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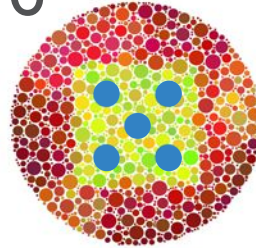
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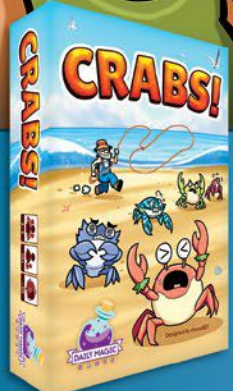
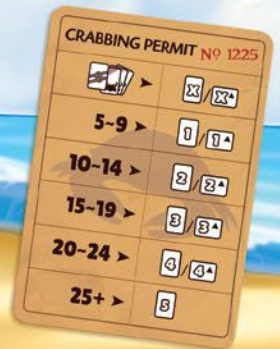
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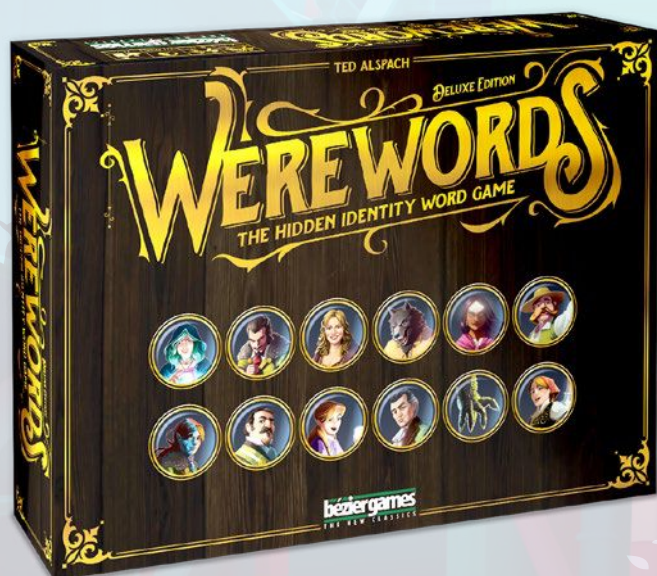
StratusGames.com



YEAR OF THE WEREWOLF!

2018 is going to be full of fur, claws, and some good old-fashioned bluffing and misdirection. There are four new titles debuting this year from Bezier Games, Inc. that are focused on everyone's favorite village eaters.

Werebeasts celebrates not just Werewolves, but also Wereghosts, Werekittens, and Werecoolns. And Werenanas. And Werenados. And even Werebagos. And much, much were-more. In the game, you're trying to secretly collect different kinds of Werebeasts while figuring out what the other players are collecting. If you deduce your opponents' secret goals, you can win their Werebeasts, or all of their Werecohow—the game's currency made from a delicious mix of villager and other random things. But if you guess wrong, you could lose everything you have. It's social deduction, with card collection and a little bit of push your luck.



Werewords Deluxe Edition is a super-powered version of *Werewords*, where players are trying to figure out the Magic Word; being helped by the all-knowing Seer and hindered by—you guessed it—Werewolves. The Deluxe Edition adds new roles, such as the Thing (the one that goes bump in the night), The Apprentice, the Doppelganger, and the wily Fortune Teller, who knows just a single letter in each word that makes up the Magic Word. In addition, the game can be played with as few as two and all the way up to twenty people, and includes a brand new game mode called Speedwords that forces the Werewolves to give the rest of the players a clue.



Ultimate Werewolf Legacy is a brand new game based on the party game *Ultimate Werewolf*, and this time Rob Daviau (*Pandemic Legacy*) has joined up with Ted Alspach (*One Night Ultimate Werewolf*) to create a mammoth Werewolf campaign for 8 to 16 people. Players take on the roles of Villagers, Werewolves, and all manner of other special roles as they try to either eliminate the Werewolves (if you aren't one) or everyone else (if you're a Werewolf). Decisions and victories by one side early in the campaign have impacts on the campaign later, with every game being different. After the 16-game campaign is complete, you can play through it again with available Replay Packs.

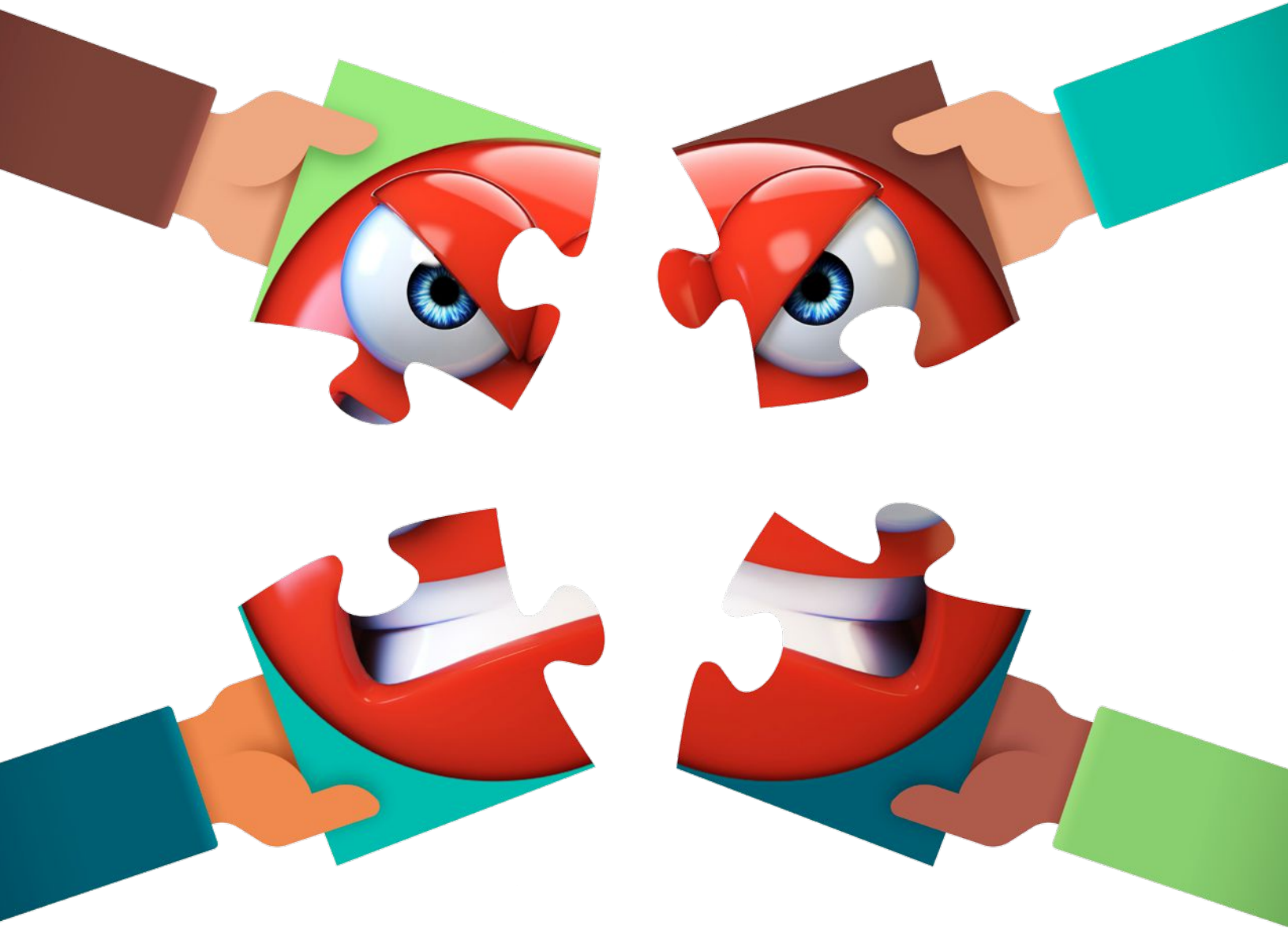


One Week Ultimate Werewolf is a board game version of the classic *One Night Ultimate Werewolf* game, which adds a twist to the One Night premise. The game sees the players take a much needed vacation to Ludwig Castle, which is rumored to be infested with—you guessed it again—Werewolves. Each day you'll wander through the castle, looking for clues, while each night you'll interact with the players and staff nearby. After a week has passed, you'll try to figure out who among you is safe, and who is a nasty old Werewolf.

With all these great new games coming out this year from Bezier Games, 2018 is definitely looking to be the Year of the Werewolf!

bezier games
THE NEW CLASSICS





CO-OP GAMES:

Defeating the Angry Puzzle



Dann Albright

Freelance Journalist and
Lifelong Board Gamer



WHAT IS A GAME?

Think about that for a second. How would you define a game? If you said something to the effect of “multiple people, or two teams, competing against each other,” you’re certainly not alone. And, more often than not, that definition works. Most games are competitive.

But sometimes they’re not.

Sometimes, in fact, all of the players are working together.

The idea of a cooperative board game still catches many people by surprise. “Who’s the winner?” they ask, and “How does it work?” While it might seem counterintuitive, cooperative games provide a great gaming experience that not only gives you the thrill of winning (if you indeed manage to win), but can also give you that little bit of competition that so many players crave.

Led by community favorites like *Pandemic*, *Mysterium*, and *Castle Panic*, cooperative games are seeing a lot of play by both casual gamers and hobbyists. So how does it all work? Here’s what you need to know.



PLAYING AGAINST THE GAME

In most board games, you have a clear opponent — the person sitting across the table from you. But in cooperative games, you’re playing against the game. You can’t look it in the eye, play mind games with it, or talk trash, but a game can be a surprisingly engaging opponent.

So what do you...do? Most cooperative, or co-op, games see players trying to meet some sort of objective. You’re trying to stop outbreaks of disease in *Pandemic*. Steal loot for fantasy heroes in *Magic Maze*. Hold off zombie hordes in *Zombicide*. Identify agents and spies in *Codenames: Duet*.

The game usually takes actions based on a random engine — like drawing cards from a deck or rolling dice. These actions get in the way of your goal, just like a live opponent would. They reduce your resources, throw enemies in your way, give you new objectives,

or any number of other things that you’ll have to contend with to win.

Cooperative games are often a bit like solving a puzzle. The actions taken by the game can be relatively predictable, especially once you’ve played it once or twice. But that doesn’t mean they’re easy. In fact, many co-op games have difficulty levels that scale with the player count or your experience. It’s like playing against a live opponent — they learn to counter what you’re throwing at them, and it gets harder to win.

Of course, solving the puzzle requires cooperation. Players need to plan their moves, play to their strengths, and help their teammates when things get rough. It’s something you might not be used to at the game table, but it adds a really engaging element to these games. It’s fundamentally different from competitive games, and it’s simply a ton of fun.

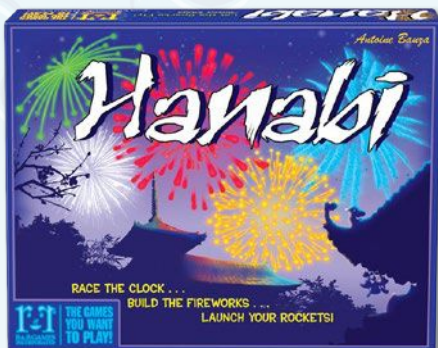
There are some drawbacks to cooperative games, though; “co-op quarterbacking” can be a problem with players who try to coordinate the actions of everyone else and end up running most of the game on their own. It takes conscious effort on everyone’s part to avoid this. On the other hand, some players might not communicate enough and have a tendency to just do their own thing – which defeats the purpose of co-op games. Everyone needs to do their part to make sure the other players are included and active.

WHERE’S THE DEPTH?

The puzzle-like nature of these games might lead you to believe that there’s not much depth involved. It might sound like once you’ve solved the puzzle, it’s over, and playing again would feel repetitive. With some games, that might be true. But many co-op games offer unique and interesting challenges that keep you coming back.

Z-Man Games’ *Pandemic* series pits players against the outbreak of several virulent diseases throughout the world, and it’s a race against time to save humanity. Each expansion adds new twists to the original concept: whether it’s changing the map or even the time period, adding new roles or viruses, or even creating new difficulties and conflicts such as adding traitors into the mix. Every expansion adds variety, bringing your team back to the table once more. One of the latest iterations, *Pandemic Legacy*, makes it so the game goes through permanent changes after each play, and you progress through a continuing story. It’s almost like playing a different game each time.

An interesting counterpoint to *Pandemic* (which can suffer from one player taking over) comes in the form of *Hanabi*, a game in which players need to put on a spectacular fireworks show. The twist is that every player holds their hand facing away from them – so



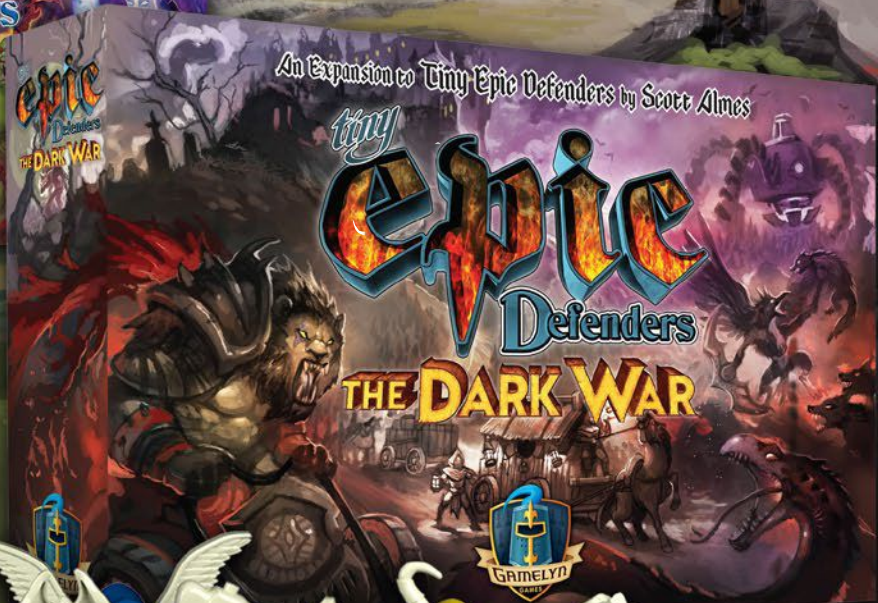
In the end, the success of a cooperative team depends on the players. As long as everyone is there to have fun and try to win, you’ll have a great time. Remember not to get discouraged, too – some cooperative games are very hard and will take several attempts before you win. With a bit of experimentation and some perseverance, you’ll find the perfect co-op games for your group.



there’s no possibility of quarterbacking. Each turn, you can play a card or reveal a small piece of information to a teammate. And with that information, you’ll need to work together to put on a show for the ages.

