.

The 12 page rulebook is a little shaky, but you’ll be up and running quickly as the game is quite simple. There is a problem with the rulebook and the Road Tiles. (see below).

The Road Tiles are a 5” square and feature a cardboard stock with a rubber back. I’ve never seen this before and it is very impressive, as the tiles don’t move on the playing surface. However, in the rulebook there are clearly “yellow lines” on the edge of the tiles to mark off the movement spaces, yet on the tiles themselves there are none. We played it using the rulebook as a guide, but were perplexed as to how this wasn’t caught during production.

The 60 cards seem a little flimsy, though they shuffle nicely and should be fine, though you should consider sleeving them if you intend to play it often.

The main components are the 35 wooden cars and trucks. There are also 5 cars for the players that come in five different colors, though the red and pink look almost exactly alike. The game also includes two custom dice with numbers and icons printed on them.

The setup for the game allows each player, in turn order, to place a Road Tile until they all have been placed. Then players will alternate placing the white cars and trucks onto the lanes of the Road Tiles, using the printed icons on the Road Tiles as a guide. Each player is dealt 3 cards and the game begins.

On a player’s turn they will roll two dice, one of them determines the amount of spaces their car can move (die faces = 2,3,3,3,4,4) and the other die shows how to move one of the traffic cars or trucks. Players are also able to play any of the cards in their hand and at the end of their turn drawing back up to three cards.

The first player to exit wins the game.

It is somewhat ironic that I would be the one to review a game about driving in traffic, especially since I don’t drive and live on a small island where three or four cars is a lot of traffic. Although I am certainly aware of traffic “off island”! At times the game nicely captures the frustration of being boxed in with a truck in front of you, or a section of road that is congested and hard to navigate through. Though to be honest, I’m not sure that this is something I would consider “fun” in a game. It does work as a “take that” game, but I’m not sure how many people are going to “enjoy” the experience - especially those who have to deal with large amounts of traffic in their daily commute.

