

Casual Game™

BOARD GAMING MAGAZINE

Fall 2016 / #17

INSIDER



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A TRIVIA PARTY GAME WHERE CLOSE COUNTS



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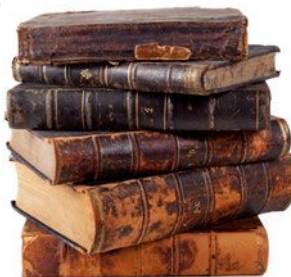


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StratusGames.com



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Cryptozoic.com



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Medievalords.com



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LooneyLabs.com



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BlueOrangeGames.com



Thank you! *Casual Game Insider* wouldn't be possible without our readers, especially the 428 generous people who supported our 5th year Kickstarter campaign.

We have lots of great content in store for you in this and future issues. We hope you enjoy it!





VALERIA™

CARD KINGDOMS

A tableau-building game

Valeria: Card Kingdoms will feel familiar to deck-building fans. You buy cards to fuel and customize an engine to win the game, but the similarities really end there because designer Isaias Vallejo had one thing in mind when designing the game: reward the player as much as possible.

Valeria: Card Kingdoms is a tableau-builder — instead of buying cards that go to your discard pile that you only use when you're lucky enough to draw them, the cards are left up in front of you to be activated on your turn and on any other player's turn. Cards are activated by

the roll of the dice and in *Valeria: Card Kingdoms* both dice *and* the sum of both dice count towards activating cards. This simple mechanic really amps up the amount of times players receive rewards. You will find yourself at the edge of your seat each time the dice are rolled, hoping that your numbers come up.

In addition to cards that are activated by rolls, you can also purchase cards that have ongoing powers. Again, these stay up in front of you and are used during specific actions you take in the game. As you build up your tableau, you really get a sense that you are building your very own kingdom.



A new kind of fantasy game

In many ways, *Valeria: Card Kingdoms* is similar to a lot of fantasy games currently on the market. There are Owlbears, Rogues, Wizards, Dragons, etc. *Valeria: Card Kingdoms* is not trying to break new ground here, but the game really stands out on its own thanks to the wonderful illustrations and world-building by Mihajlo “The Mico” Dimitrievski.

The Mico’s artwork has a unique flair to it that makes every location, monster, and character have a playful yet serious look to it. His lines are fast and rough. His coloring is striking and bold. And his composition makes you feel as if you were standing in the world of Valeria.

Along with beautiful illustrations, the developers made sure to give this fantasy world a new twist by merging magic with religion.



A priest in the world of Valeria is not only a follower of a divine path, but can also summon great magic. This concept is touched upon in some fantasy worlds, but it is a focal point in the world of Valeria that comes out in the design of its characters and locations.



An expanding world

With the success of *Valeria: Card Kingdoms*, it's no wonder that Daily Magic Games will release two new games set in the world of Valeria, *Villages of Valeria* and *Quests of Valeria*. The games are completely stand-alone and build upon the rich lore that was established in *Valeria: Card Kingdoms*.



Additionally, the much-anticipated expansion for *Valeria: Card Kingdoms*, *Flames and Frost*, will seek funding on Kickstarter at the end of the year. This expansion will bring in a new set of citizens with unique powers for players to recruit, new sets of monsters for players to slay, and new domains for players to expand their kingdoms. Along with this huge expansion, Daily Magic Games will have a new booster pack available, *Expansion Pack #3: The Agents*, that will add a new mechanic to *Valeria: Card Kingdoms*. 🎲

DAILY MAGIC
GAMES



Codenames

This year's Spiel des Jahres winner, *Codenames*, was receiving a lot of buzz even before the award. It's not hard to understand why once you play this clever mix of party and word game for yourself.



Naomi Laeuchli

Game Reviewer and
Casual Game Groupie

MSRP: \$20
Designer: Vlaada Chvátil
Publisher: Czech Games Edition
2-8+ players, ages 14+, 15 mins.

To start, you divide players into two teams and one player on each team is chosen to be the Spymaster. Twenty-five word cards are laid out in a grid at the center of the table, representing the codenames of agents in the field. The two Spymasters draw a key card and secretly consult it. The key card informs them which word cards belong to their own spies and which belong to the other team, which ones are innocent bystanders, and which one is the Assassin.

On your team's turn, your Spymaster gives one clue. A clue consists of one word which he or she feels relates to one or more of the words on the table (e.g., 'hat' could be used for both 'hood' and 'crown') and a number representing the number of cards the clue relates to. Your team then discusses the clue and guesses one of the available cards. The

Spymaster will then lay a tile on that card to reveal its identity. If it belonged to the other team or was an innocent bystander, your team's turn immediately ends. If it was the Assassin, you lose the game. If the card was one of your team's agents, you may continue to guess or end your turn. You may guess as many cards as the Spymaster indicated (plus one extra), as long as each guess reveals one of your own agents. Play continues until one team has revealed all of their agents or the Assassin is revealed.

Playing as either the Spymaster or a guesser is lots of fun. The task of finding the perfect clue word to hint at the right cards and avoid your opponents' is much more difficult than it seems, while trying to correctly interpret the clues often ends up in hilarity while also being a real head-scratcher.

Codenames is dripping with fun player interaction. The games are just short enough that everyone can have a chance to play as the Spymaster, and the game comes with 200 double-sided word cards so you're never going to be playing with the same set of words twice.

This is one of the best party games out there and it's made all the better by its cool spy theme.





Imhotep

Ancient Egypt. Beautiful artwork. Fun components. Worldwide recognition as a Spiel des Jahres nominee. What more could you ask for?

In *Imhotep*, players take on the role of builders in the time of the Pharaohs, and attempt to outbuild their opponents. The board consists of five large tiles that represent various locations, including a marketplace and four different building sites. Each round of the game, a card is drawn that states which four ships are going to be used. Each ship only has space for a certain number of stones. On your turn you may gather three stones of your color from the quarry, place one of your stones onto a boat, play a market card, or send one of the boats to a tile.

When a boat lands in the marketplace, any players with stones on that boat may take turns selecting a card. These cards can be played for special actions during the game or saved to score points later. When a boat lands on a building site, the stones are placed in the building and points are scored depending on the site. The Pyramid scores immediately, while the Temple scores at the end of each round and the Burial Chamber and Obelisk score at the end of the game (all of these having their own unique scoring rules). The player with the most points after six rounds wins. On the back side of each tile is a slightly more advanced variation — once players grasp the rules they can add variety and up the ante by using the advanced sides during play.

In this game, you need to put a lot of thought into your strategy (Where will my blocks do me the most good? Which boats should I move them to?) while also keeping an eye on your opponents, because while you're busy setting up points for yourself at the Obelisk, they may be running wild in the Burial Chamber. Sometimes, you

might even have to ship a boat you don't have any stones on just so someone doesn't send it where it will score them the most points.

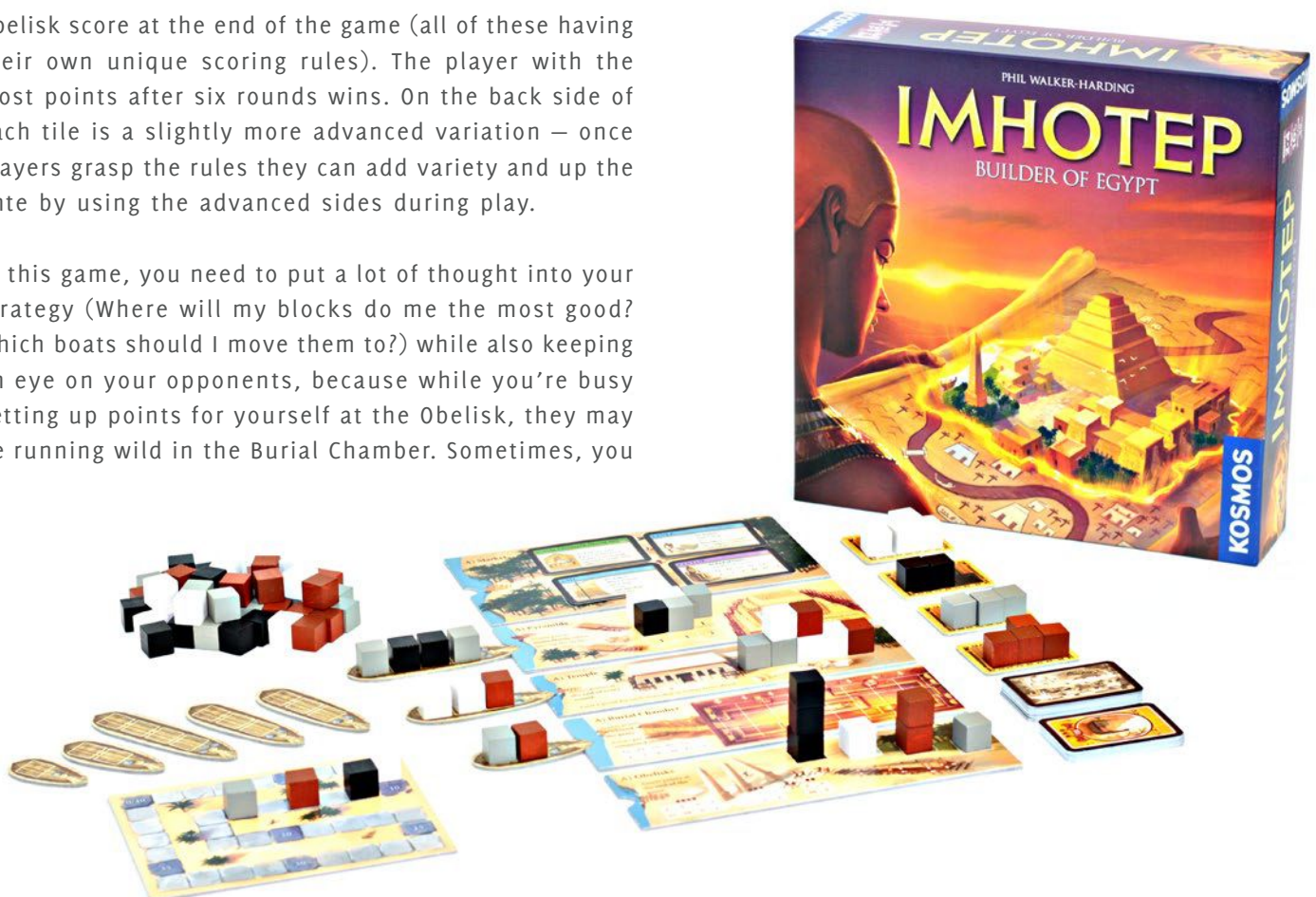
This is one of those games that leaves you itching to play it again so you can explore new strategies and develop new techniques. The rules are simple, the game easy to pick up, but you'll spend many a fun hour trying to master it. *Imhotep* is perfect for any strategy lover.