But not all co-op games are designed to play with your gaming group. *Codenames: Duet* is a cooperative two-player version of the breakout word game *Codenames* by Czech Games Edition. Both players seek to get their partner to guess specific words while avoiding others. It sounds simple, but requires a great deal of creative thinking to uncover your agents before time runs out.

Where cooperative games may appear to be a simple puzzle to solve on the surface, a combination of scaling difficulty, legacy-style games, hidden traitors, and an assortment of unique mechanics and expansions can keep these titles fresh. The randomness inherent in these games also makes every play through unique.



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SEMI-COOPERATIVE GAMES

So what happens when one of your teammates beats you in a co-op game? *Dead of Winter* takes your standard co-op survival game and adds a twist: giving each player a secret objective that they're trying to meet in addition to the main objective that the team is working towards. One of those secret objectives might be that a player is a traitor and seeks the downfall of the very colony the other players are trying to save!

Though *Dead of Winter* wouldn't be considered a casual game with its heavier theme and more time-intensive experience, it is a great example of a game that requires players to balance cooperation with the drive to win. These "semi-cooperative" games usually see everyone working together to avoid a specific loss condition, while still rewarding the player who achieved the most points.

If you like the idea of a traitor in your midst, *Betrayal at House on the Hill* is a great choice. In this tabletop classic from Wizards of the Coast, there's always a traitor, but no one knows who it will be or why. As players explore the haunted mansion, they draw room tiles that change the layout each game, which randomly generates one of 50 game modes. Will one of the players be bitten by a werewolf? Become possessed by a ghost? Each play through is a new experience; will you make it out alive this time?

Castle Panic balances cooperative and competitive drives very well. Players need to cooperate to defend the castle

from invading monsters, but there's still one winner at the end of the game. So every action you take could both help and hinder your chances at winning. If the monsters invade, everyone loses. But if you help your opponents too much in the defense, they'll win.

If you like this idea but want a bit more complexity, *Archipelago* fits the bill. Players need to explore the Pacific, harvest resources, use them to make money, and meet their secret objectives. But they also need to work together to keep the native population from getting too restless and declaring a revolt. It's a stereotypically colonial game, but the strategy and semi-cooperative nature make it a standout in the genre.

Some games may even feature more direct conflict, with one player facing off against the rest of the team. This is usually the case with hidden movement games. *Scotland Yard* features one player moving around the map in secret, while the other players need to use clues to determine where they are and cut them off before they can get to their goal.

While hidden movement games typify the asymmetrical or "one-versus-many" genre of games, they fit nicely into the semi-cooperative space as well. The seeking players work together, while the hidden player does his or her best to win. So there's cooperation and competition in the same game.

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DIVING INTO COOPERATIVE GAMES

There's a wide world of cooperative games out there, with a variety of themes and unique gameplay. Choosing one to start with can be intimidating. Here are four options that will appeal to a wide range of gamers:

Pandemic is the king of cooperative games — but it's also extremely easy to learn and play. Of course, surviving the apocalypse and wiping out illnesses is going to be a challenge. But the mechanics of the game are remarkably simple, you can play a full game in 45 minutes, and it plays up to four players (or more, with expansions). Three full expansions means you'll have plenty of new stuff to check out once you come to grips with the game, too.



Another popular option that won't throw players into the deep end is *Forbidden Desert*. Players need to work together to excavate the dunes to find treasure, but they'll also need to manage their water, seek shelter from the sun, and figure out how to survive brutal desert storms. A random setup as well as the chance inherent in the Storm deck provides enough variety to keep players coming back.

Despite its diminutive name, *Tiny Epic Quest* gives players a lot to think about. How will your team of elves try to save the land? Close the mystic portal or slay all the goblins? No matter which you decide to do, you'll need to work together with other players...but you'll also try to take all the glory for yourself.

Mysterium is perfect for fans of *Dixit* and *Clue* (though you certainly don't need to be either). As an asymmetrical co-op game, one player is the troubled ghost who cannot speak but instead communicates with mediums through picture cards. The rest of the group will need to figure out who was present on the night of the ghost's murder, uncover the suspect who committed the crime, where, and with what. It's a bit like *Clue*, but one player gets to play as the ghost of Mr. Boddy. It's highly thematic, interactive, full of beautiful art, and a whole lot of fun.

A NEW KIND OF REWARDING EXPERIENCE

After reading about these cooperative games, you might be wondering if winning a co-op game is really all that rewarding. In a competitive game, you get to enjoy the tension as each player plans their moves and the satisfaction of knowing that, if you won, you outplayed your opponent through strategy and maybe a bit of luck.

Cooperative games don't have that same feeling. But that doesn't mean they're not as rewarding; it's just a different kind of gratification. Co-op games certainly aren't easy, even with more people (*Pandemic* is easiest with two, and quite difficult with four). At the end, if you've played to your strengths and helped your teammates when they were struggling, you'll come out on top, and the fact that you conquered a rather difficult task together is very enjoyable.

Because we're all fans of casual games here, I'd be remiss not to mention the fact that many co-op games tell stories, too. And in co-op games, all of the players help shape the story. At the end, you've created a work of art together, and you all get to appreciate it — together.

Winning a cooperative game can be a hard feeling to describe. Most people understand the appeal of triumphing over an opponent, but fewer have experienced the thrill of defeating what amounts to an antagonistic, angry, and aggressive puzzle. If you haven't done this yourself, it's time to give it a shot. 🎲



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SPIRIT ISLAND

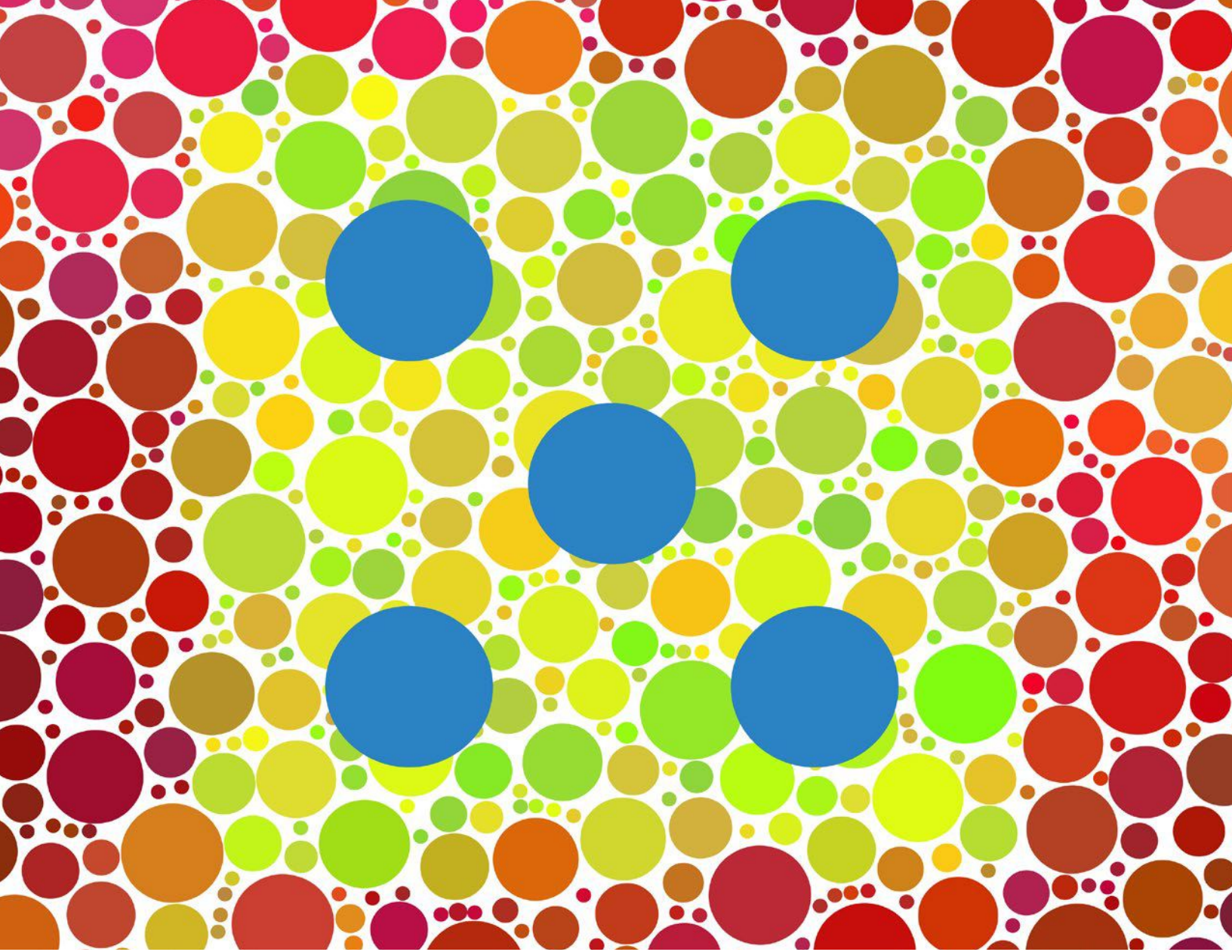
A GAME BY R. ERIC REUSS

Spirit Island is a complex, thematic cooperative game about defending your island home from colonizing Invaders. Players take on the role of spirits of the land itself, each with its own unique elemental powers.

WILL YOU DEFEAT THE INVADERS?



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Color Blind:

Keeping Sight of Game Accessibility



AnnaMaria Jackson-Phelps

Board Game Blogger and
Taco Enthusiast



Imagine sitting down at the table to play with a group of friends. The board is set up, the cards are passed out, and the minis arranged. Play begins, but it's soon apparent that there's something amiss. While your friends are talking about exchanging cards or moving pieces, you can't tell the difference between them individually—many look the same to you.

The Challenge for Color Blind Gamers

For many color blind gamers, this is a familiar situation. To put it into perspective, one in every 12 men and one in every 200 women are affected by some form of color blindness. Given the numbers, there's a chance at least one member of your gaming group is affected with some type of color blindness.

There's a host of challenges for color blind players: cards are hard to tell apart, cubes appear identical, even sections of the board may be difficult to read. For two color blind gamers, Jason Lees and Cameron Bales, it can be a struggle to differentiate key components of the game.

It was in a recent game of *Village* that Lees had difficulty with the resource tokens. "The green-and-brown cubes were so tough to distinguish," explains Lees.

Bales, on the other hand, points out an inability to see terrain or hex types across the *Settlers of Catan* board. "When I look at the map, I just can't see the colors of most of the resource tiles," describes Bales. "I think I

see desert/field/hills, mountain, clay/forest. I always have to ask people what the tiles are."

Even with the most vivid colors used for pieces, differentiating game pieces by color can be an issue for color blind gamers. Michael Heron of Meeple Like Us, a website dedicated to accessibility in games, sums it up well: "[The] biggest issue in tabletop game design is when color is used as the only source of information on game state. There's no such thing as a color palette that is genuinely 100% accessible to everyone, although there are color palettes that are much better than others."

Heron adds, "We're all a little bit color blind in some circumstances. Lighting conditions come into effect, and this can have a massive impact on how easy it is to tell things apart. It's best to think of color blindness accessibility as something that benefits everyone — like all accessibility fixes, really. If your game isn't dependent on color, you're protected against digital versus print color inconsistencies and environmental issues."



In Catan, the resource tiles can be difficult to distinguish for players with red/green color blindness (original photo provided by Scott King Photography).

Publishers and the Manufacturing Process

At first glance, it seems like it would be a simple fix for publishers to address the color blind issue in the design process. So why do companies design game components to look the same in the first place?

“I think the question you’re asking is what is more common: separate designs (and molds) for tokens/characters, or just different colors across a common shape,” explains

Michael Fisher, president of the board game manufacturer Grand Prix International, Inc. “Typically, we see that the fewest number of molds possible are invested in, and then separate colors are molded across [that] common shape. This is obviously the most economical approach given the trend toward lower production quantities, and therefore a lower number of products to amortize the upfront costs against.” Fisher adds:

“If the project is a higher price point item, or a much higher production quantity, there’s more financial viability to support multiple molds that will produce differentiated shapes (and colors at the same time).”

— **Michael Fisher**
President, Grand Prix International, Inc.

The main reason publishers go to game manufacturers with similar component design boils down to cost. Colored wooden cubes are cheaper than custom molds, while cardboard pieces are more efficient with just a couple basic shapes. Different types of tokens are harder to source than various colors of the same one. Additionally, ease of scavenging parts for prototypes to demo is also a factor.