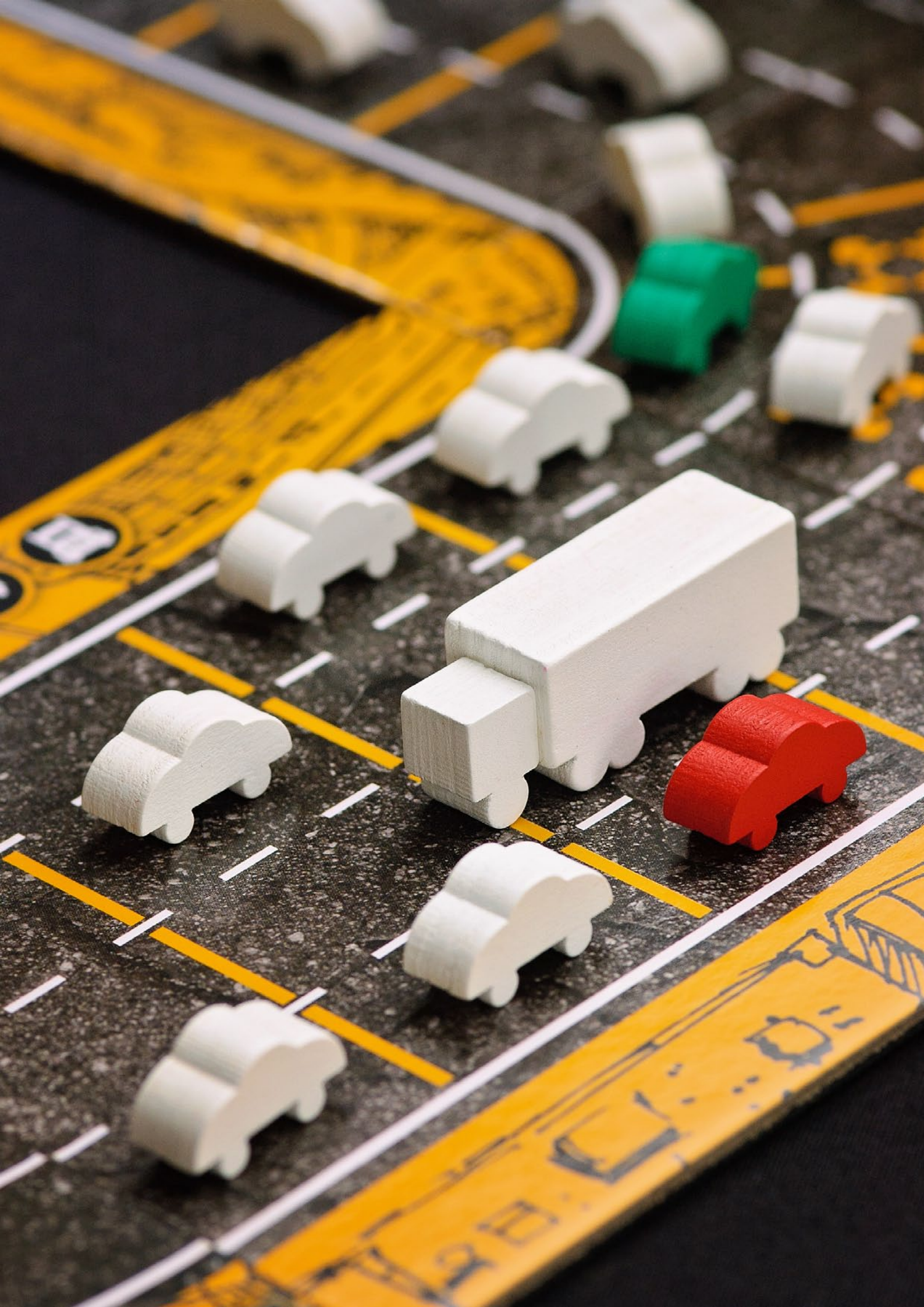
Having said that, the main focus of the game is the “screw your neighbor” approach using the white cars and trucks to box in and block your opponents. The Reaction cards are a must in order to hold off your opponents from hampering your plans, though they can also be cancelled by other Reaction cards

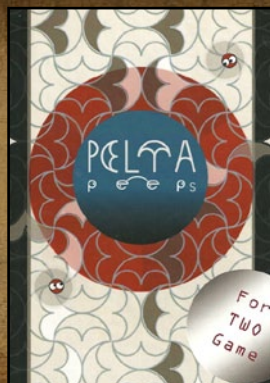
It’s not a bad filler game, but the theme and “take that” element are going to definitely turn some people off. I thought it was somewhat interesting, but not one that was going to hit the table often... unless of course we were in an hostile mood and wanted to experience “road rage” indoors. 🚗

Designer:	Randall Hoyt
Publisher:	Jolly Roger Games
Players:	2-5
Mechanic:	Roll and Move, Racing
Ages:	12+
Length:	45 Mins.

WORTH TRYING

www.jollyrogergames.com





Handcrafted Game

One of the joys of the current state of the hobby is seeing the dreams of many aspiring designers come to fruition. While the overwhelming majority outsource their products to China for production, some choose not to do so. “Pelta Peeps” by Pelta Games is a light family strategy game that is hand made in Florida and features laser cut acrylic pieces. But, will the choice to not outsource hurt the sales of the game? Let’s find out...

We were sent two versions of the game, a 2 player game and a 4 player game with a 2 player expansion. Both of these came in a 6 3/4” x 4 3/4” x 3” box and has no insert.

Upon opening the box you are greeted with red tissue paper. Each box contains a tchotchke. We received two PeltaPeeps pins and a glass star, both of which have no use within the game. Underneath the next layer of tissue paper we find the game’s components, each color is stored in a re-sealable ziploc sandwich bag and has the color of the pieces hand written in magic marker.