MSRP: \$40

Designer: Phil Walker-Harding

Publisher: Kosmos

2-4 players, ages 10+, 40 mins.



Sheriff of Nottingham

Wheel and deal in the era of Robin Hood and his Merry Men, as you play as merchants trying to bring your goods to market. The Sheriff will try to stop contraband from slipping through, but he might be persuaded on occasion to look the other way.

In *Sheriff of Nottingham*, players take turns taking on the role of Sheriff. Each turn, the Merchants choose which cards to place in their bags and must declare to the Sheriff the exact number of cards they've selected, but may choose to lie about the item type.

The Sheriff may choose to check any, all, or none of the Merchants' bags, searching for illegal goods. The catch is, if the Merchant was telling the truth all along, the Sheriff must pay them for the search, but if the Merchant was lying, she has to pay the Sheriff for any of the smuggled goods.

A player can try to offer bribes to the Sheriff (of money, cards, or even future favors when their turn as Sheriff rolls around) in an attempt to dissuade him from searching her bag.

You might want to do this if you've got a sack full of contraband, or just to play some mind games. In general, contraband is worth more money if successfully smuggled through, but players earn a bonus in the end for having the most of each type of legal good.

At the end of the game the player with the most money wins, which leads to some great dilemmas. Your contraband will earn you points, but enough to make up for the bribe you need to pay in order to smuggle it through? Or can you risk accepting an opponent's bribe when you know whatever they're sneaking past you will garner him points at the end of the game? These trade-offs lend a lot of weight to the bluffing and player interaction, and trying to outthink and outmaneuver the other players is both exciting and enjoyable.

Sheriff of Nottingham is one of the best bluffing games we've ever played. The game itself looks beautiful, with little bags the Merchants slip their cards into before handing them to the Sheriff. There are so many factors you have to take into account for each decision you make, from the bribes to the inspection. You'll soon find yourself sucked into the negotiation and haggling of the game and it won't let up until the last copper is counted.



MSRP: \$35

Designers: Sérgio Halaban, André Zatz

Publisher: Arcane Wonders

3-5 players, ages 14+, 45-60 mins.



Best Treehouse Ever

Sometimes a game comes along that not only has great mechanics, beautiful artwork, and fun gameplay, but also helps bring to life a fantasy – be it delving dungeons, commanding spaceships or, as in the case of *Best Treehouse Ever*, building the ultimate clubhouse you always wanted as a kid.

In this card game, players are building treehouses. They all take their turns simultaneously. You each start with a hand of six cards. Each card belongs to one of six color sets and depicts a fantastical room for your treehouse such as a waterslide, a pirate ship, or a movie theater. When adding a room, you have to make sure it's properly balanced by rooms underneath and that your treehouse isn't unbalanced on one side. You also have to keep in mind that once you've built a room of a particular color, all future rooms of that color must be built touching it. If any color gets blocked off by non-matching room colors, you won't be able to build that color anymore and you could be losing out on a lot of points.

After each player has added a room onto their tree, everyone passes their hand to the player on their left and you once again choose a room for your house. This continues until each player only has two cards to choose from. You then play one of the two rooms and discard the second. Finally, players take turns choosing and playing Game Changer cards, which affect which colored rooms will score double this round, and which ones won't score at all. After the points are tallied, players are dealt another six cards and play continues as before. At the end of three rounds, additional points are scored for the players with the most rooms in each color, and the player with the highest score wins. An optional ruleset also allows you to score extra points for playing colors in a particular pattern.

MSRP: \$24

Designer: Scott Almes

Publisher: Green Couch Games

2-4 players, ages 10+, 20-30 mins.

Between the colorful artwork and the fantastic rooms, you really do feel like you're eight again and planning your dream clubhouse. But there's a lot more to the game than just nostalgia, as you really have to think both about your own plans and what cards you are handing over to the next player each turn.

For a creative, imaginative, and strategic card game, you need look no further than *Best Treehouse Ever*. Just be sure to have a lot of table space when you break this game out, because your dream treehouse takes up a lot of room!



Feed the Shoggoth!

Who wouldn't want to play hot potato with a Lovecraftian horror, where winning means feeding cult members to a monster, and losing...? Well, losing means being eaten yourself.

In *Feed the Shoggoth!* players are cult leaders. Each player is randomly dealt a cult which comes with its own unique power. Your goal in the game is to score points by feeding your followers to the Shoggoth monster. On your turn you may play artifact cards which give you special bonuses. You can also use spell cards to try to move the monster in front of you. Only when the monster is in front of you can you declare your intention to feed a minion to it. Other players can then use action and spell cards to move the Shoggoth away from you so that your sacrifice will be unsuccessful, though if you have the right cards, you can block their attempts.

If you end your turn with the Shoggoth in front of you, you must feed it a minion or you yourself will be eaten and out of the game. After you've sacrificed a minion to the beast, it will move clockwise to the next player. That player had better hope he has a minion to feed the beast or a spell to move it away from him, or he too could end up being eaten on his turn. As minions are fed to the monster, they are removed from the game, so the risk of being eaten yourself increases as the game progresses.

In addition to spells and actions which can move the Shoggoth, there are various ones to impede other players and give yourself boosts. As you don't draw cards until the end of your turn, throughout the game you have to balance using cards to sabotage other players and holding onto some to benefit yourself – to complete a successful sacrifice on your turn and score points, or avoid being stuck with the Shoggoth and no minions in hand. In addition, there are lots of cards you can play on anyone's turn, so you always feel involved in the game.

Feed the Shoggoth! is light and amusing. There's some great flavor text, the artwork successfully represents the feel of the game, and the mechanic of forcing the Shoggoth towards other players or attracting it to your side is a lot of fun. The first player to reach a certain number of points wins – but *Feed the Shoggoth!* is a game where it's truly all about the fun, take-that, 'not it' journey.

MSRP: \$20

Designer: Badger McInnes

Publisher: Squamous Studios

3-6 players, ages 14+, 30-60 mins.





Anaxi

What is gigantic and bright? What about something that is bright and scary? Now can you think of anything that's all three?

This is the concept behind *Anaxi*, in which each round three descriptive words are laid out in a Venn diagram, a one minute timer is set, and players must race to write down as many words as possible to fit into each section of the diagram. Any words written down by more than one player are disqualified. Any unique word you think of which fit two of the descriptive words, earns you one point — while a word that fits all three of the descriptions will earn you three points. The player with the highest score after five rounds wins the game. Simple, straightforward, and easy to learn.

But despite the simple rules, *Anaxi* often feels like a brain teaser, with some of the combinations of descriptive words being quite difficult — you get a satisfactory sense of accomplishment when you successfully come up with a three-point word. The components are lovely, with transparent cards placed on a base card that helps create the look and feel of a Venn diagram. The game includes

MSRP: \$22

Designer: Uncredited

Publisher: Funnybone Toys

2-6 players, ages 8+, 10 mins.

seventy-five word cards, so there are countless combinations of words, and you don't have to worry about replay value. If you enjoy a fun, brain-taxing game, *Anaxi* is for you. 🧠



★ RECOMMENDED GAMES ★

For a complete list, visit CasualGameRevolution.com/games

Casual Games

Age of War Card Game*	Dragonwood
Armada	Dungeon Roll
Backstab	Eruption
Bang! The Duel	Evolution
Best Treehouse Ever*	Fastrack
Bomb Squad	Feed the Shoggoth*
Bullfrogs	Fidelitas
Camel Up	Flip City
Can't Stop	For Sale
Carcassonne	Forbidden Island
Castle Panic	Get Bit!
Cube Quest	Get Lucky
Dimension	Gravwell
Dragonflame	Hanabi

Imhotep*
Indigo
Jolly Roger
Just Desserts
Juxtabo
King of Tokyo
La Boca
Lanterns
Love Letter
Nevermore
Nyet!
Pyramid
Qwixx
Rattlebones

Relic Expedition
Sheriff of Nottingham*
Splendor
Stuff & Nonsense
Survive
Sushi Go!
Tak•Tak*
Takenoko
The Hare & the Tortoise
The Last Spike*
Ticket to Ride
Timeline
Tsuro
Walk the Plank

*Newly added

Party Games

Anaxi*	Concept	Sketch it!
20 Express	Last Word	Skōsh
Apples to Apples	Loonacy	Spot It! Party
AttrAction	Off Your Rocker	Snake Oil
Bellz!	Pickles to Penguins	Stinker
Choose One!	Pluckin' Pairs	Taboo
Coconuts	RANDOMonium	Wits and Wagers
Codenames*	ROFL!	Word on the Street

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WHEN YOU NEED TO LEARN A GAME,



Matt Thrower

Freelance Board and Video Games Journalist



The worst part about being a gamer is learning rules of a new game. Structure and procedure are central to our hobby, to the point where even minor misunderstandings can ruin a game. I traded away a copy of the fantastic *Evo* after my first play because I thought that movement allowance was per piece. In reality, it's a total spent over all pieces, so my accidental house rule made movement massively overpowered. This is, no doubt, a key reason why so many of us prefer casual games over intricate miniatures games or wargames.