Fortunately, more and more game publishers are starting to take accessibility into account while printing games.

Many new games use both colors and symbols to indicate different things, and games with physical resource components are starting to vary the shapes from piece to piece. *Ticket to Ride* is a good example of an early adapter: trains are indicated not just by color but by a symbol, and the images used for the various train cars differ in the second edition of the game. So as the board slowly fills up with similar train pieces, players can identify which trains belong to each player.



In Ticket to Ride, the corners of the cards contain symbols that match the train spaces on the board (original photo provided by Henk Rolleman).



Lanterns: The Harvest Festival is another fantastic example of changing the design to become more accessible. The object of the game is to place tiles covered in different colored lanterns onto the table, earning players points. (You can see where the issue might be with this.) But Foxtrot Games designed the game so the colored cards and tiles also contain lanterns with shapes that are particular to each individual color.



In Lanterns, the lanterns of each color can also be distinguished by their shape (original photo provided by AnnaMaria Jackson-Phelps).

Roll your way to fun!

Newer games like *Mystery of the Temples* made numerous tweaks to the game before they launched distribution. “We’re using various apps and online tools to check that our changes work for various [types of] color blindness, and/or contrast issues,” explains Tiffany Caires, Marketing Director for Deep Water Games. “We also have contacts within the

industry with various [types of] color blindness, and we send them images and prototypes to verify what we’re doing works. There’s also just some simple rules we’re following, like making sure colored items have unique shapes or icons, reducing the amount of red and green used together, etc.”

Spotting the Issue

Game creation can be a very involved and detailed process. The designers constantly playtest the game and tweak rules for months or even years before sending it to the manufacturer. Designing game elements that make it more accessible may not even cross their mind. So, what are some things that publishers can look out for in particular when designing games?

“If you’re using icons or shapes to differentiate the various parts of the game, it’s much better if they can be easily described verbally,” offers Michael Heron. “That helps with a number of accessibility problems but mainly it means when someone asks ‘Oh, which one is that,’ you can actually say something like ‘it’s the bird’ as opposed to ‘it’s the slightly fuzzy blob with the two smaller blobs rather than the sharper pair of blobs with the single blob.’”

“*Hanabi* is a game that I think suffers from this,” continues Heron. “It’s playable for those with color blindness, but it’s not especially easy to describe.” *Hanabi* is a cooperative game that tasks players to put on the greatest firework show imaginable. The catch is that each player has their hands facing away from them, and the other players give hints as to what cards to choose in their hand. Trying to describe fireworks without using the color can quickly dampen the fun.

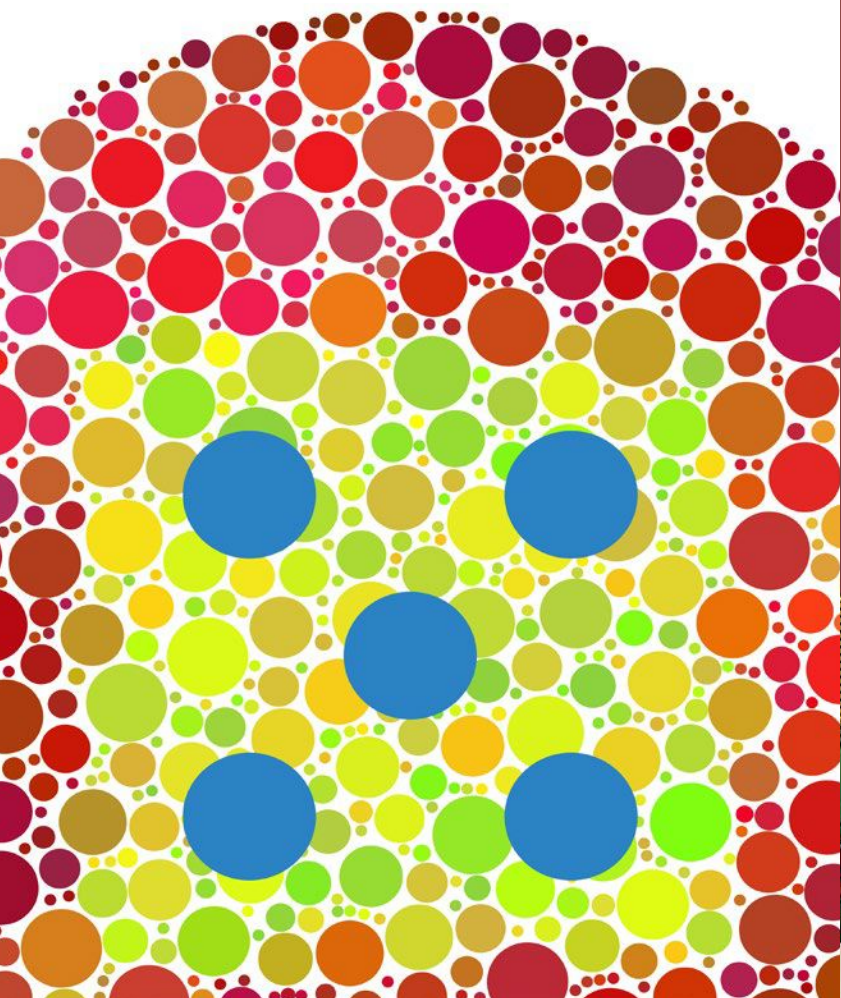
But Heron points out that not all games rely solely on cards. “Some games link color to game role for components: ‘The blue pawn is the medic’ or ‘the red pawn is the soldier,’” Heron says. “That makes it hard for people to swap in more distinctive tokens if a color palette can’t be supplemented with some other channel of information. That’s rare though. Even if you’re using dice, you can investigate different face types, transparency versus opaque, marbling patterns versus without and so on.”



As a color blind gamer, Cameron Bales has given this some thought. "I usually look for games with large, clear iconography that would work printed in black and white. That's the simplest, safest thing," explains Bales. "What I'd like to tell the graphic designers at game companies: design in color, but print your designs in grayscale at 1/2 size and see if they are playable. This would let them test for color issues and acuity issues."

Richard Gibbs of 640z Games (another site dedicated to accessibility in gaming) has four guidelines for designers. "If it can have an icon, use an icon! If it can't have an icon, use different shapes. If it can't use different shapes or different icons, avoid the danger combos. Learn more about color blindness and test whatever colors you finalize with a color blind simulator."

While not perfect, online tools and resources like CV Simulator provide some context on what someone with color blindness might be seeing. Also, thinking and testing for this in early stages is huge — playtesting should definitely cover tests for accessibility.



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Above: Azul's patterned tiles provide some help for color blind players, but replacements may still be needed for the solid-colored red and blue tiles (original photo provided by Henk Rolleman). Below: the dice in Sagrada are only differentiated by color (original photo provided by Scott King Photography).

At-Home Hacks

What about those games already sitting on your shelf that are less than perfect? Color blind gamers still want to play those buzzworthy titles, so there have been numerous color blind hacks/modifications to make them accessible. Callum Taylor created black and white stickers for *Settlers of Catan*. Easily identifiable, these icon-based aids are applied to the tiles so that telling terrain apart is no longer an issue.

Jason Lees mentioned home modding to overcome issues as well. "The only game I've modded (though I've considered a few) is *Village*. What I did, which was successful, was using a Sharpie to put a dot on each brown cube. That differentiated the browns and greens. I did the same thing on the boards and cards so I could easily tell green from brown."

Even recent releases will get the color blind hack treatment. Next Move Games' *Azul* focuses on tile-laying to create works of art. Color blind gamers have

since substituted the solid-colored tiles in *Azul* with new printed ones. Next Move Games has printed tiles available that can make a great substitution for the solid red and blue tiles.

Websites and forums have allowed color blind gamers to discuss hacks or purchase aids. Hobbyists on Board Game Geek share ideas from repainting pieces to using dots to mark the variety of card games out there. 64oz Games also publishes printable hacks on their website for *Hanabi*, *Set*, *Race for the Galaxy*, and *Battleline*. These work by printing to stickers, then applying to the game itself.

Other gamers mentioned swapping out dice in games like *Sagrada* and *Harvest Dice* to colors and dice types that were more accessible. As dice come in all manner of sizes, colors, and patterns, finding a good substitution doesn't take too much time – your average game store usually has dice by the bin full!



Make Your Voice Heard

The best way to help make changes for accessibility in the community is to make your voice heard. Having trouble seeing a piece? Notice your color blind friend is staring furrow browed at a set of cards? Email the manufacturer or mention it on their social media page. With the amount of competition for crowdfunding dollars, as well as the push for inclusivity in gaming, publishers and designers are taking notice.

Jason Glover talks about feedback changes during *PLAGUE: the Card Game*'s development. "While demoing the game at Gen Con, I had a number of people ask if changes would be made to the game so that color blind people could play. I had only heard this brought up one time before by a friend of mine who is actually color blind, but at Gen Con I heard about it from about half a dozen people. I launched the Kickstarter campaign without any changes to the game as far as the color blind aspects are concerned. Guess what? I got a ton of emails asking for a change so that color blind people could enjoy the game. So I did make the change with the help of our backers' feedback."

Comments on Capstone Games' *The Estates* Kickstarter prompted a change, as well — what was formerly a stretch goal for a sticker sheet to apply patterns on the floor cubes was directly integrated into the game. Clay Ross, the creative mind behind the game, mentioned it in an update: "It's because of your comments and suggestions that we came to this solution."

Newer editions of *Splendor* include symbology for each color after players mentioned it was hard to play with just colored circles depicted on the cards. Numerous other games are incorporating color blind accessibility as well, directly based on feedback from players.

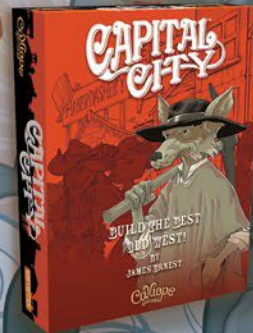
As more people in the community push for strides in accessibility, issues like color blind inclusiveness in gaming becomes the standard. Communities can be found to share issues and offer support, while resources are being created to finally bring those difficult classics to the table. What's most important is that your voice matters and is definitely being heard.

After all, the more people we can get to the gaming table, the better. 🎲



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Andrew Birkett

Freelance Journalist and Chief
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Most gamers have heard of or witnessed a game gone terribly wrong: some player takes an overwhelmingly large lead, and then proceeds to gloat about their impending victory and further demolish the other players' hope. It rips the fun out of the experience for everyone, and can dissuade those gamers from wanting to try that game again. But can anyone blame the all-mighty winner? The goal of most board games is in fact to emerge victorious, right?

According to James Hudson, founder of Druid City Games and proprietor of Board Game Spotlight, that would be wrong. He feels the ultimate purpose of gaming is to provide an escape that allows us to “engage with our friends and family.” If Hudson is right in believing that the purpose of gaming is to spend quality time with family and friends, then should any player intentionally crush other players to the point of making it an unenjoyable experience for them? And if we should choose not to crush other players with no remorse, then how can we mitigate potential negative experiences for other players while still playing competitively?

On one hand of the argument, a game designer sets victory conditions for a reason. Win conditions are used

to influence player's decisions, enable strategies, as well as form game length and pace. According to Board Game Geek, the definition of a game is “something where a single person or a group competes or cooperates toward a goal, whereby one or more players win or one or more players lose.”

Without having a win condition in which the player(s) emerge victorious or defeated, the game would simply become an activity. In a competitive game with only one winner, a player should always continue to make the most optimal decisions in order to ensure their victory among their rivals, even if this makes a less than enjoyable experience for other players.

Does Competitive Also Mean Combative?

Ken Shannon, game designer of titles such as *Tournament at Camelot* and *Approaching Dawn: The Witching Hour*, describes himself as extremely competitive and thereby might at least partially agree with this viewpoint. Additionally, his idea of the main purpose of gaming is the “intellectual engagement in a social setting.” He further adds: “It takes the place of physical, tactical, and strategic actions I imagine I would have done in a war.”

If the purpose of gaming is intellectual engagement like the tactical decisions of war, then the goal should be to crush the enemy at all costs, right? As the expression goes, all is fair in love and war. On the other hand, it is not considerate to the other gamers you're playing with to demolish their gaming pleasure. Hudson would likely argue that the mentality of winning at all costs would go against his purpose for gaming.





“I do enjoy winning (who doesn’t?), but not at the cost of ruining the fun for others,” Hudson explains. “I very much discourage ‘hyper competitiveness’ in my gaming groups. I have seen that type of behavior suck the fun right out of a game session. Then you have a big group of people not having fun, and that is why we play games!”

Hudson also points out that we live in times in which our schedules are tight and careers and families get in the way of additional social interaction. Gaming provides the escape needed for gamers to enjoy themselves, relieve stress, and spend time with family and friends. When gamers take time out of their busy schedules, they expect to enjoy the experience. They don’t necessarily have to win.

“I don’t think players are dissuaded by losing, I think they are dissuaded by bad attitudes,” describes Hudson. “I lose all the time, no big deal, but if I am losing to

someone who is bragging and rubbing it in, then that dissuades me terribly.”

With all that being said, most gamers probably do not agree fully with either point of view, but lie somewhere in the middle. Despite the fact that Shannon is a very competitive player, he realizes that crushing someone in a game can be tough on players, especially younger players and more casual gamers. He has on occasion made suboptimal decisions to help other players win. Though he says that games with deception mechanisms are ones for which he is particularly willing to fall into this play style.