While two versions of the game were sent, we will be primarily looking at the 2-6 player version, as the dedicated two player game is somewhat fiddly with all of the small pieces to be used as connectors and just wasn’t very interesting.

The 2-6 player version of the game already had the connectors built into the pieces and made it a bit more interesting. However, you are forced to play the first three rounds with pieces that have at least two connectors, otherwise it is possible to end the game after only five moves. Perhaps some pieces should have been marked as “starting pieces” so that there wouldn’t be a need for this clumsy rule.

The essence of the game is that you may place a piece into play by connecting it to another piece. After connecting, you may either move or flip an opponent’s piece. At the end of the game face up pieces are worth more points. Play continues around the table in this manner. The game ends when the first player has played all their pieces.

There was more strategy in this version, in particular to what pieces you and your opponents had left towards the end of the game. Players were often caught short of available connectors in order to get their final pieces into play. The defensive nature of some of the pieces was an interesting concept as I kept trying to shut down the board and end the game earlier, while forcing my opponents to “open up the board” with more connectors which were quickly grabbed by the rest of us.

The scoring method is a bit convoluted, however, a sample score sheet is included (you’ll have to make copies) to help you keep track of it all.



The best part of the game is that the pieces look great and they caught everyone's attention, especially as the playing area filled up with the connected pieces. However, there are some tell tale signs of being laser cut, as the sides have a smoothed, ridged edge.

While it is commendable that the company produces the product onsite using UV printed laser cut acrylic (which uses low power consumption) and VOC free inks and that there is no "wasteful transportation impact on the environment". Unfortunately, none of those things translate into a good game at a reasonable price.

The bottom line for this game is the cost. By not outsourcing the components they have placed their product out of reach of the majority of potential customers. The 4 player "PeltaPeeps" Full Game (64 pieces) has an MSRP of \$190 and there is a two player expansion for \$99 (to take it to 6 players). In my opinion, \$289 for a light children's/family game is not

realistic. If it had a price point of \$25-35, I could see it as a possible game for children who enjoy beginner strategy games or for family gatherings. However, at the current price point I can't recommend it. 🎲

Note to would-be publishers: know your market and what it will support.

Designers:	Thomas Kite & Samuel Kite
Publisher:	Pelta Games
Players:	2-6
Mechanic:	Abstract, Tile Laying
Ages:	8+
Length:	10-80 Mins.

PASS

www.peltagames.com



Designer's Kit

Due to a booming board game market, there is a growing need for quality board game manufacturers, and as the competition increases, many of these companies are trying to differentiate themselves, as well as making their production values known to a growing customer base. China's WinGo has released a "Designer's Kit" that offers potential clients a practical look at what they have to offer, as well as the level of quality that can be expected. Let's take a look at what the kit has to offer.

The "Designer's Kit" comes in a sturdy 7" x 4 3/4" x 2" cardboard box. The box has a linen finish, spot varnishing and foil stamped text. All three of these features are nicely laid out and are indicative of what can be expected. Over the surface of the box top, sides and bottom are various areas designated for game related information with specific suggestions. This is of great aid to a new designer/publisher who is looking for ideas as to how to lay out their box design. As an example: on the bottom of the box is a light blue box that says: "Show off your game components here. Show some gameplay. Show what gamers would like to see." The barcode area states: "Barcode should be in UPC or EAN format."

Upon opening the box you are first greeted with the "WinGo Designer's Guide". This 16 page book is printed on a sturdy paper stock with a gloss finish that contains all of the important production information such as: Artwork File Requirements, Bleeds and Margins, Die Cut Areas, Special Treatments and more. There are also three pages devoted to the production of Miniatures.

The kit includes two punchboards. The first one is a standard sheet of tokens, including one set that shows their ability to have a token with a "punchable" center. The second punchboard shows their handiwork at creating some custom shapes, as well as including a piece that can be folded along a pre-cut crease.