It's always a relief when you can have an experienced player explain the rules to you instead, to be on hand to resolve any disputes or clarifications. After rejoining the board gaming hobby back in 2010, it was an experience Rodney Smith (creator of the *Watch It Played!* video channel) wished he had more often. Until he started wondering whether he might be able to be that experienced player for everyone. "I hope to be that friend you wish could teach you that game you just bought," he told me. "I enjoy working with video

equipment, and I have a pretty ferocious appetite for board game media content. So I started to feel the pull to create content myself."

He was also impelled by something most gamers who remember the pre-online age can relate to. "I live in a small town, which I would not describe as highly active with enthusiast board gamers, so the idea that I could create content that might connect me to the greater board gaming community was very appealing."

TO THE INTERNET!



Of course, the internet is already full of people who use video as a medium for unboxing and reviewing games. The appeal of doing so via a visual medium is something Smith understands well. "I wanted to showcase how visually engaging board games can be," he enthused, "and I wanted to actually play the games with my audience. It's also a platform I was prepared to create for, having shot video in the past."

But reviews weren't something he was happy doing. "It wasn't in my comfort zone," he explained. "I find games to be such a wildly subjective experience that I don't feel confident having someone use my opinion as a basis for their purchasing decisions." Instead, he felt that he could help people with their choices by explaining game mechanics in detail. "I felt that if I could show how a game worked and even show it being played, I could provide an opportunity for people to decide for themselves if a game would be a good fit for them."

This was before Wil Wheaton's *TableTop* show, so it was an innovative concept for the time, when text and podcasts were still the dominant media for board game content. Smith is clear on why he thinks videos proved to be such a hit as an alternative. "People want to see what's being talked about," he told me. "It goes back to how people prefer to learn games. They want someone to teach them." But as an avid content consumer himself, he understands there's a place for everything. "Podcasts and text serve other needs," he explained. "If I'm going for a run, I can listen to a podcast. I can't watch a YouTube channel."

On the flip side, there's a danger that video, as a passive medium, would lose some of the intricate details required for skilled gameplay. We've all had the experience of comparing what we've learned from reading a book to watching a documentary. Almost always what you read is more memorable, more readily available for recall. Smith, however, thinks that video offers different advantages.



“The reality is, whether you read the rulebook or watch a video, you’re going to forget things,” he said. “When you read a rulebook, you’re seeing a very abstractly presented series of instructions. It can’t visually present everything it is explaining. You didn’t actually see how it worked, you just read the concept of how it works. This results in increased opportunities for confusion, and forgetting what you’ve read previously. However, in a video we’re showing you

everything as we teach. You don’t just read about how the rules work, you see them being performed.”

He also believes that learning via watching has the potential to be more efficient, something he works hard to exploit in his videos. “I do my very best not to waste my viewers’ time,” he stated. “You want to be playing your new game, not listening to me wax philosophical about game design. From start to finish, I focus on just teaching.”

HOW IT'S MADE



This level of care and attention has allowed Smith to monetize his series very effectively. “It has been my full-time work for the past four years,” he revealed. “We’ve had a growing and enthusiastic audience and so when I’ve run yearly fundraisers to provide an income, I’ve found the support to make it possible to keep going. It keeps me in a very deep state of gratitude to both my family and the generosity of the gaming community.” It has taken risk and hard work to reach that place, however. “The first few years

were financially supported by my wife,” he told me. “Board game media content creation is not a cash cow, and it’s a very time consuming venture.”

As I talk to Smith, it becomes clear that time, hard work, and attention to detail aren’t things he’s afraid to put in. “Each instructional video takes a few days to learn, a full day to script, a full day to shoot, and usually several hours to edit,” he said. Indeed he’s so particular about getting things right that his videos are often more up-to-date with errata than





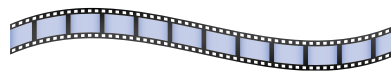
published rulebooks are. “We work directly with the publisher to address mistakes or ambiguities that end up in the rulebooks,” he explained. “I will often have discussions with the publisher about areas of potential confusion, and ensure I am prepared to clarify them in the video.”

These discussions, together with repeated experience of playing the game, lead into a carefully crafted script for each episode. Nothing in the explanatory videos is ad-libbed. “My scripts are just the rules re-arranged in a manner that I think makes more sense, and written in the way I would talk, if I could speak my thoughts perfectly,” Smith told me. “In this way the videos retain my voice, but it ensures that when I present I don’t repeat myself, forget things, or go down rabbit trails.”

This high level of professionalism extends to the equipment used to make each episode. Smith lists a Canon 70D to do the shooting and lavalier mics for the audio, plus a bunch of Adobe products for the editing. Given the level of care involved, it’s perhaps surprising that Smith frequently co-presents with his children. But they do a great job, and their adult supervisor thinks they add an extra dimension to the proceedings.

“I wonder if it might inspire some people to give a game a try that they might otherwise have felt was too complex,” he explained. “Perhaps they might reconsider, thinking ‘Well, if that 11-year-old can play... then maybe I can figure it out, too!’” They got their break on the show through a dynamic that all gamer parents will know. “Since I played so many games with my kids,” Smith said, “they were a natural choice.”

LEARNING HOW TO TEACH



Given that rule explaining is a thing many gamers struggle with, I asked this game-explainer extraordinaire if he had any tips for people on how they could improve. His response was adamant. “Prepare,” he stated. “There is a big difference between feeling prepared and actually being prepared.” When pressed for details, he suggested that gamers should “sit down

and do the work of setting out the game and working through the rulebook, or watching one of our videos. Then try teaching the game out loud to yourself. You’ll soon learn where you’re having trouble. Spare your friends that and give yourself the best chance of creating a fun time for everyone. Be prepared.”





Even having created a slick, professional show that pays enough to keep Smith in full-time employment, he's not content to rest on his laurels. "I hope to keep improving all aspects of the content," he told me. And speaking with him, it's easy to see why he's prepared to keep putting so much effort into what he does. "Tabletop board gaming is a wonderful hobby that many more people would be a part of, if they felt comfortable to give it a try," he said. "My hope is that if someone stumbles across our videos, they find a warm, inviting, and quality presentation of the hobby that draws them in and makes them interested, not just in our content, but in exploring the hobby and other passionate board game content creators out there." 🎮

Rodney's videos can be found on YouTube at: www.YouTube.com/user/WatchItPlayed

Above, right: *Watch It Played!* shelf talker in a retail store. Right: *Watch It Played!* on display in a Korean classroom. Below: Rodney Smith poses with occasional guest star Pep MacDonald.



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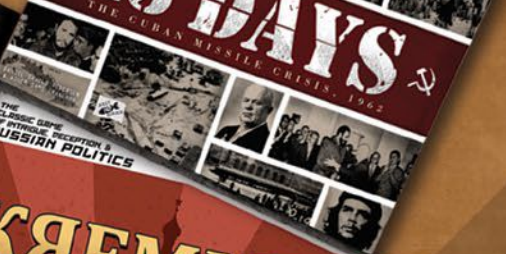
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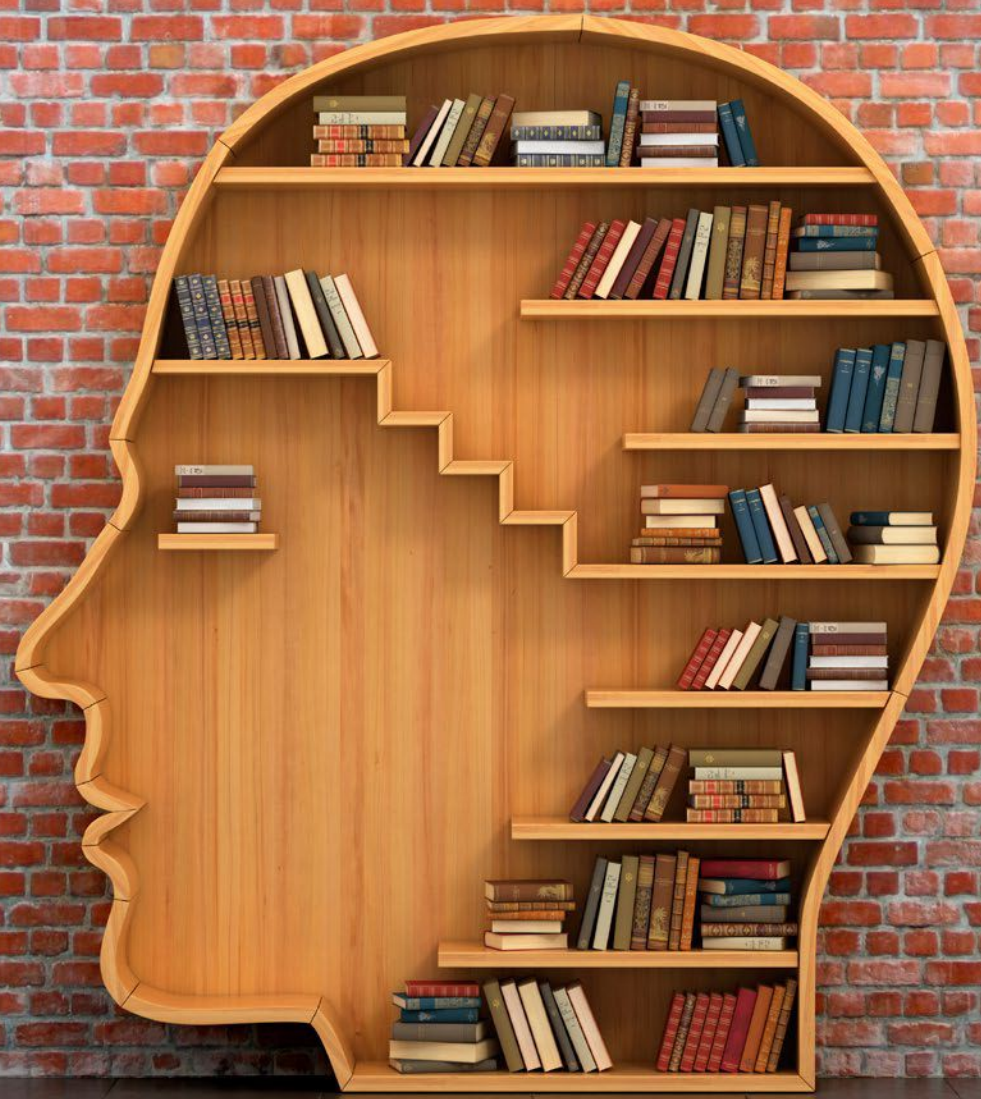
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Video Games, Board Games, and the Storytelling Animal