Although Hudson is all for providing the most enjoyable experience for gamers, that doesn’t mean that he lets his 8-year-old son beat him—Hudson says his son must earn his victories. Therefore, James Hudson, Ken Shannon, and most other gamers likely believe that playing just to win with no empathy for other players is not the best game plan.

Be the Change You Want to See

So, what can players do to continue playing competitively while simultaneously making sure not to ruin the experience for other players?

A common cause of negative experiences in gaming is when a new player competes against a player who is already well seasoned with the particular game they’re

playing. If the veteran player doesn’t make enough of an effort to explain the game and potential strategies, they could be subjecting that new player to a less than ideal play experience.

This can be circumvented in several ways. Paramount is explaining the rules thoroughly to new players to

“I very much discourage ‘hyper competitiveness’ in my gaming groups. I have seen that type of behavior suck the fun right out of a game session. Then you have a big group of people not having fun, and that is why we play games!”

— James Hudson
Founder of Druid City Games



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make sure that no one player is at an unfair advantage. Additionally, these new players should be warned about common pitfalls, especially in games that require build up, since early tactical errors might make the rest of the game unenjoyable. Part of that involves informing the new players of potential strategies and play styles. Finally, a seasoned player could try to test out a strategy they've previously not tried in lieu of their usual strategies and actions.

Another common reason for negative gaming experiences is overly obnoxious players. These players can be reined in by communicating with them. If they're an adult, other players should be able to talk to them about their behaviors and how they adversely affect the group. Though it can sometimes be tough to talk to someone about their obnoxious behaviors, it can be necessary to provide a completely welcome and fun group for all. All gaming groups need to have rules and procedures in place for dealing with and resolving conflicts.



Win the Battle, Lose the Group

Additionally, even if actively competing for the win, all players should always avoid certain destructive actions and behaviors. Some of those behaviors include: targeting take-that actions overwhelmingly to any single player, trash talking and/or condescending remarks, gloating, disengaging anyone from the game (such as through serious "analysis paralysis"), cheating, trying to bend and interpret game rules in a manner that allows you to beat other players, and any other behavior that might be construed as non-inclusive to any other player.

The most imperative thing is to make sure that everyone at the table feels welcomed and comfortable playing the game. It is critical to be open and inclusive with gaming and the introduction of new gamers needs to be a positive experience for them to continue with the hobby. Ultimately, all players (especially new gamers) should be aware that overly competitive, rude or unethical play styles will not be tolerated. Creating

guidelines for the group to prevent any player from feeling attacked will go a long way to eliminating toxic behaviors in your gaming group.

Though it is easy to get into a competitive mode while gaming, tuning back some of the more inappropriate behaviors such as trash talking, gloating, and personal targets of particular negative in-game actions will go a long way towards making sure your group does not lose any members.

Additionally, for some players who are overtly competitive, it is wise to avoid playing strictly competitive games and instead opt for co-op games. By playing co-op games and working together, the competitive player can avoid bringing out some of their more unbecoming characteristics.

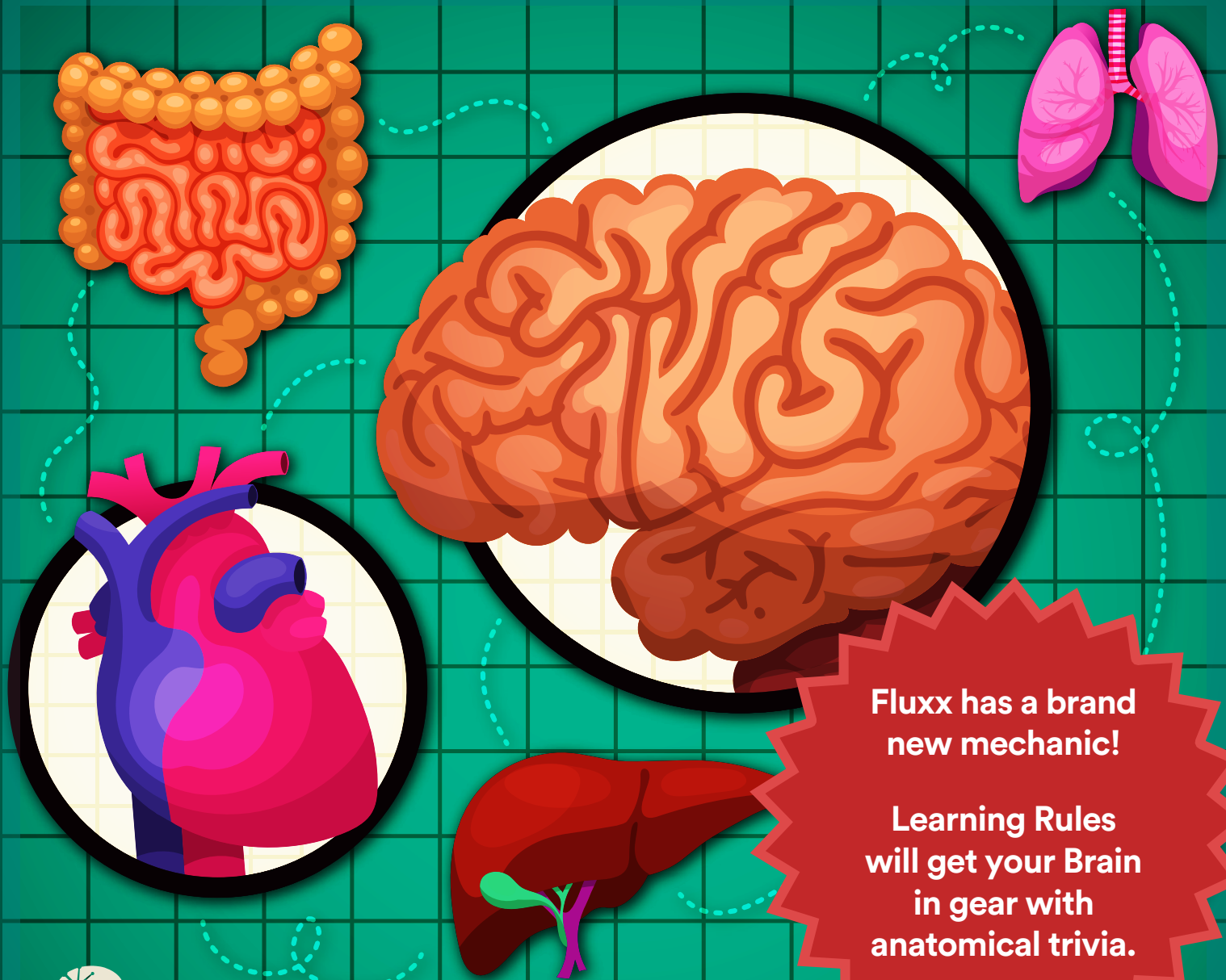


You Win Some, You Lose Some

Board gaming is meant to be a fun escape from the day-to-day stresses in one's life while simultaneously providing a great avenue to connect and share memories with those we love. Though it is reasonable to get a bit competitive, it should never come to a point where any one player diminishes the play experience for another player.



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There are ways to ease some of the negatives of losing for other players without having to give up on one's competitive nature. However, it is likely impossible to completely eliminate any sour notions about losing in gaming. Most people would prefer not to lose, but ultimately a majority of folks are less concerned about losing than they are about enjoying themselves. It is our job as gamers to work to avoid hyper-competitive play in our gaming groups and ensure fun for all players. 🎮



Where do you fall on the spectrum? Do you lean more towards conquering your opponents like a tactical war general or are you all for ensuring that all players have excellent, fun times while gaming with you? Join the discussion by tweeting to Andrew @AtherisAndrew on Twitter with the hashtag:

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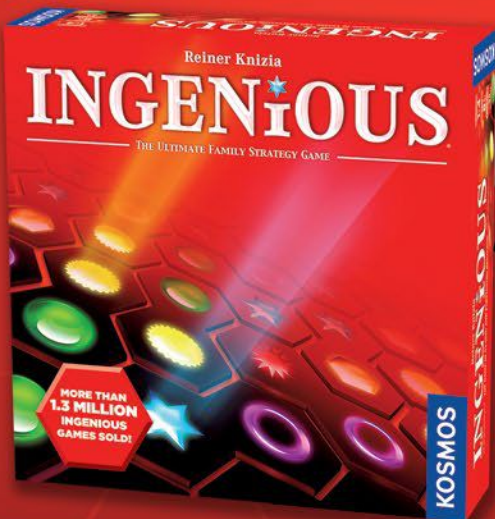
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Penny Pinching:

Board Gaming on a Budget



Luke Muench

Developer, Writer, and All-Around
Board Game Enthusiast

Whenever I suggest someone should consider delving into the rich and varied hobby of board gaming, the one factor that deters them the most is the seemingly large cost that comes with it. Board games can range from \$10 to well over \$100, with some titles being customizable to an overwhelming level. From upgraded components to various expansion packs, any one game can change a \$30 affair to something far more extensive and costly. And when you are already uncertain of where you should start, this can quickly become a deal-breaker.



We live in a day and age when board gaming is on the rise, yet there are few resources made explicitly for people just getting into the hobby. So for those who do decide to take the leap, it's important to find a way to be informed and make it manageable monetarily. Fortunately, this is a subject that has been covered in recent blogs, podcasts, and YouTube shows, like my channel Budget Board Gamer.

So whether you're new to gaming or a veteran of the hobby, here is some advice to make things easier on your wallet. No matter who you are, saving a couple bucks is never a bad thing, and while the subject does cater to newer members of the board gaming craze, I think the following can be helpful to anyone throwing cash at their unwieldy and ever-growing collection.



Be Selective

As of June 2018, there are over 99,000 board games, expansions, and re-releases registered on Board Game Geek (BGG) – a website dedicated to all things board gaming. So if you're looking to pick out a game for yourself, make sure it's one you *really* want to play. Is the theme something that excites you? How much strategy are you looking for? How much luck should play into who wins? How nice are the components? These are all factors that need to be heavily weighed and considered, and some of this will come with time and experience.

That said, don't expect that the first few games you get will be your favorites. The first game I picked up, *Small World* by Days of Wonder, now adorns my apartment wall as an art piece; a reminder of where I started this journey and how far I've come. So pick something that you think looks mind-blowingly cool.



Do Your Research

There are a lot of factors to consider when looking for a new board game, and you won't have the answers to most of them by simply looking at the box. Sites like BGG are fantastic research tools built for this reason. Find a game's page, see what people are saying about it, what game mechanics it contains, and a handful of price quotes. But don't stop there; find some recent reviews to see how the game has held up over time.

You also want to keep an eye out for games with high replayability – the more times a game hits the table, the more the initial cost is worth it. The point is, if you're going to spend the time and the money to play it, you should have a pretty good idea of what to expect well before you open the box.



Hype and Type

Sites like BGG will have ranking/rating systems, and curate a list of top rated games that fluctuate as titles are released. Community hype is also a real thing, so sites might also include a "hot list" of highly anticipated or trending games. While seemingly helpful, these lists can potentially be a big waste of time. BGG's list is about the overall ranking, not about the best games that fit your specific tastes.

It can be easy to see positive ratings and be swept away by the idea of a complex and involved game like *Terra Mystica*. But, more often than not, the most complex games are the most expensive due to how many components are involved. And without having experienced the game at least once beforehand, you could be dropping a ton of money on a game that you may not even enjoy.

Rather than focusing on the games everyone else is talking about, look for types of games that you know you like, then use resources like the BGG forum, geeklists, or the countless videos and articles on the internet to

find games that scratch a similar itch. So while a game's rank can help to indicate an overall quality of a product to the masses, it shouldn't be a number that you rely on to measure if a game will be good for you.



Dealing With It

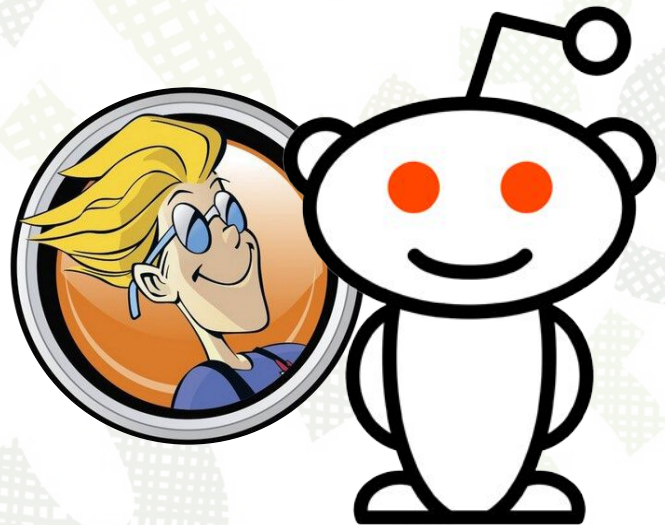
There are deals for anything if you go looking for them, and board gaming is no exception. Various websites will hold big clearance sales when they become overstocked, with a sale showing up on newsfeeds and in emails every couple of days. Big names like Amazon will have annual board game sales, while associated sites like CamelCamelCamel will keep track of any pop up specials. Sometimes being patient today will have your wallet thanking you tomorrow.

The same can be said about brick-and-mortar stores, with certain deals going on throughout the year. Big name chains or local game stores may also have regular or seasonal promotions. In a day and age when you can get just about anything you set your mind to from a variety of sources, make sure it's for the best price you can find.



Stay Informed

Speaking of sales, I've set up my Facebook, Twitter, and email to bombard me with notices regarding sales, contests, and more to help me be aware of what new things are headed to store shelves and how cheap I can get them for. While I'm not saying to make your accounts become a pile of ads, consider following or subscribing to those publishers that produce games that really appeal to you. It could save you a lot of time and money in the long-run. Board game forums on sites like BGG or Reddit can also be a simple way to stay connected to the community, and keep you posted on new deals or new stock for popular games.