Also included is a four panel game board. This sturdy board has a black linen finish back and a white front that has areas printed in light grey with examples of board layout ideas.

The box includes a custom, two well, cardboard insert. In one of the wells is a custom, clear plastic insert.



Included is a sealed tuck box of cards, which highlights their shrink-wrap capabilities. The box has useful information printed around its sides and includes four different sizes of playing cards within. Each of the cards have a different core: black, blue, purple and white. The cards also feature linen and regular finishes, card weights of 300 and 350 gsm and various rounded corner cuts. Some of the cards include production information, such as full bleeds and borders.



Inside the plastic insert are several smaller components that show what the company is capable of. The first one to grab your eye is the miniature. This plastic miniature shows good detail and measures a little under 1 1/2". The miniature and its pose show that the company can produce this type of miniature and not settle for an easier pose during the casting process.

The other included components are: a very nice metal coin with an "antique" finish, a plastic base for a standee, two custom dies - each having a marble finish and painted, engraved faces, a bag of translucent cubes and a bag of custom shaped meeples. One of the meeples is a wizard and it features an intricate cut between his staff and body.

The "Designer's Kit" does an excellent job of showing what WinGo is capable of producing on their end, as all of the components were of a high quality and covered a wide range of products and materials. Judging from the quality of this kit, WinGo would be a company I would be interested in working with in the future. So, if you have aspirations of producing your own game and are wondering what you can expect from WinGo, this kit would be an excellent resource to obtain and see for yourself what they're capable of doing for you. 🎲

Manufacturer: WinGo Games

RECOMMENDED

www.wingogames.com



SUPERHOT

SUPERHOT is a micro-deck builder card game that was funded on Kickstarter, designed by Manuel Correia and published by Board and Dice in Poland. The game features the graphic design and artwork based on the video game of the same name. The 1-3 player card game not only features head to head and 2 vs. 1 play, but also co-op and solitaire play.

In solo mode, you lose the game if you ever have four bullet cards in your hand, the bullet deck runs out, the obstacle deck runs out of cards, or you have to refill your hand to four cards and you are unable to do so. In order to win there are three levels you must complete, each increasing in difficulty. The first level has one goal card chosen at random from a deck of 25, two goal cards in level 2 and finally three goals in level 3. You do get a mulligan once per level, but the goal card must be in the next level. Once you complete all goal(s) in a level, you shuffle up all the obstacles cards, as well as your own deck and discard pile, and draw new goal cards to start the next level.

Six cards are dealt from the obstacle deck in a row to form the Line, with the 7th card on top of the obstacle draw deck to show you what's coming in the next round. Thematically, this represents the current "room" you are in and the things you can use to hide from the "dudes" in the room, or use to fight them. Additionally, there are also items that can help: like pliers to pull the pull the bullets out of you! In the bottom ten cards of the obstacle deck, a bullet card is shuffled in, this comes from a separate 12 card bullet deck.

The player's starting deck is made up of eight starter cards from which four cards are drawn to form your starting hand. The player plays defense cards with values equal to the defense cards he or she is trying to defeat. The same goes for attack cards. There are also cards where you may use a combination of both attack and defense together. Cards in the Line are either defeated or knocked out. The unique aspect of this game is cards that are defeated go into your deck's discard pile, while cards you played or cards that are knocked out (by flipping them over) in the Line go into the obstacle deck's discard pile, to show up in a later round in the line.



Photo: Jeff Rhind

After the player's cards are played, they refill their hand to four. Next, the number of cards the player has played will determine how many slots, from right to left, in the Line are placed in the player's discard pile, whether there is a card in the slot or not. The remaining cards in the Line with effects at the bottom then trigger, not all of which are bad. Some let you draw a card, or do nothing; while others may force you to place a bullet card into the obstacle discard pile. These bullets are coming...you know they are! In the last phase of the turn, the Line moves to the right and then is refilled from right to left back up to six.