Dann Albright
Freelance Journalist and
Lifelong Board Gamer

One of the common refrains since the resurgence of board games is that people are getting into them as a response to the “isolating” nature of video games. And while this seems to intuitively make sense, is that really what’s behind the recent explosion of tabletop gaming? Or is there something else at play, something deeper?

In an age when most video games require an internet connection and many of the biggest titles – *World of Warcraft*, *Destiny*, *Overwatch*, *Final Fantasy XIV* – specifically encourage interaction and cooperation, the “digital isolation” argument carries less weight. Yes, some of the most popular games out there are still single-player-only and have fewer opportunities for interaction than the MMOs mentioned above, but the millions of daily logins on these multiplayer games make it clear that they’re hugely important to players.

In fact, some video games arguably offer a more accessible (though fundamentally different) social platform than board games, as it’s easy for players from around the world to get together to play. And if you need more proof of the potential for video games to create social experiences, look no further than the absolutely massive phenomenon of *Pokémon Go*.

But if the resurgence in board games isn’t a response to the isolating nature of video games, what caused it? Certainly there have been many factors, including the highly effective use of Kickstarter, significant innovations in game design, and the newfound popularity of geek culture, largely driven by increased representation in the media. An important factor that’s been overlooked in discussions on the popularity of board games, however, is the hobby’s deep connection to storytelling.

Once Upon a Time...

Throughout history, humans have been storytellers. Cave paintings, oral legends, parables, visual art, novels, Twitter posts – they’re all different ways of telling a story, and they’ve evolved with us. Says Jonathan Gottschall, author of *The Storytelling Animal*: “Human minds yield helplessly to the suction of story. No matter how hard we concentrate, no matter how deep we dig in our heels, we just can’t resist the gravity of alternate worlds.”

It’s just something that the human psyche is built to do. We read and write, listen and tell stories all the time; our brains are made for it. It’s why children are able to make up imaginative stories for anything



The advertisement features a dark blue background with a subtle pattern of white swirls and glowing golden cubes. At the top, a cartoon thief character with a black cap, mask, and orange cape is shown holding a large golden coin. Below this is the board game box for 'THIEVES!' by Richard De Riik, which features the same thief character. The text 'Are you naughty... ..or nice?' is written in a stylized, golden font across the middle. Below the text is a cartoon illustration of Santa Claus with a white beard and red hat. At the bottom is the board game box for '12 Days' by James Ernest & Mike Schlinker, which features a reindeer and a sleigh. The Calliope Games logo is prominently displayed at the bottom in a large, golden, stylized font. Below the logo, the text 'Available at Your Favorite Local Game Store.' and the website 'www.CalliopeGames.com' are written in a smaller, golden font.

Are you
naughty...
...or nice?

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they're doing. As adults, we often need a little help — and that help comes in the form of games.

Games, whether on the board or on the screen, help us create a shared world of imagination that we can inhabit. Whether it's the high fantasy world of *Warcraft*, the futuristic dystopia of *Euphoria*, the early capitalist age of *Monopoly*, or the science-fiction galaxies of *EVE*, these worlds let us escape from the challenges of everyday life and give us the opportunity to cooperatively craft a story that plays out before our eyes.

Video games are good at creating an immersive experience for players to enter; the huge, sprawling open world of *The Witcher 3*, the vast wastelands of *Fallout*, and the detail-packed realms of the *Elder Scrolls* series allow players to get totally absorbed in

another world that they can explore over hundreds of hours. On the other side of the scale, games like *The Wolf Among Us*, *Tomb Raider*, and *The Last of Us* give the player a chance to see through the lens of a single character and become deeply immersed in that character's story.

Interactivity separates this type of story consumption from standard novel reading, but there are some strong similarities; fantasy series like George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* or Anthony Ryan's *Raven's Shadow* are known for creating expansive, immersive worlds that take many hours of reading to fully explore. Other books focus on singular storylines that readers are addictively pulled through — think of the compulsive qualities of Dan Brown or James Patterson books.

So, What About Board Games?

Board games, on the other hand, are a different type of storytelling altogether. Many games give players the suggestion of a story and let them fill in the rest. Take *Settlers of Catan* as an example. The general theme of the game is colonizing an island, but players can tell any sort of story they want. By inhabiting the shared imaginative universe that doesn't prescribe a specific story, players are free to co-create any tale they'd like: they can tell a story of how their particular settlement begins to grow, how their army keeps robbers away (and nabs some resources on the side), how their roads block other civilizations from

accessing valuable resources, or why they're willing to trade a sheep for some wood.

Even if these stories aren't explicitly told over the game board, the fact that all of the players are thinking about the world of *Catan* instead of their own world is a form of storytelling of its own. Gottschall uses daydreams as an important example of storytelling, and the unstructured imagination of daydreaming bears some similarity to the habitation of the game universe.





Let's look at a more concrete example. *Dixit* is a popular board game in which one player says a word or phrase and plays a card with a complex picture on it. Some of the cards include a king turning to stone, a rabbit with a sword confronted by three doors, an abacus with planets instead of beads, and a snail confronted with a large, spiraling set of stairs. Other players also choose cards, and they're shuffled together; players then try to guess which picture the first player put in.

The storytelling component of the game isn't highly explicit, but the tendency of players to explain what they were thinking lends itself to the creation of a shared imaginative universe. Every card has an infinite number of stories just waiting to be told, and to be good at the game, players must attempt to decode an entire story in the first player's mind by linking a single word with a picture.



THE TITANS
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Mysterium functions similarly, but adds more thematic material. One player plays as the ghost of a murder victim, and must communicate with other “mediums” by giving them vision cards that, like the cards in *Dixit*, contain abstract artwork that can be interpreted many different ways. The mediums must read these visions correctly to piece together the story of the murder: the perpetrator, the weapon, and the location (it’s also easy to imagine them coming up with a story as to exactly why the murder happened this way).

And, of course, many highly thematic games are very explicit in their storytelling; *Eldritch Horror* sees players moving around the board to solve mysteries and prevent unspeakable evil from wreaking havoc on the world. It’s pretty clear what the general story is, but it’s very easy for players to expand upon it by adding details, talking about character motivations, and so on.



Casual Storytelling

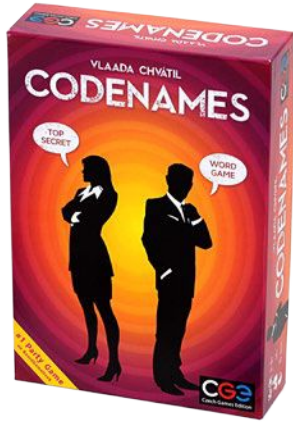
Even games that don’t seem to have any story at all can appeal to the storytelling instinct. Take *Codenames*, the winner of the Spiel des Jahres 2016 award. It feels like a simple word game, but the spy theme encourages players to co-opt pieces of that theme into an implied story. Shifty eyes, secretive glances, coded phrases, spy-movie talk, and other actions related to the theme help players establish a co-created universe over the course of the game (often through role-playing, which is deeply ingrained in storytelling). The story they create may not have an explicit plot, but the slight elements of role-playing connect with our desire to tell stories.

The same could presumably happen in games that have even less explicit story cues, like *Fluxx* or *Monopoly*. In these games — and, arguably, pretty much all others — players often speak in character, even if just for a moment, and often just to tell a joke, challenge an opponent, or celebrate victory. Or they might make a connection between two seemingly disparate elements of the game: “I’ll replace the ‘Time Is Money’ goal with the ‘Hippysm’ one, as I’ve realized the error of my ways.” These are the things that stories are built on, even if players don’t fully role-play their characters or verbally tell a full-fledged story.