Support Your FLGS (Friendly Local Gaming Store)

To some, this will seem to contradict my previous points; going to a store to pay full price for my games? How will that save me money? In order to compete with online giants like Amazon and Cool Stuff Inc, local retailers have come up with various reasons as to why you should stop in. Many have back rooms of games for people to freely play, allowing you to try out a ton of games before you buy them. Some will even give you a discount if you attend an event

featuring the game before purchasing. Most have some sort of loyalty program, providing better discounts the more you support the store. And for those who are newer to board gaming, having someone there to walk you through what games are worth your time and money is well worth the price of the game itself. Stores may also offer community swaps or garage sales for used games.

Visit builditgames.ca for all the details.



Build it



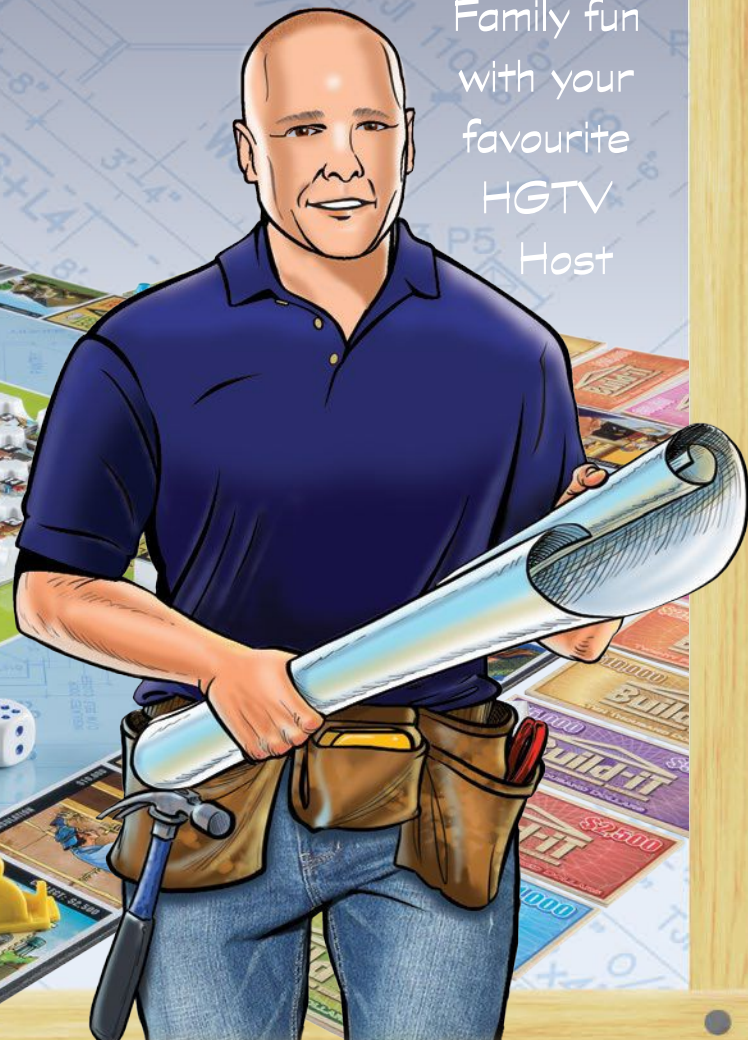
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Giveaways Galore

Now, I'm not trying to say you should rely on giveaways and the promises of free stuff to actively build your collection. More often than not, those contests won't be featuring games that you have any interest in. All the same, there's no harm in entering these contests; most of these contests are free, and you'll educate yourself on the types of games being released in the process.

There's a list of such giveaways on BoardGameGeek.com, but some Facebook pages specialize in informing their followers of such deals and events. You also don't want to miss Casual Game Revolution's big giveaways, which usually coincide with the release of each new issue of *Casual Game Insider*.



Enter to win these great casual games (US only):
CasualGameRevolution.com/latest-giveaway



Print & Play

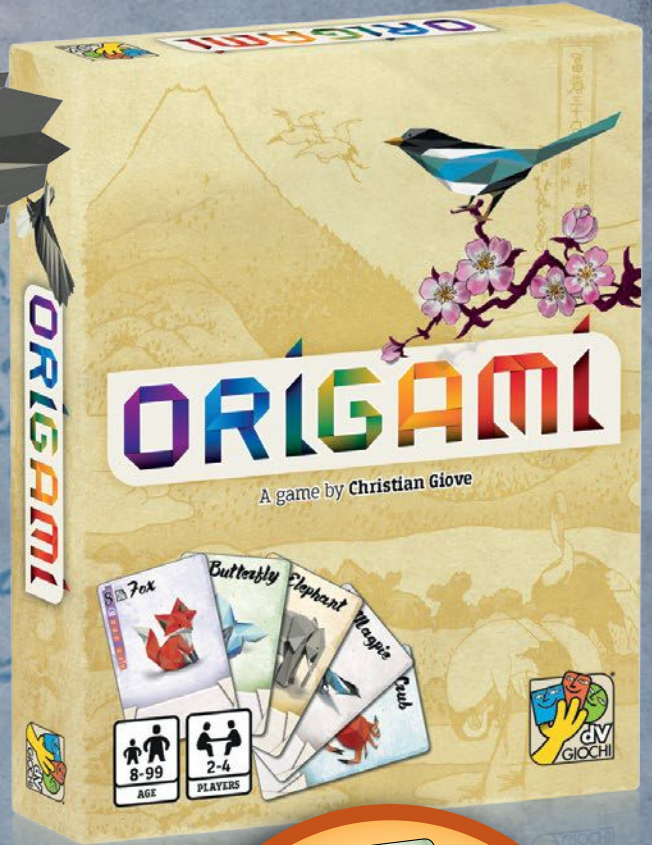


Free Print & Play games offer an opportunity for players to try out games on the cheap, costing only what is needed to print the necessary cards and other components.

Some publishers, in the hopes of growing their community and brand, have freely provided their works online as PDFs. Those interested can print off the necessary cards or components and, using card sleeves and dice, can experience some fantastic games for relatively cheap. No, these won't be the prettiest things to look at, but it helps inform players as to what they like, allowing you to grow your collection early for little to no money down. And if you end up liking the game enough, you can always go out and buy your own retail copy down the road.

You can sometimes find Print & Play copies on the publisher's site, and BGG has a section of their site dedicated to this. Here are four of my favorite Print & Play games worth checking out: *Tiny Epic Kingdoms* (Gamelyn Games), *Deep Space D-6* (Tau Leader Games), *...And Then We Held Hands* (LudiCreations), and *Elevenses for One* (Eagle-Gryphon Games).

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Your Board Gaming Buddy

At the end of the day, you won't be able to afford every game you've ever wanted to play, and it's a rookie mistake to buy everything you want to try. Fortunately, this hobby is rife with people with huge game collections just looking to hang out and play. Whether it's through your FLGS, conventions, meet-ups, or word of mouth, you should be able to find someone with knowledge, experience, and a wealth of games to play. Now, I'm not saying you should go looking for these people just to leech off their games; go to make friends, to hang out, and to hopefully join or establish a gaming group. (After all, games are only as good as the people playing them.) As long as your friendship is mutual and everyone is respectful of one another, there's no reason not to use your friends as a resource to learn more of what you do or don't like.

There you have it — some solid pieces of budget board gamer advice that will have your wallet thanking

you. Not all board games are expensive, but if you're wanting to turn your love of gaming into a hobby, it can start to add up quickly. So don't just throw money at a game you might not even like; figure out what kind of games you like, research which titles fit the bill, and find ways to pick them up for cheap. There are definitely ways to break into the hobby without breaking the bank. ☺

Luke Muench is a regular contributor to The Cardboard Herald blog and host of the Youtube channel Budget Board Gamer. This article was originally published August 8, 2017 on www.CardboardHerald.com.



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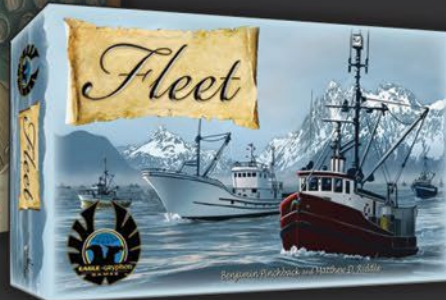
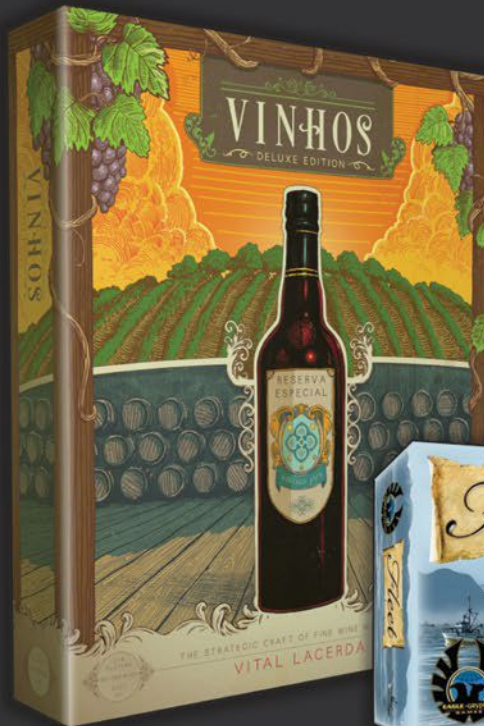




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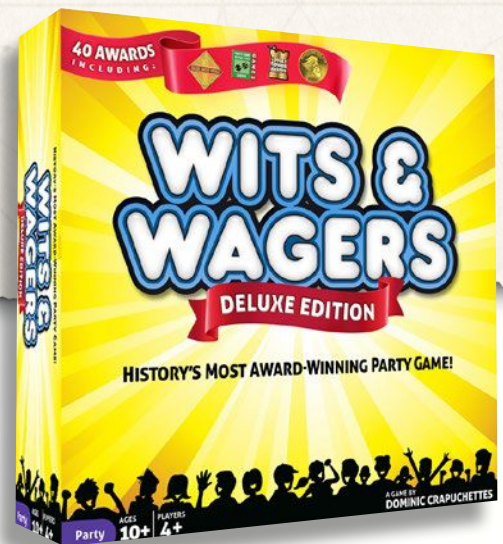
Riding Out the Storm: From Boat to Board with North Star Games

For North Star Games co-founder Dominic Crapuchettes, publishing casual games floats his boat.



Josher Lumpkin

Freelance Writer and
Hardcore Board Gamer





Things weren't looking so great for Alaskan salmon fishing vessel captain Dominic Crapuchettes.

"We were taking on water and all of our electronics went dead," recalls Crapuchettes, who now runs North Star Games. "All of our radios were dead."

A fierce storm raged outside the small boat. Violent waves caused them to bob helplessly in the unrelenting wind and rain. With no way to contact the shore and no power, Crapuchettes feared the worst.

"I turned on a flashlight, opened up our floorboards, and our engine was nearly completely submerged. Our batteries were submerged," Crapuchettes says. "If we'd taken in enough water to get sucked into the air intake at the top of the engine, then that would have just killed the engine and we all would have been completely dead."

With mortal dread as a compelling motivator, Crapuchettes and his crew began frantically searching the boat for the source of the leak. They found that a wayward tow line, typically reserved for docking the vessel to shore, had found its way into the propeller and somehow spun open the boat's 12-inch propeller access hatch inside the boat.

"We basically had a foot diameter hole in the bottom of our boat, just gushing in water," says Crapuchettes.

With the hole located, they were able to close the hatch and pump out the water, but the harrowing event terrified Crapuchettes. He longed to get off the boat for good to follow his dream of starting a board game company.

"I knew in my heart what I was gonna do," says Crapuchettes. "But then it played out over many years. Every new life-threatening experience where I was literally close to dying, I would go, 'Okay, I'm gonna stop.'"

NorthStarGames™

New Horizons

Finally, after 12 seasons captaining the salmon boat, in 2003 he jumped ship and went all in on board games. There was just one problem: Crapuchettes had never run a company before.

“I knew nothing about business,” Crapuchettes tells *Casual Game Insider*, “so I wanted to figure out how to start up a company, to learn about entrepreneurship, and to find a business partner. So I applied to business school and got in. I got really lucky.”

It was at University of Maryland’s business school that Crapuchettes, then in his early thirties, met Satish Pillamarri, who would become his business partner and co-founder of North Star Games.

“Usually, your summer internship in business school is working with a big corporation, but mine was just a summer internship with my own company, and I convinced my future business partner to join me,” says Crapuchettes. “I got a grant from the Kauffman Foundation, which I paid to Satish, because that was basically my only capital at that point. So he got paid and I just worked for free.”

Like most people who work in the board game industry, Crapuchettes has been a lifelong gamer. Growing up, he says his French mother



Satish Pillamarri and Dominic Crapuchettes posing at Target with the first edition of Wits and Wagers (2006)

didn’t want the family watching too much television, preferring more interactive ways to pass the time, such as playing games. Crapuchettes learned how to play chess by the time he was four years old and was playing competitively by the time he was eight. When he was in eighth grade, he made up a game called *Kabloogi* – which was banned from his school because too many kids were playing it in class.

All Hands on Deck

In the 1990s, Crapuchettes got hooked on *Magic: The Gathering* and hit the tournament scene.

“When I wasn’t fishing in Alaska, I was playing *Magic*,” he tells *Casual Game Insider*. “I think the first Pro Tour was in New York in ‘95, and I got invited because I called 100 times. I didn’t take it super seriously. I was paying my way through college, and if it was convenient, I went to the pro tour. And I think I earned about \$30,000 doing it over a period of several years.”