What's really interesting about this game is how the cards you play don't go into your discard, but instead come back to haunt you in a new room later. So, what is critical here is the timing for which cards you play and when you play them. You need to be effective in which

cards get defeated into your discard and which go into the obstacle discard to fight you later. Card effects in the line before it refills can have a positive or negative impact and affect how you play the game. All of this can be mitigated on how many cards you play in order to defeat cards to your discard pile.

Thematically, the game ties in well with its video predecessor. Only when you move does the game move. As you play cards, things happen, bad guys and bullets move in the room. You see the bullet coming at you. Can you slice it out of the air with your katana or will it inevitably hit you? As a whole, Superhot is a unique micro-deck builder. It's not overly complex, but does offer some interesting decisions. It plays fast, and although the game play is very "samey", the large number of goal cards makes the game challenging every time it's played, as well as offering that "let me play just one more time" feel. 🎮

Contributors



Serge Pierro

Serge has playtested numerous games for several companies, including Wizards of the Coast and AEG. He has also written for Duelist, Inquest and Gamer print magazines. His award winning photography has appeared in both newspapers and magazines. He has self published a game, and has several other designs ready... but, currently finds his free time devoted to doing Game Nite.

Eric Devlin

Eric has been the North East Regional Representative for Wizards of the Coast, the brand manager of *Legends of the Five Rings*, as well as working with Sabretooth and Third World Games. He has an extensive background in playtesting for top companies. He has also written for Games Quarterly, Duelist, Inquest and others.



Bill Braun

Bill has been a contributing writer for PSNation and High-Def Digest, an Editor and Publisher Relations Director for 30PlusGamer, and the co-creator and podcast host of A Band of Gamers.



Tom M Franklin

Tom lives in North Carolina where he and his wife are staff to their five cats. His writing has appeared in his agent's Inbox and the occasional hand-written letter to friends. He grew up playing Abstract Strategy Games (back when they were simply called games) and still regards dice of all kinds with suspicion. His Board Gaming Claim to Fame is having taught over 300 kids how to play Chess. Considering he's been playing board games for over 50 years he really should be much better at them than he is.





Jeff Rhind

Jeff is a single father raising a 19 year-old son and a 8 year-old daughter, and slowly coaxing them into the world of tabletop gaming. He has been gaming for many years and shares his love and appreciation for the hobby by reviewing and talking about games on his web site: completelyboard.com as well as his You Tube channel at youtube.com/completelyboard. You can also follow him on twitter [@jeffrhind](https://twitter.com/jeffrhind)

Kevin Lauryssen

Kevin has a Master in Audiovisual Arts and majored in Animation. He works as a Freelance Draftsman for multiple companies in Belgium. He's an avid gamer who has created a web-comic about boardgaming. His work can be found at www.game-night.be



Steve Krause

Steve is a newspaper designer based out of Pontiac, Michigan. He first became enchanted with modern board games with *Betrayal at House on the Hill*, and it's been downhill ever since. His work on board games has appeared in Slate, and he runs the [@boardgamesofinsta](https://boardgamesofinsta.com) instagram account and you can follow him on twitter at [@steve_krause](https://twitter.com/steve_krause).

Contributors Welcome

Game Nite is always interested from hearing from people who are interested in contributing to the magazine, either regularly or as a guest contributor. If you have an idea for a series or a one shot feature that you would be interested in doing, feel free to contact us - we'd love to hear from you!



Interview Gallery



Steve Jackson #1



Dan Verssen #1



Paul Herbert #1



Reiner Knizia #2



Franz Vohwinkel #2



James Ernest #2



Mark Copplestone #2



Reiner Knizia #3



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Brom #3



Chenier La Salle #4



Ryan Dancey #4



Brian Snoddy #4



Beth Sobel #5



Bruno Faidutti #5



Tom Jolly #6



Antoine Bauza #7



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Ryan Laukat #8



Chad Hoverter #9



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Ludovic Roudy & Bruno Sautter
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