Because it’s not about laying out character, plot, conflict, and the other constituent parts of what we think of as traditional “stories,” but rather constructing a shared universe of imagination, something that lets us escape from our everyday lives, even if just for a bit.

And the way that board games allow us to do that is distinctly different from the way video games do; neither is better or worse, but before the resurgence of board games, the best way for people to access these co-created universes was through the stories created by video game publishers. The demand for a different way to create, develop, and tell stories brought board games back. And now that we’ve had a taste of this particular sort of storytelling, we’re hooked. 🎮





Read more about Codenames in the Reviews section on Page 8.



Calliope Games

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The right side of the image features a vertical banner. At the top is the "Calliope Games" logo in a stylized, orange font. Below it is a large, detailed illustration of a red Chinese dragon. Underneath the dragon is the box for the board game "Tsuru", which also features a red dragon illustration and the text "Tsuru" and "The game of the Path." Below the box, the word "Tsuru" is written in a large, elegant, cursive font. Underneath that, the tagline "The game of the Path. Your journey begins here." is written in a smaller, elegant font. At the bottom, it says "Available at Your Favorite Local Game Store." followed by the website "www.CalliopeGames.com".



10 Steps to Bring Your Game to Market, Part 1: So, I've Had This Idea . . .



Steve Shields

*Professional Project Manager,
Game Designer, and Publisher*



Everyone has a book in them, so the saying goes, and the same may be said of board games. If you can read, you can write a book, and if you play board games, you can invent one. First-time game designer Steve Shields has recently embarked on this process, so we invited him to share with us his ten tips for success as he progresses his board game from the idea phase to game store shelves. In this first half, Steve will discuss his steps and advice from concept to prototype.



BEFORE YOU START, STOP.

Game design and publishing can be both exciting and lucrative, but only for a very few hardworking and lucky individuals. Whether your great game idea turns into an international bestseller or simply a hit with your friends, there is one fact that is absolutely certain: creating a game takes ages!

Bringing your brilliant idea from inception to production is going to be a long, often challenging, process. If you do decide to go for it, you should be aware of the inevitable impact upon your social life and, to a lesser extent, on your wallet.

Many potentially excellent games make it no further than the back of a dusty kitchen cabinet, forgotten and forlorn, untouched by a possibly adoring public because it wasn't given the proper time constraints. If you are unprepared to see at least a year elapse between your initial idea and an 'on sale' boxed copy of your game hitting the market, or if you can't afford to invest at least \$300-\$500 into the project, then it might be wise to reconsider before you even begin the process.

A basic guide to the time required over twelve months is at least two (sometimes late!) weekday evenings a week, and about one in four weekends. Anything less and you'll either need assistance or will be reducing your chances of success. If it were easy, everyone would do it!

If you think you will have enough time and money to invest, as well as an original game idea, read on...



Steve's game, *Planet23*, goes from digital concept to printed prototype.



ALL PART OF THE PLAN.

As with any project, if you fail to plan, then you are planning to fail. The importance of planning your project cannot be overemphasized – but this doesn't mean elaborate charts, graphs, and spreadsheets need be involved, and no prior knowledge of project management is required. In fact, it's easy.

In order to plan effectively, you will only need the following: a calendar or diary; a note pad and pen; and no deadline! This last part is important, as the steps outlined within this feature assume that the game is not already in production, and that no publishing, licensing, or marketing arrangements have been made. Designing games and bringing them to market commercially for a publisher requires a significantly different strategy to the steps outlined here, and resources beyond the reach of most casual gamers.

All you really need to do to plan your project is this: establish your aims and set goals, write them all down, and refer to them often. Quantify what success means to you, and align your goals in order to meet your criteria. Focus closely on only the next two weeks ahead. Set yourself achievable-yet-meaningful goals by making a 'to do' list, and keep a record of your achievements as you proceed.

It may seem like you have a mountain to climb at times, so just remind yourself to take many small steps. Break large tasks down into many tiny tasks, and cross them off your list as you complete them. You'll get there.



PUBLISH AND BE DARNED.

Before you begin your project it can be useful to understand, and aim for, a publishing strategy. The two main options are: submit your game to a commercial publisher, or self-publish.

The main advantages of submitting your game to a publisher, if your game is accepted, is that your work will be pretty much done. Commercial game companies take care of the manufacturing, marketing, and distribution, so you can sit back and wait for the profits to come rolling in while dreaming up your next game.

The big downside is, of course, the low upside! As you will soon discover if you elect to self-publish, the costs of marketing, manufacturing, and distribution can be eye-wateringly expensive, perhaps prohibitively



so to the lone designer. The share of the sales profit you can expect to receive from a commercial publishing agreement will reflect these costs, often by deducting them 'pro rata' from the profit generated by sales, before calculating the division of whatever funds remain.

Self-publishing allows you retain a good deal more of the money that the game might generate in sales revenue, though its chances of generating anywhere near the amount that it could if taken on by a commercial enterprise are significantly less, so net-net there may be little economic difference whichever route to market you take.



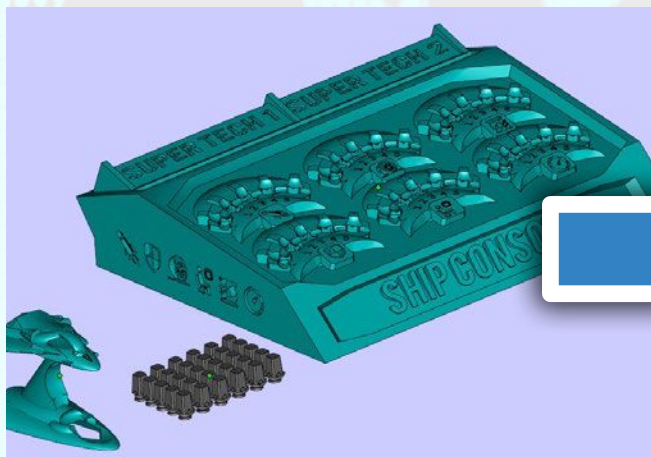
LET THE GAMES BEGIN.

Alright, so far you have your idea, a realistic expectation of how much time and money you're investing, and determined your publishing method. Now let's get to the fun part.

Designing and building the first iteration of your game will be fun, and the joy of bringing your idea to life is possibly one of your primary motivations. Before you start the creative process, however, it is useful to consider your target audience. Are the items you are about to create all relevant and appealing to the people who you are hoping to engage?

Another key understanding of designing a modern board game is the unique selling point. Novel ideas, gimmicks, radical game-play dynamics, and even artwork can all fall under this broad category. Truly unique and effective ideas can be your key to success, but it's worth ensuring that they are integrated into your game with care and precision.

The materials you will choose to use and the techniques you will try will largely depend upon factors such as the game size and type, available budget, availability of tools or printers, and/or your level of skill. Your game doesn't have to look pretty at the start — it just has to work.



The Ship Console from Planet23 started as a 3D model and was brought to life through modern 3D-printing technology — a great prototyping option for game designers.



It is good practice to bear in mind how each element of the game you introduce will be explained in the rulebook. Doing so can help govern wise decisions when straying into areas of over-complication, or pure indulgence, and will also make writing the rules a much easier exercise when the task arrives.

Be prepared to see your original idea morph and adapt as you progress. What may have seemed reasonable as a notion may be fanciful in reality; see failures as opportunities to evolve your creation, embrace change, and don't give up. Being confident in your game concept before you dive into design can save you some major time and headaches down the road.



STOP. AND START AGAIN.

As your game begins to develop, you will inevitably come to realize that some of the aspects you were planning to include will need more thought and experimentation in order to 'work' as part of the overall game dynamics.

Be bold, make mistakes, and create a testing process through development. Once you have a cycle of playtests behind you it is advisable to keep a log of the things that you include, introduce, alter, or remove from each iteration of your game. My own game, a space-based exploration, trading, and resource management board game called *Planet23*, is about to enter the manufacturing phase, and is on version number 8.2 as of the time of writing.

While much of the original inspiration has remained, which has driven the design process and guided many of the creative aspects of the project, it is very likely that the finished version will have changed. By thoroughly playtesting each iteration, you can make smaller alterations and adjustments to keep your game on track as feedback dictates.

Perhaps one of, if not the, most difficult decisions you will have to make is when to stop inventing and start manufacturing and marketing your game. As with many creative endeavours, the finished product can be over-developed as well as under. Only playtesting and collecting opinions can guide you in this,

Classic.



Lord of the Fries and Give Me the Brain: two classic Cheapass Games about fast food and slow zombies. Come see what else is cooking at cheapass.com.



and achieving the fine balance required between resources and rewards may take many more adjustments than you'd planned for. The more honest feedback you can get, especially from people who don't know you personally, the better.

By now, your game has gone through a thorough cycle of concept, design, develop, and test. Once you finally have a version of your game that you are confident with, you have yourself a stable prototype. However, much of the real work is still yet to come, including manufacturing, marketing, and management. ☑

Stay tuned for Part Two of this article in the next edition of Casual Game Insider.



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GEN CON² CON¹6

A Record-Smashing Convention



It is almost ten in the morning on Thursday, and I am starting to understand the scale of Gen Con 2016. Huge packs of attendees are standing huddled closely outside the doors of the still closed exhibitor hall. A single door opens and out walks a middle-aged man with spiked hair, a serious face, and a security uniform. He stands up on a chair and addresses the crowd in as loud a voice as he can. Having walked aimlessly around the convention grounds for the last hour, I'm standing in the back and can't hear a word he says. Thankfully the crowd fixes that when they begin to chant, "DO-NOT-RUN!" The gentleman has us repeat this mantra several times, thanks everyone and walks back towards the doors. The anticipation is palpable. Somehow, this hoard of anxious gaming fans maintain their composure and calmly walk through the doors into what I can only describe as nerdvana.