Crapuchettes says his experience playing *Magic: The Gathering* stoked his interest in designing games.

“Part of the reason I loved *Magic* was because I loved the sealed deck tournament,” he says.

In a sealed deck format event, players are given six unopened packs of cards from which to create a deck. It differs from standard format, where players bring a deck constructed of cards from their own collection.

“I loved designing decks. I loved drafting a deck and designing it. So really it was the game design bug that made me love *Magic*.”

Unfortunately, it was the World Wide Web and the ability of players to share their decks that killed *Magic* for him.

“I played pre-internet. It was really hard to come up with a deck that wasn’t on the internet that could beat internet decks. In fact, I only did it once, maybe twice,” Crapuchettes tells us.

MAGIC
The Gathering



Grackles™

In this lightly themed abstract strategy game, you'll line up as many of your birds on the telephone wire to score as many points as possible.

Place tiles and connect dots of your color with your Grackle tokens. Rotate empty tiles and extend lines to increase your score. At the end of the game, the player with the most birds on the telephone wire is the winner.

- ◆ Plays like a classic
- ◆ Perfect for abstract strategy lovers
- ◆ Beautiful acrylic, debossed tokens

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PROTOSPIEL

Great Minds Think Alike

In 2001, Crapuchettes and two other game designers started Protospiel — a convention where game creators gather to test out their newest designs in a casual environment. The event is still running today. In fact, a dozen cities now host their own regional Protospiel conventions.

When Crapuchettes and Pillalamarri started up North Star Games, they had only a modest goal in mind: to create beloved board games that are good enough to be played by generation after generation.

“For that to happen, a game’s gotta be something that resonates with people and is really fun and compelling,” Crapuchettes says. “But it’s also gotta be simple enough that you can teach it and it has a natural progression to the next generation.”

“The edge that I have is my understanding of board games, coupled with my understanding of non-gamers,” Crapuchettes continues. “That’s where I have a serious edge over most anyone, even in the industry. I love board games, but I also have a lot of non-gamer friends. I have a lot of experience with trying to get them to play

Deciding What to Rule Out

The combination of North Star Games’ extensive refinement process and setting aggressive, ambitious goals has been successful for the business, but it also takes a lot of time and labor.

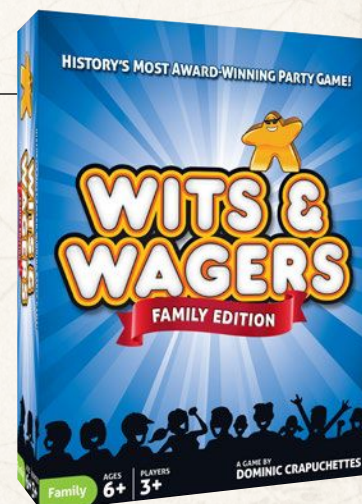
“That’s why we release so few games,” explains Crapuchettes. And though Crapuchettes is deep down himself a hobby gamer — two of his favorites include *Diplomacy* and *Dungeons & Dragons* — he says an important part of his craft isn’t adding a bunch of rules to a game, but rather removing them for a smoother experience.

“The appetite for rules in the hobby gaming world is extremely high, so to solve a problem in a game’s design, you can always just add another rule. That’s such a simple way to solve a problem compared to ‘how do I remove a rule and solve two problems?’” Crapuchettes says. “‘How do I remove two rules and add one that can solve three problems?’ So it’s just a lot harder and it takes a lot more time to solve the issues with fewer rules.”

my hobby games and seeing how difficult that is. And then going back to the drawing board and figuring out how to design games that are easy to explain that still kinda capture that fun that I love.”

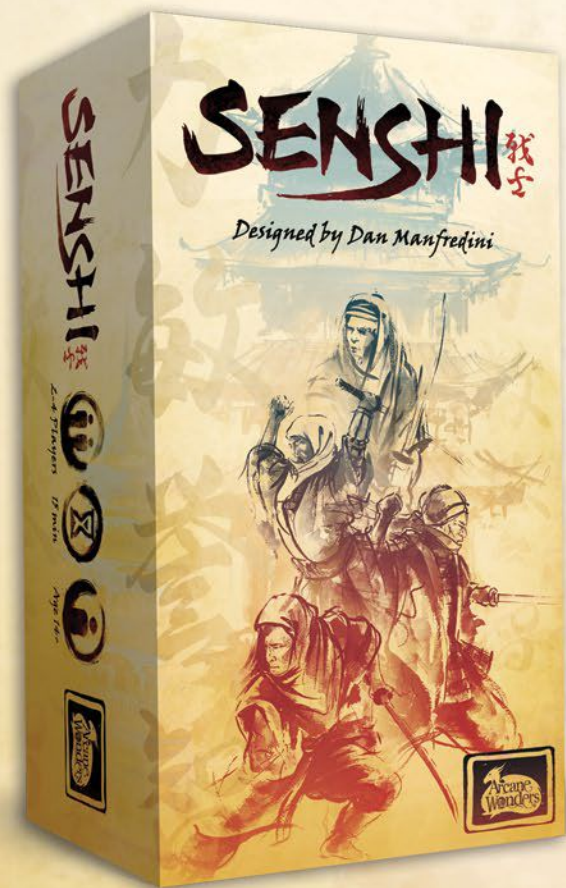
Crapuchettes tried out his game *Wits & Wagers* on over 1,000 people at craft fairs, toy shows, and game conventions. He asked anybody he could get his hands on to play. Through this extensive playtesting, the designer gathered valuable information he used to refine the game. He kept only the most fun parts and ditched everything else. The result was an incredibly engaging trivia guessing game, where players bet on each others’ best estimations of answers.

All their hard work on *Wits & Wagers* paid off. According to North Star, the game is the most awarded party game in history — including the Revolutionary award from Casual Game Revolution. Further, the team was able to do something that other hobby gamers hadn’t done before: crack into the mass market. Crapuchettes and Pillalamarri got *Wits & Wagers* onto shelves at Target stores in 2006 and it has been available there ever since. Other titles in the series, such as the stripped-down, gambling-free version, *Wits & Wagers Family*, and more have also seen phenomenal sales.



“The end result is people notice, ‘I taught this game to my parents and they seemed to like it!’ but they don’t realize why that process was so much simpler with a North Star game,” Crapuchettes says. “But I know why! It’s because we’ve tested it, we’ve tried it, and we’ve really looked at the speedbumps and tried to figure out how do we remove every one of them.”

SENSHI 戦士



2-4 Players



15 min



Age 14+

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The Evolution of North Star

In *Evolution*, players design animal species to adapt to a changing ecosystem and changes in the food supply. Using a combination of hand management, action allocations, and a little bit of luck, they compete to become the dominant species. As with North Star Games' mass market titles, Crapuchettes and his team spent time testing and refining *Evolution*.

"For a hobby game of its depth, *Evolution* is very simple to teach. In fact, the biggest issue I've had with *Evolution* is that the depth is hidden too well for savvy gamers. The savvy gamers think, 'oh yeah that's kinda simplistic.' But if you get under the hood of the game you'll see there's really amazing balance. You have a lot of control. I just spent so much time simplifying the ruleset and making it so easy to learn that it hid away the depth."

But there's another factor involved when writing a game like *Evolution*. The game has to *feel* right. Theme has to be integrated with simple mechanics so that players can imagine that they are actually becoming the fantastic beast in a dynamic climate.

Going All In

North Star Games' next act will be the 2-to-8 player wild west-themed card game *Most Wanted*. A design collaboration between Crapuchettes and *Happy Salmon* designers Ken Gruhl and Quentin Weir, *Most Wanted* "does for poker what *King of Tokyo* did for *Yahtzee*."

"My seven-year-old son was my biggest playtester for this game," says Crapuchettes. "It is his favorite game bar none, by a longshot. We've played over seventy times now."



"Making the mechanics invoke theme was really tough," says Crapuchettes. "Making the game easy to learn, balanced, and also thematic means you throw away lots of good rules that work perfectly fine on two levels, but just don't nail the theme quite right."

Evolution has been written about in the prestigious academic journal *Nature*, and is used in schools around the world to demonstrate how our world selects for species who are able to adapt in the face of developing conditions.

Crapuchettes describes the gameplay: "You're vying to be the most wanted outlaw. There's a lot of building up a hand, going head-to-head for high cards or pairs. It's not a legacy-style game, but it has some elements. You can kinda progress and incorporate other actions into the game which bring it closer to poker, but we removed the things that are confusing to non-poker players. There's no 'full house,' 'flush,' or 'straight.'"

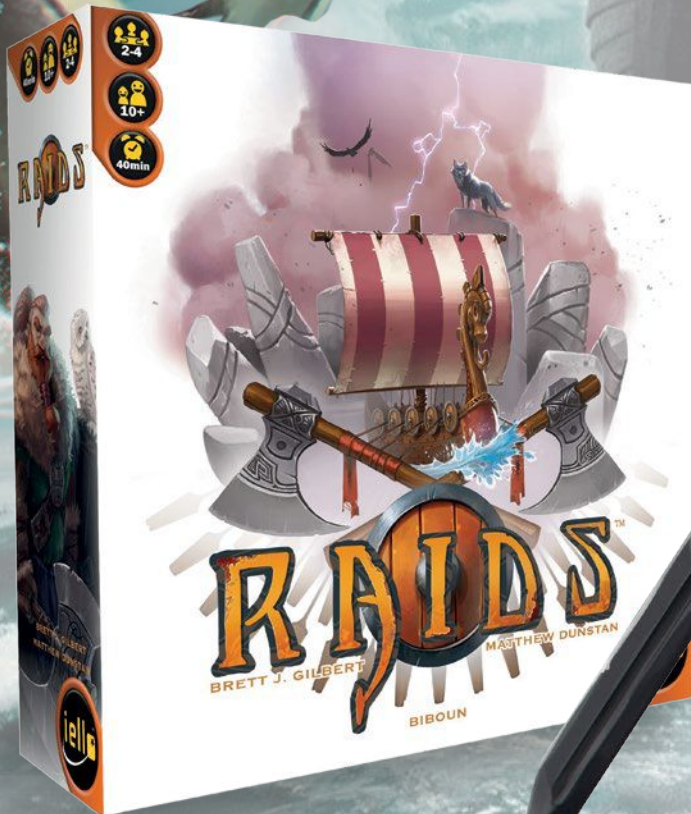
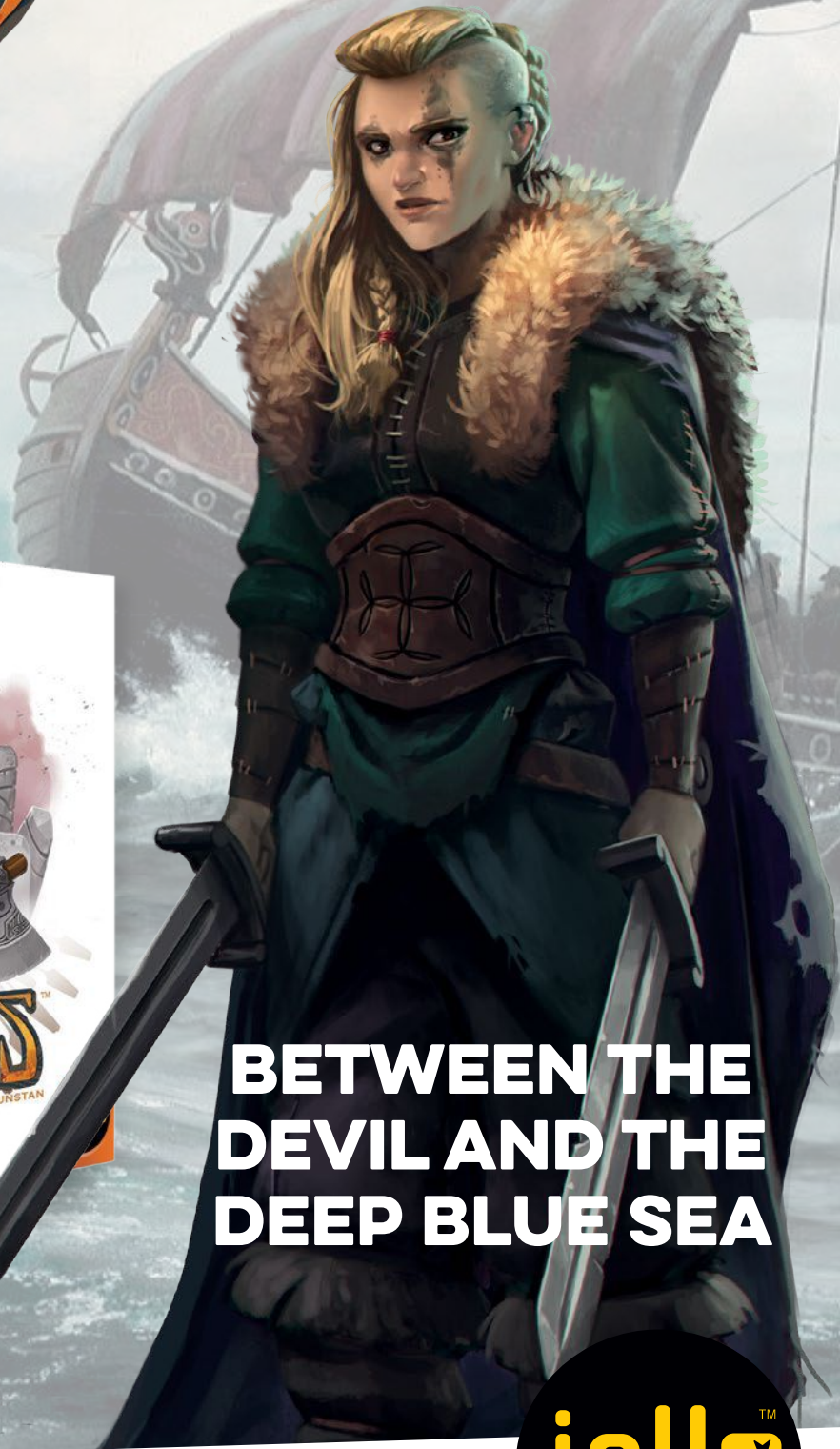
Crapuchettes says the game will make a fun and stimulating casual game for hobby gamers while meeting North Star Games' standard of being easy to teach and not having any fiddly rules.