Jesse Tannous

Writer, Gamer, Editor,
and Professional Nerd



Companies big and small have booths decked out in their exclusive merchandise, stacks of newly released board games line the shelves, and the lines of eager patrons form quickly. Vendor booths range in size and scale from small stores complete with their own walls and flooring, to the typical single table that fits a couple of people and their product. Elaborately painted miniature figures fill display cases and tease those who have never picked up a paintbrush in their lives. People frantically pull out lists and check booth numbers as they try to visit specific companies before the lines get too long. Scanning the gorgeous artwork, seeing the smiling faces of the demo staff, and hearing the sound of dice rolling and cards shuffling puts me in a state of ease that I have rarely felt at other pop-culture focused conventions.

What's So Special About Gen Con?

Let's talk about the sheer scale of Gen Con. The programming guide for Gen Con this year was over 300 pages long, most of which consisted of the daily schedules. Content, panels, and activities were spread out between 10 different buildings, all within a few blocks from each other. As for seminars, there were 400 to choose from that covered all things geek, from "Adding Lights to Your Cosplay" to "ZOE & DG: Fan Symposium." The various panels I planned to attend were easy to locate, and similar content seemed grouped in the same buildings

The big names sport some truly impressive spaces. The cashiers working the counters of companies like Asmodee, Fantasy Flight, and CoolMiniOrNot stay busy throughout the day, and demonstration tables outside their main shop areas have little problem finding eager players.

After getting a small taste of the scale of the exhibit hall, I try to explore the rest of what Gen Con has to offer. Having attended massive conventions before like Phoenix Comic Con, I am used to crowds and content being split between multiple buildings, but somehow the 60,000-person convention seems to put the likes of PCC (an over 100,000-attendee event) to shame.

for convenience. I never had to venture into more than three buildings to find the content I was interested in seeing.

It wasn't just panels and seminars, either. Art Shows? Check. Cosplay Competition? You bet. Auction? Check. Puppet Slams? That surprised me, too. They even had a blood drive! Make no mistake, Gen Con truly is the Disneyland of consumer gaming—impossible to fully explore in a single day, or even the full four days.

Casual Games at Gen Con

Reporting on Gen Con wouldn't be complete without sharing some of the titles I was able to demo during my time there. And there were so many games to try! Below are just a few games to keep an eye out for when you're looking for your next buy.



Sushi Go Party!

Gamewright • 2 to 8 players • Ages 8+ • 30 minutes

Fans of Gamewright's 2013 release *Sushi Go!* will immediately recognize the distinctive art and style of this new expanded version of the casual card game. As with the original game, players will still earn points by drafting sushi combinations, trying to acquire the highest score by the end of the game. *Sushi Go Party!* adds additional gameplay in the form of customization options for the Sushi deck. All players agree on which cards they will place in the shared deck at the beginning of the game. This works similarly to deck-building games like *Dominion*.

The party version also supports up to eight players as opposed to the original's max of five. Newly added Sushi, Appetizer, Dessert, and Special cards provide some varied gameplay even for experienced *Sushi Go!* players. Take for instance the Special Order card, which allows a player to copy any other card in play, which can make all the difference to achieving a perfect combination. This version adds a lot of depth to the original game, and the adorable artwork makes me hungry for more.



Shaboom!

Haywire Group • 2 to 4 players • Ages 7+ • 15 to 30 minutes

Published by Haywire Group, *Shaboom!* is a wacky sort of game that tests dexterity and speed. The game is designed for 2-4 players, each receiving a tray of assorted items. Each player's tray comes with the same amount and type of items, and only differ by their particular color. Each turn, a player will draw a card from a central stack instructing the group to perform a particular action using the pieces on their trays. They may need to stack some specific pieces together, spell out a word using the lettered pieces, or maybe roll dice until they get a particular result. Whatever the action, players frantically race to complete the instructions and be the first to slap the card and shout "SHABOOM!" to score the point. This is a perfect kind of game to play with family looking for a PG but rowdy game session.





AssassinCon

Mayday Games • 4 to 6 players • Ages 12+ • 30 minutes

AssassinCon is a recent release from Mayday Games. Players take on the role of some of the deadliest assassins from around the world, all of whom have converged to enjoy their yearly convention. This convention isn't all exhibitor halls and panel rooms though, as each player is secretly assigned a target marked for elimination. The goal of the game is to avoid being eliminated while also taking out your target. Players select their movement card in secret for each round, and reveal their selection at the same moment. If two players end up in the same room they can make an elimination attempt, but players need to be careful—if their opponents end a turn in one of the special rooms they can eliminate their targets from farther away.

Even if a particular player ends up a victim early in the game, they aren't totally out of the running yet, as they can come back as ghosts to try and startle their killers into making mistakes. While the game is ultimately about trying to kill each other, the cartoony artwork and general playful tone of the game makes it a great family choice if you are looking for something with a few more strategy and deduction elements.



GEN CON²⁰¹⁶ At-A-Glance

What: Gen Con
(originally named the Geneva Convention)

Where: Indianapolis, IN

When: August 4-7, 2016

Gen Con gets its name from Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, where it started in 1968. Founded by the legend himself, Gary Gygax (*Dungeons & Dragons*), Gen Con continued to grow over the years, moving to larger and larger venues before finding its current home in Indianapolis, IN.

This year, Gen Con hosted a record-breaking 518 vendors and had over 60,000 attendees from over 50 countries. Indianapolis reports that the convention brings in over \$70 MILLION in annual revenue for the state.

Although primarily thought of as a gaming convention, Gen Con also attracts the occasional superhero or giant robot.



by Fish Hat on Flickr

by Daniel Incandela (Flickr)



J'Accuse!

Smirk & Dagger Games • 3 to 6 players • Ages 14+ • 30 to 60 minutes

Smirk & Dagger Games have designed a number of wonderful casual games in the past and *J'Accuse!* is their latest debut at Gen Con 2016. Players take on the role of a family member of the recently deceased M. Harpagon Richard. His death and the massive inheritance he left behind is something the characters have been eagerly awaiting. Unfortunately, the local police inspector isn't convinced that Richard died of natural causes, and is putting his keen detective skills to use to try and build a case against the characters.

The goal of *J'Accuse!* is to avoid suspicion for as long as possible, while also helping the inspector gather evidence against the other players. The game ends when someone is arrested for the crime. This happens when enough evidence is gathered against a particular player. Evidence is broken up into Motive, Opportunity, and Weapon. These evidence cards get divided up to all the players and become "Hard Evidence" when one of the *J'Accuse!* cards are played. If a player acquires one of each type of evidence or any 5 pieces of evidence against them, then they are hauled away to



prison as the murderer while the remaining players enjoy their newfound life of luxury. *J'Accuse!* supports up to 6 players and is great if you are looking for a game that utilizes memory and bluffing.

Crowds of attendees gather outside the main exhibit hall in anticipation of the show opening. (Unless otherwise specified, Gen Con 2016 photos are courtesy Trent Howell, The Board Game Family.)



AGES 8+ | 1-3 HRS | 1-10 PLAYERS

EXPERIENCE THE 22 WONDERS OF

PYRAMID ARCADE



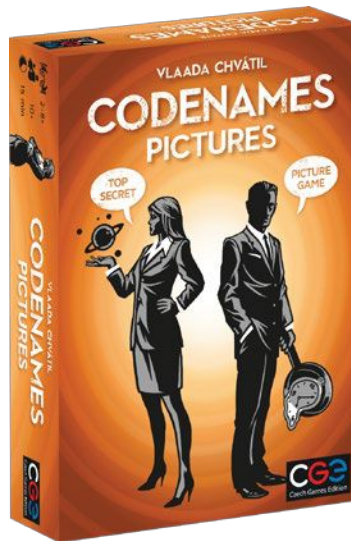
LOONEY
LABS



Codenames: Pictures

Czech Games Edition • 2 to 8 players • Ages 10+ • 10 to 20 minutes

Czech Games Edition has recently released this variant to their award winning party game *Codenames*. Players are rival spymasters who are attempting to get their team in communication with their secret agents out in the field. As with *Codenames*, the spymasters give their team one-word hints based on the grid of cards set-up at the start of the game. The key difference with *Codenames: Pictures* is that instead of the agents being represented by a single word codename, they are images that contain several elements. *Codenames* was the recent winner of the Spiel des Jahres 2016 award, and judging by how quickly Czech Games Edition was selling out of their copies of *Codenames: Pictures*, it is safe to say that casual gamers were eager for more. The introduction of the picture version may open up the game to more players who may not have been very interested in the word association elements of the original game.



This was my very first Gen Con, and I can say with confidence that it did not disappoint. Gen Con was a game inside a gaming convention, and the best kind of game at that. One that allowed different players to experience it in the ways that suit them. With entire sections of the massive event still left as a mystery to me, the replay value is certainly there. Perhaps best of all, it encouraged social interaction and exposed me to new experiences. 🎲

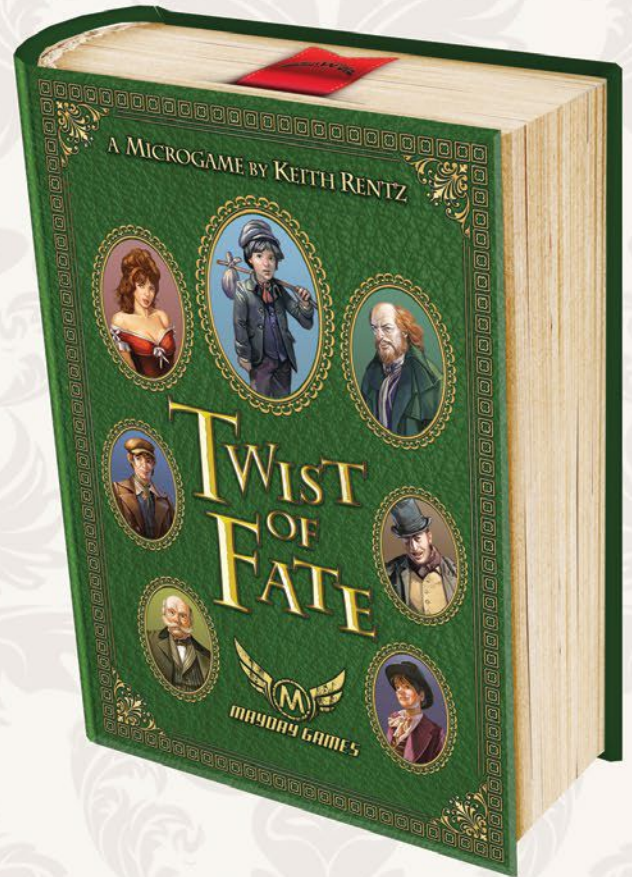
GEN CON 2016

TWIST OF FATE



Based on Charles Dickens' novel, *Oliver Twist*, it is London during the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century; a harsh place to live if you are poor. Escaping the degradation of the industrial city and finding sanctuary from the ever-present crime and vice is something only money or luck can provide.

Gain Luck and Shillings and help Oliver Twist find sanctuary at Mr. Brownlow's home by acquiring 8 Sanctuary Points.



COMPONENTS

- 41 Cards
- 4 Score Tokens
- 1 Rulebook



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GENETIC DISCOVERY:

THE BIRTH AND LIFE OF SET



Elizabeth Mackness

*Enthusiastic Geek, Gamer,
and Marketing Guru*

Game ideas are born from all kinds of situations. Marsha Falco, the designer of *SET*, found her life-changing game idea in a veterinary lab. With many millions of copies sold to date, this simple stroke of genius would impact the gaming world forever.

Marsha Falco isn't your typical game designer. Of course, like many game designers, she grew up with an avid love for games — especially those that were simultaneously challenging and fun; the kind of game you want to play again even after losing. Luckily, game design came naturally to her as an eight-year-old, when she would lose pieces to her games and would have to either improvise or create entirely new games and rules. Combining her love for thought-provoking games with necessary adaptation inspired her to design her first game: *SET*, The Family Game of Visual Perception. However, unlike many designers in the industry, game creation was not something Marsha had anticipated pursuing as a career. In fact, Marsha originally began her career as a population geneticist when she first stumbled into the idea of *SET*.

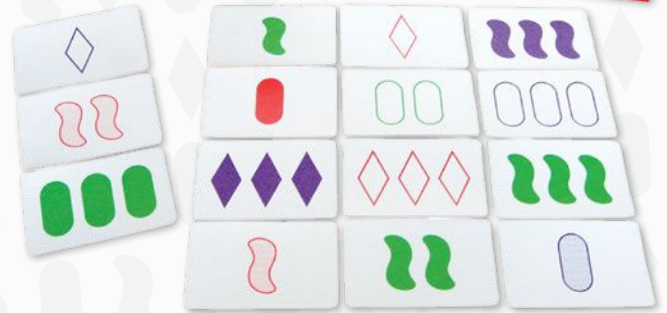


THE EVOLUTION OF SET



Here's the story – in 1974, Marsha found herself doing genetic research in Cambridge, England, where she was trying to understand whether epilepsy in German Shepherds was inherited. In order to study the genes in the dog's cells, Marsha created file cards with blocks of information for each dog. Because certain blocks of information were the same on each file card, she drew symbols to represent blocks of data, rather than writing out the data. She used symbols with different properties to represent different gene combinations. While explaining the combinations to the veterinarians she was working with, Marsha decided there could be some fun in the combinations of symbols and the idea for *SET* was born. Over the years, Marsha refined the game by playing with her family and friends and it was finally released in 1990.

If you're unfamiliar with *SET*, then let me tell you how it works. *SET* is a race to collect the most SETs. A SET consists of three cards that are either all the same or all different in each individual feature. The four features are: shape (diamond, oval, or squiggle);



The latest edition of *SET*. Players simultaneously try to identify groups of three cards that are either all the same or all different in each individual feature.

color (purple, red, or green); number (one, two, or three shapes); and shading (solid, open, or striped). To play, simply put down twelve cards. The first person to see a SET, shouts "SET!" The player then grabs their SET and the dealer replaces the cards. Once there are no more cards left in the dealer's hand and everyone agrees that there are no SETs left on the table, the game is over and the player with the most SETs wins.

For many *SET* players, one of the best things about the game is that it crosses many barriers – language and age are no exception. A six-year-old can skillfully beat a 40-year-old, and since *SET* requires no language, it can be easily taught regardless of someone's native language or reading level. While *SET* does create a ton of fun for everyone, *SET* also stealthily provides a great brain exercise that makes it easily accessible for teachers to use in classrooms to improve cognitive processing speed, or for doctors to exercise patients' left and right brain connection after a head trauma. With a variety of uses, it's easy to see that *SET* is far more than a simple game.

SET
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DECODING THE MARKET

Now to move on and get back to the story – let’s go back to 1990 when Marsha was ready to release her new game. This was a time when the gaming industry was still a very new territory for Marsha, so she began by setting a goal for *SET*: two years to sell 5,000 copies of the game. To her, it was an ambitious number for her first game, but it was a number worth aiming for. Needless to say, Marsha’s game sold much more quickly than she would have ever anticipated. *SET* was quickly recognized by a number of organizations and media alike – big names like The New York Times and American MENSA.

With the surprise success and demand for the game, Marsha ended up launching a new game company, Set Enterprises, Inc., and set about creating more fun-yet-challenging games – like *Karma*, *Five Crowns*, *Quiddler*, and *Mini Rounds*. Her games are some of the most highly awarded games on the market, with over 100 best game awards including awards from Games Magazine, Parents Magazine, Dr. Toy, Parents’ Choice, Teachers’ Choice, and ASTRA. Marsha is one of the most rewarded game inventors by MENSA, with MENSA recognitions for three different games – *SET*, *Quiddler*, and *Karma* – a feat that is not easily accomplished.

Marsha’s newest favorite is a mischievously competitive party game called *Karma*. Originally, *Karma* was a family game that Marsha’s family frequently played



In Marsha Falco’s *Karma*, the last person with cards loses and everyone else wins.

together and now she’s officially added it to the full line of Falco family-friendly games. The goal of *Karma* is to get rid of all of your cards. The last person with cards loses and everyone else wins. One of the best aspects of *Karma* is that unique balance between strategy and luck. In addition, the wild cards, or “*Karma* cards,” that are mixed in throughout the deck, create such a distinction in the game, that’s it’s really hard to know who is going to win. This distinction allows for that same unique aspect that Marsha has

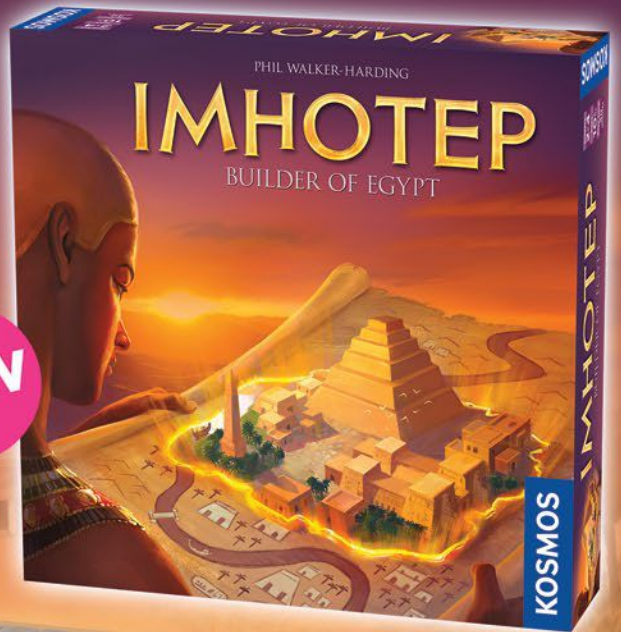


In addition to *SET*, several other games have been designed by Marsha Falco and published by Set Enterprises, Inc. The “Mini Rounds” pictured next to each game offer shorter, faster gameplay in a mini tin.