"Any gamer that plays it I think will go, 'Wow! I can play this with my family!' So the gamers, I think, are going to be real key beachheads, because they have an appetite to try new games to see if they're fun," he says. "And this game is just packed with fun."

North Star Games™

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DEVIL AND THE
DEEP BLUE SEA**



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Risky Business

So how does running a game company stack up to risking his life on a fishing boat?

“My stint with starting up a company and business school was intense, just in a longer way,” Crapuchettes says. “The sleepless nights come in waves with the company. The hard times are always associated with taking risks. Every time you’re growing or doing something big, you’re taking risks. Every time you’re just kind of staying in status quo, it’s a lot easier to sleep at night, but your company doesn’t grow. Growth is really correlated to the risks that you take.”

Those risks have ultimately paid off – Crapuchettes’ new vessel doesn’t show any signs of sinking anytime soon. 🎲



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Naomi Laeuchli
Game Reviewer and
Casual Game Groupie



In *Fairy Tile*, each player is dealt an equal number of page cards and given a magic token. You draw one of your page cards and keep it secret. The starting land tiles are set in the middle of the table, and the princess, knight, and dragon are placed on their starting positions. The goal of the game is to be the first player to complete each of your page cards. Each page has a goal to be completed – for example, the prince and princess must both share the same forest location, the dragon must be able to see the knight or princess across a straight from where it’s standing, or the knight must visit a mountain location connected to two or more mountains.

On your turn you may place a new land tile or move a character. Each character has its own movement rules. The dragon must move in a straight line, only stopping once it hits an edge of the kingdom. The knight can move up to two spaces and can never end his movement on a space adjacent to where he began. The princess can move only one space, but can also jump between castles. If your card’s goal is complete after performing either of these actions, you reveal it, read it aloud, and then draw a new one. You may only do this on your turn. Some goals also require you to have moved one of the related characters on that turn in order to complete it.

Rather than move a character or place a tile, a third option is to choose to turn a page, in which case you flip your magic token up, place your current story page at the bottom of your deck, and draw a new one. Your turn is over. On a future turn, you can flip your magic token down to take an extra action.

Fairy Tile is a gorgeous game. From the pre-painted miniatures to the art on the cards, its fairy tale essence is beautifully captured. Sometimes you get really unlucky (or lucky) on the cards you draw, but the ability to turn the page ensures that you’re never left stuck. The story you create as you progress is a neat addition, and the final result is a game that feels magical and sweet and requires some clever character maneuvering.

Fairy Tile

Designed by Matthew Dunstan, Brett J. Gilbert

2-4 PLAYERS

30 MINS

AGES 8+

\$30
MSRP



LUCK

STRATEGY



INTERACTIVE

INDEPENDENT





Logic and puzzles are beautifully paired in this intriguing game about figuring out the secret rule behind the structures you build.



At the start of each game of *Zendo*, one player is chosen to be the moderator. The moderator draws a rules card. Rules cards come in three different difficulty levels, and usually include some decision the moderator can make about the rule, using clips to lock in their decision on the card. The game comes with wedges, pyramids, and blocks in three different colors. The secret rule dictates what kind of structures can be made with these. So, for example, the secret rule may dictate that a structure must contain at least one pyramid.

At the start of the game, the moderator builds two structures, one following the secret rule and one breaking it, and then marks which is correct and which is not. Players then take turns building structures. After building a structure, the player asks the moderator to Tell (immediately mark it correct or incorrect) or Quiz (each player guesses whether it is correct or not, and whoever guesses correctly earns a guessing token). On your turn, you may spend a guessing token to make a guess about what you believe the rule to be. If you have multiple tokens, you can spend more than one on your turn. If you are incorrect, the moderator must build a structure that disproves your guess but still follows the secret rule. If your guess cannot be disproven, you win the game.

Zendo is a mind bending, head scratching game. Completely abstract, this works in its favor as it means players can focus solely on the puzzle. Besides the rules, the game comes with a little booklet full of tips for both the moderator and players, as well as some guidance on coming up with your very own secret rules.

When you first play as moderator, you think the easy rules are a little too easy, but once you've taken a spin as guesser, you soon realize that figuring out the puzzle is a lot trickier than you'd think. If you enjoy a puzzling good time, *Zendo* is for you.

Zendo

Designed by Kory Heath, Andrew Looney

2-6 PLAYERS	15-60 MINS	AGES 12+	\$40 MSRP
LUCK		STRATEGY	
INTERACTIVE		INDEPENDENT	

Lucidity places you in a world of nightmares. Will you escape your dreams or become one of them in a dice game that's both spooky and dark?



Throughout the game, players are collecting power points. Once a player collects fifteen, all other non-Nightmare players get a final turn and the player with the most points wins the game. Each player is given a player card on which they keep track of their dice. On your turn, you choose from one of three sleep tracks, which determines how many dice you will be rolling this turn. You draw that number of dice from the dice bag, select two of them to return, and roll the rest.

Dice come in four different colors, each of which corresponds to one of the Nightmares, and each die has four possible results. Some dice are more likely to roll certain results and are therefore more dangerous. The results are Power, Hunt (if you have four or more of these you are eliminated), Exhaust

(if you have three or more of these your turn ends and you must discard all your power points that match the color of a die you draw from the dice bag), and Shadow. Different colored Shadows give you different abilities; some can help while others harm. If you have three or more Shadows of the same color, you become a Nightmare.

After rolling, you resolve your dice by placing them on your player card and carrying out the actions shown on the card. You can then choose to rest (discard one Shadow or all your Exhaust dice and end your turn), or you can push your luck (take another turn, drawing two more dice than before). You may do this two times before you must rest and end your turn.

As a Nightmare, you have special abilities that activate when other players rolls certain results in dice of your Nightmare color, and on your turn you can either steal power of your color from a player or force a player to roll a die you draw from the bag. If all players become Nightmares, the game immediately ends and the one with the most power points wins.

Lucidity is a compelling dice game with a unique theme. While some of the artwork is a bit dark and gruesome (too scary for young children), it sets a distinct tone for the game. You are faced with many interesting choices; not just when to push your luck and which dice to return to the bag, but also deciding when it is advantageous to actively try to become a Nightmare. Deeply layered and deeply spooky, Lucidity is a unique dice game that brings something fresh to the genre.

Lucidity

Designed by Shannon Kelly

1-4 PLAYERS

20-30 MINS

AGES 14+

\$30 MSRP



LUCK

STRATEGY



INTERACTIVE

INDEPENDENT



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There are some games that make you feel like a kid again, while providing challenges no matter your age. In *Shaky Manor*, you must shake, nudge, and tilt the right items into the right rooms while keeping the unwanted ones out!



Each player is given a manor — a box with eight rooms connected by open doorways. The game also includes several miniature objects: meeples, ghosts, eyes, spiders, snakes, and treasure chests. There are two different modes for playing the game. In the first, each player puts a meeple, a ghost, and three treasure chests into their box, which is then randomly mixed about by the player on their right. A card is then drawn to show the room into which you are trying to move the meeple and the treasure chests. No other object may be in that room with them. Players then race to be the first to accomplish this. You may tilt and shake the box, but cannot touch any of the objects with your hands. The first player to complete the challenge scores a point. An opponent then chooses an object to add to the winner's box to

make the next round more difficult. The first player to five points wins.

In the second game mode, players start the game with a meeple, two ghosts, two eyes, two spiders, two snakes, and three treasure chests in their manor box. A card is then drawn that determines which items you are trying to maneuver into a room alone together, while the top card of the draw pile shows which room you are aiming for. Once again, the game continues to five points. Alternatively, players can decide ahead of time to gather all of the objects *not* shown on the card into the target room.

The various objects each pose their own kind of challenge as you move them through your manor — with long snakes getting stopped by doorways, eyeballs rolling all around, and rubber spiders gripping onto nearby objects. Throw in the racing aspect of the game, and the result is often hilarious as things go wrong, objects zoom in and out of the target room, and your plans quickly go awry.

Shaky Manor offers a lot of silly fun, while the game variants mix things up. It's a great family game, but entertaining for adults as well. You're unlikely to have anything like it in your game collection, and it's perfect for when you want to bring something new to the table.

Shaky Manor

Designed by Asger Harding Granerud, Daniel Skjold Pedersen

2-4 PLAYERS

10 MINS

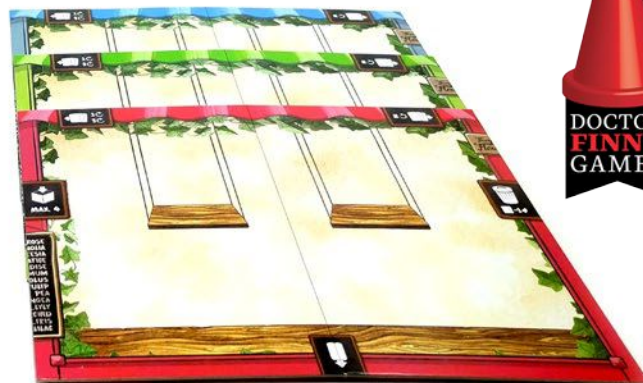
AGES 7+

\$26
MSRP

INTERACTIVE INDEPENDENT



Beautiful bouquets and gorgeous garlands are all in a day's work when you run your very own flower shop!



Each player is the owner of a florist store in the aptly named game, *The Little Flower Shop*. Each of you has your own shop window, which can hold up to eight vases and three flower baskets. The game takes place over three rounds. Each round, players are dealt seven cards. You look at your hand, choose one card to keep, and pass the remaining cards to the player next to you. You continue drafting and passing the rest until you're handed a single card. You may either choose to keep it or spend \$2 to discard it and draw a random card from the deck.

There are several different types of cards. There are flower cards, which contain up to three flowers and come in different varieties. There are vases, each of which needs a specific type and number of flowers to fill it. Each vase can only hold one flower card. If a vase is correctly filled it is worth up to four points. Baskets, when kept, are placed in your hold area. Baskets can be bought for your shop once in your hold area and are worth points at the end of the game. There are also order cards; with these, you can sell a flower card, a vase card, or both (if the flower matches the vase's requirements) to earn money.

You can place up to four cards in your hold area. You can reorganize your cards at any time during the game, which includes moving cards around in your shop window and in your hold area. Flowers can also be moved from one vase to another. If at any time you need to place a fifth card in your hold area, and you cannot or choose not to

reorganize your cards to clear up space, you must place a card in your trash pile. At the end of the game you earn points for the filled vases and baskets in your shop window and the money you have earned, and lose points for every two cards in your trash pile.

Delightfully lovely, and creatively charming, *The Little Flower Shop* is both joyful and relaxing, with a satisfying conclusion as you complete your window display. There is plenty of player interaction, and as your display starts to fill up, card choices become more difficult. The ability to keep rearranging your cards up until the end keeps the game from becoming frustrating and allows everyone to stay in the running, even if you make some bad calls early on.

The Little Flower Shop

Designed by Steve Finn

1-4 PLAYERS	20 MINS	AGES 10+	\$28 MSRP
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LUCK	STRATEGY
INTERACTIVE	INDEPENDENT

Many board games have sent players delving through dungeons, but not many have been able to turn it into a casual experience. Rather Dashing Games has accomplished this in the cooperative board game *Wakening Lair*.



The dungeon consists of twelve room cards placed facedown, with a monstrous terror placed in the twelfth. Each player chooses a hero and puts their token on the dungeon entrance. On a hero's turn, she rolls two dice; the combined number dictates which room card is flipped over and filled with monsters. If you roll a room that has already been flipped, you add an additional monster. The hero then takes up to three actions, which can be a combination of moving through rooms and attacking.

Attacks are simple. Each monster (and hero) has a series of numbers written on them. If you are attacking without weapons, you roll one die. If it matches the number on the far left of the monster's card, you cover it with a damage token. Each monster is vulnerable to a particular type of

damage, and if your hero is using a matching attack, the hero can keep rolling as part of the same action. If you are using items, you can roll up to two additional dice with each attack if you match icons on the item with icons on your character card. Once a monster is defeated, you draw a treasure card. If you ever end your turn in a room with one or more monsters, they will attack you, each rolling one die. If a hero dies, the game ends.

Shuffled into the bottom of the monster deck is the Monstrous Terror Awakens card. When this is drawn, you reveal the monstrous terror. Once awake, at the end of each turn, the monstrous terror advances one room through the dungeon, bringing any monsters it encounters along with it. If it exits the dungeon, the heroes all lose. Each monstrous terror has unique abilities and powerful attacks. The terrors also have a great deal of health and are often hard to hit. Once the monstrous terror is defeated, the players win the game.