PHIL WALKER-HARDING

IMHOTEP

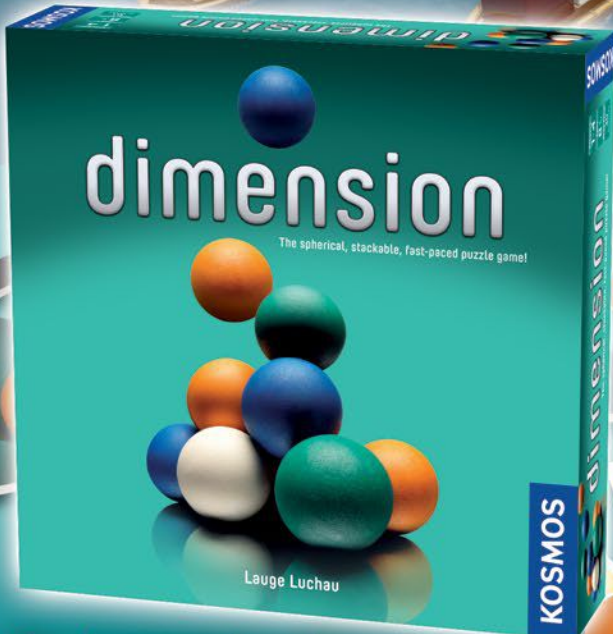
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made sure to include in all of her games – everyone, regardless of age, stands on equal ground when playing Karma. A child can beat an adult and vice versa. Another unique fact is that Marsha actually created *Karma*'s tagline – “What Goes Around...Comes

Around” – before the game even had a name due to *Karma*'s give-and-take nature. One thing is for sure, *Karma* is a wonderful gateway game for families to incorporate into their game nights.

FROM FAMILY-FRIENDLY TO FAMILY-OWNED

In 2005 Marsha's daughter, Colette, took over the operation of the family business to give Marsha more time playing and developing games. Currently, Set Enterprises is an all-woman owned and operated company that's still going strong with a new award-winning game launched almost every year. Often, you'll find Colette's two dogs, Maui and Kya, romping around the office fetching *Mini Rounds* (they really do that!) or you'll find the whole SET team demoing one of Marsha's latest prototypes. Set Enterprises is true to the nature of a game company; a truly fun place to be for fans and employees alike. Frequently, fans of SET, *Five Crowns*, *Quiddler*, and *Karma* stop by the office to snap a selfie with the SET logo above the office doors and play games with the team.

Amidst continuing to create mind-twisting games that bring entire generations of families together, Marsha also volunteers for MarK-9, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue K-9 Possee, and MC2, the Mountain Canine Corp in Los Alamos, New Mexico. So when Marsha's not playing and planning

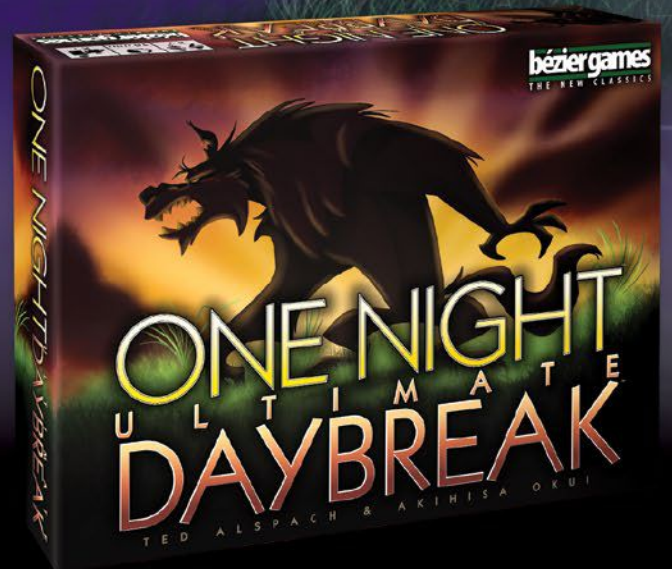


Colette Falco, Marsha's daughter, manages business operations to give Marsha more time to develop games.



The SET line of games includes the standard and Mini Round versions, along with a dice and Junior version.

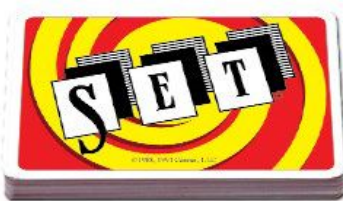
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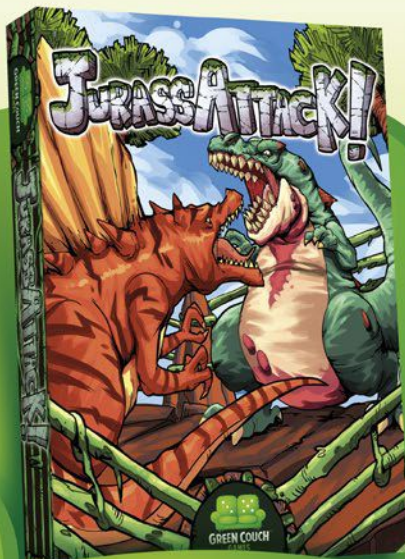
another fun game, she's training her Border Collie, Blue, to help find missing people. You can expect many more inventive and challenging games coming from Marsha very soon – so keep a look out for more to come from Set Enterprises. Until then, you can check out her games and play online at www.SetGame.com. 🎮



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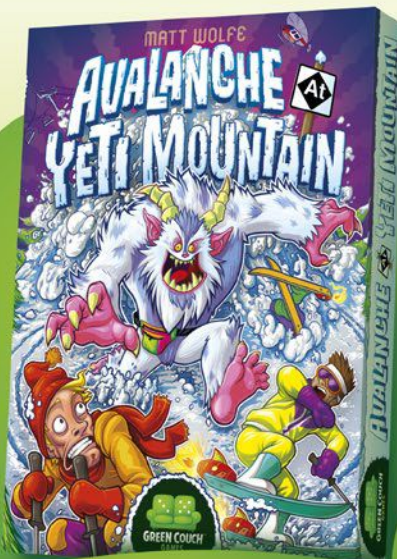
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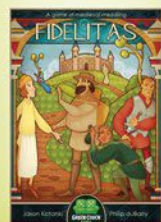
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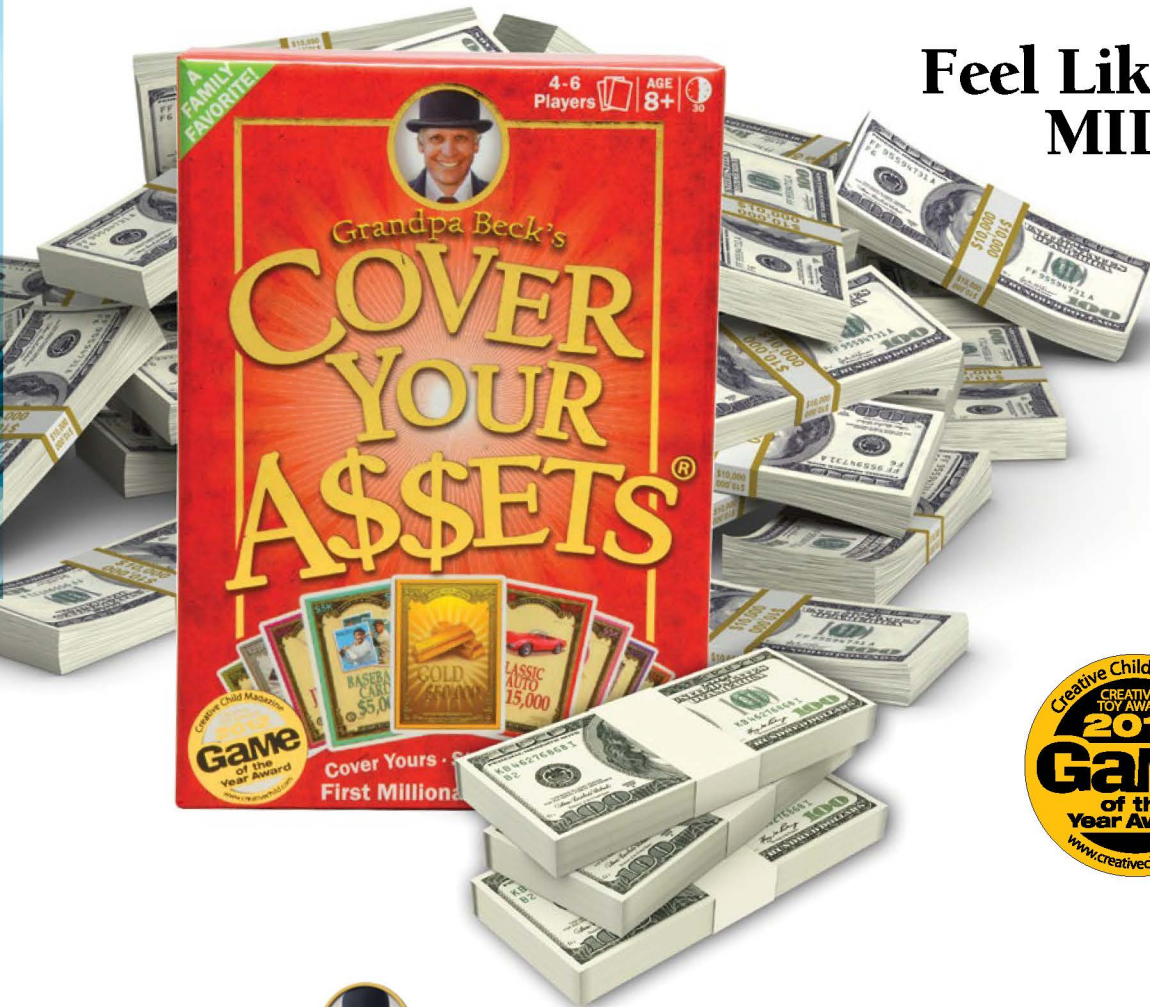
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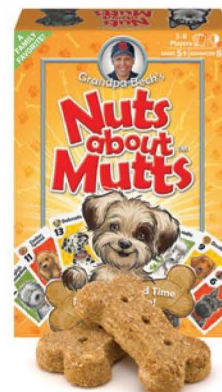
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