There are a lot of little rules to keep track of, and *Wakening Lair* is in need of player aid cards, but it does a great job of taking a dungeon crawling experience and adapting it into something more casual. Each hero (which can be played as either male or female) comes with its own unique abilities, and since you start off with nothing and slowly increase in strength as you gather more items, the feeling is deeply satisfying and rewarding when you finally defeat the lair's monstrous terror.

Wakening Lair

Designed by Mike Richie

2-6 PLAYERS

30-40 MINS

AGES 14+

\$35
MSRP



LUCK

STRATEGY



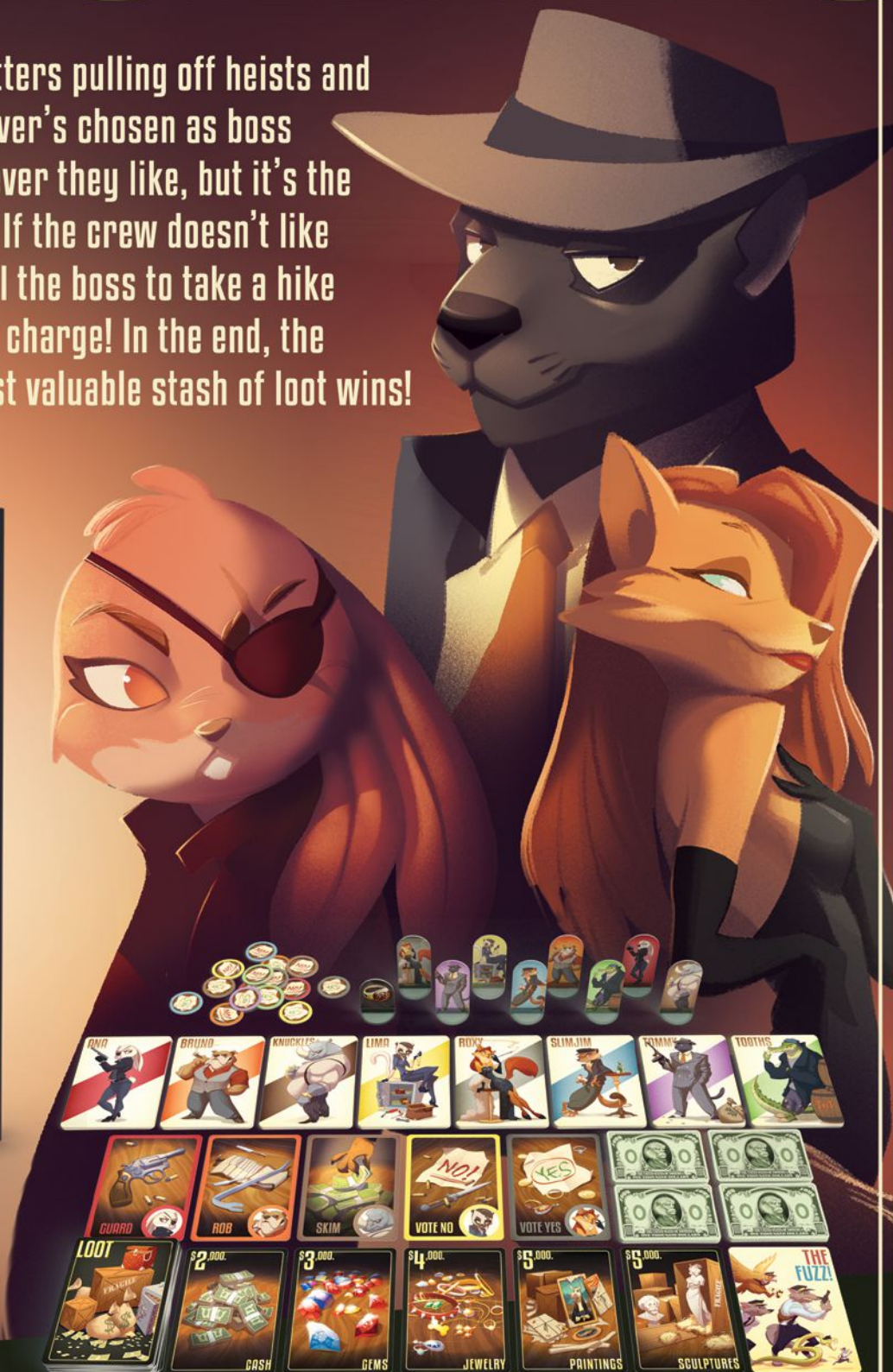
INTERACTIVE

INDEPENDENT



GOODCRITTERS

A game for 4-8 criminal critters pulling off heists and fighting over the loot! Whoever's chosen as boss can distribute the loot however they like, but it's the crew that has the final say. If the crew doesn't like the split, they might just tell the boss to take a hike and put some other mook in charge! In the end, the critter that collects the most valuable stash of loot wins!



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SEPTEMBER

Muse shares certain core mechanics with games such as *Dixit* and *Mysterium* while bringing enough new ideas to the table that it can stand apart on its own.

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GAMES



Players divide into two to three teams. There are two decks: the masterpiece deck, which features richly detailed and gorgeous pictures, and an inspiration deck. When it is your team's turn, one player is chosen to be the Muse. The team on your left then draws six masterpiece cards and two inspiration cards. This team chooses one masterpiece and one inspiration to pass to the Muse.

The Muse looks at both, reveals the inspiration card and the masterpiece is returned to the stack of five other cards, which are then shuffled and revealed.

The inspiration card gives instructions which the Muse must follow to give one clue that will hopefully help his team guess which of the six masterpiece cards is the correct one. For example, the inspiration card's instruction may be to name a nonfictional holiday or a color of the rainbow. If the team guesses correctly, they get to keep the masterpiece card; otherwise the team on their left takes it. The first team to win five cards, wins the game.

It would be nice if there were a few more inspiration cards included, but there's still a nice variety, with some cards having you make sound effects, hum a melody, or draw shapes in the air. Having an opposing team select both the masterpiece and the inspiration card ensures that you will always be up against a challenge – this, together with the inspiration cards, sets *Muse* apart from the rest. 🎲

Muse

Designed by Jordan Sorenson



LUCK

STRATEGY



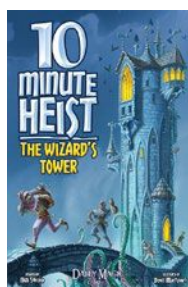
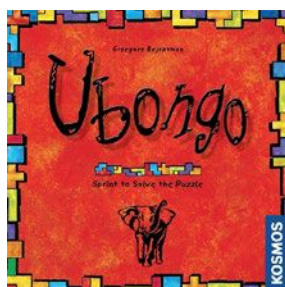
INTERACTIVE

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AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR

Protect the Infinity Stones and Defeat Thanos!

In this cooperative dice battling card game, players will recruit heroes and assemble a team to face off against Thanos and his villainous forces in an effort to thwart him from accomplishing his master plan - collecting all six Infinity Stones to power the Infinity Gauntlet and wreak havoc on the very fabric of reality.



Ages: 10+ | Players: 2-4 | MSRP: \$49.95 | Play Time: 60+ Min

USAopoly

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Your Turn!

A Spotlight on the Gaming Community by



#CGIspotlight

Photo provided by Scott King Photography





What game do you play most often, and why?



“*PitchCar*. It’s the one game I play at almost every convention and have run it consistently for over a decade now.”

—Tom Vasel, The Dice Tower



“We don’t have one because we are always trying something new. Is that good, or bad?”

— Nina Jiron

Photos provided by
Scott King Photography

“It’s a tie: *Splendor* or *Codenames*. Both are quick to pick up and entertaining without much set up or prior instruction.”

— Allie Heeter





*Above: Bruno Cathala vs. Antoine Bauza (the designers of 7 Wonders Duel).
Below: Hanabi deck fanned out. Photos provided by Henk Rolleman.*



“7 Wonders Duel. My wife and I have loved playing 7 Wonders with family and friends and that love carries over to 7 Wonders Duel. Most of our prime board gaming time involves just the two of us, so 7 Wonders Duel is the perfect game, made for two, with all the elements we love from the original plus some great additional mechanics and rules that make us want to just keep playing.”

— Karsten Cutterer

“Because of its simplicity and elegance — and because most players new to our hobby have never seen gameplay like this — Hanabi is the one I break out most often to show to friends.”

— Dan “Shoe” Hsu

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*JOKER
DICE*



*"The upper
tier of dice."
-Vasel*



*"Near statistically
perfect."
-Everett*



*"Simply
beautiful!"
-Lowry*

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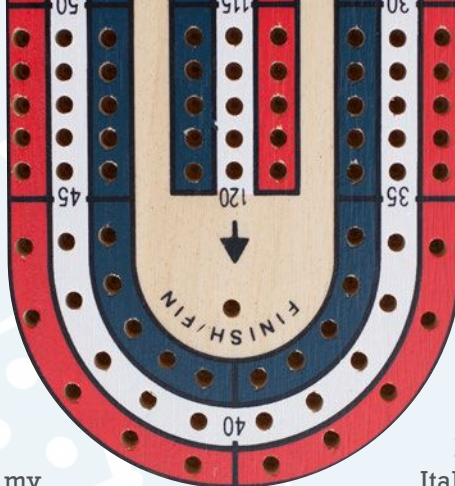
"I'm going to cheat and list two games: *Cribbage* and *Scopa*. As the host of *The Spiel* and the man behind the Major Fun Award, I spend a LOT of time playing new games all across the spectrum — from kids' games and party games all the way up the ladder to heavy strategy games that take hours to play.

And I certainly relish every minute of my time exploring the wonders of modern board and card games. An interesting thing happens, though, when I am left to my own devices.

I return to the classics.

I grew up playing *Cribbage* with my Mom. So there's certainly a nostalgia angle to the question of why I play so much. But nostalgia will only carry a game so far.

— Stephen Conway, *The Spiel* Podcast and Major Fun Awards

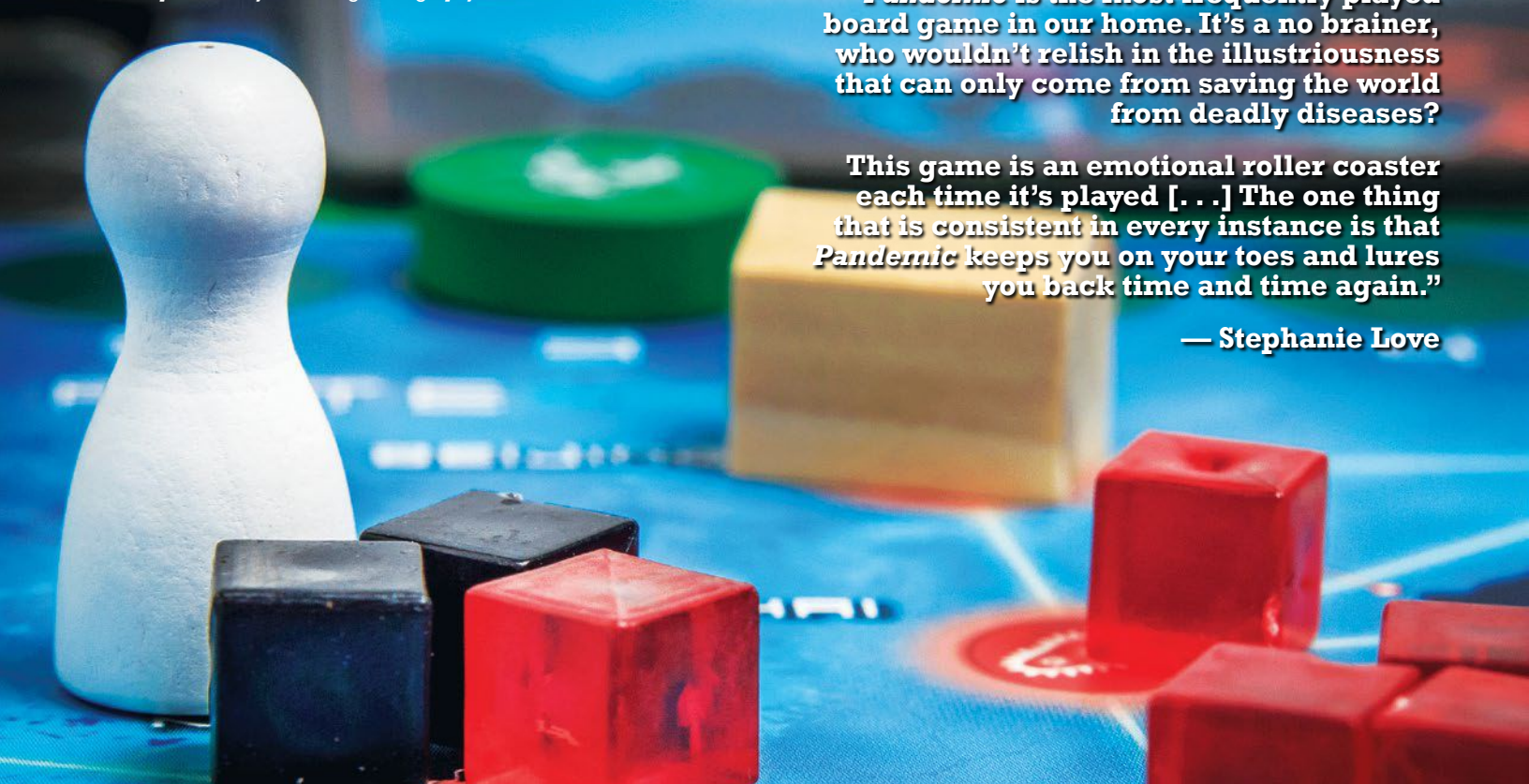


Not only is *Cribbage* a game full of history and great subtle strategy, it's also a game you can play and enjoy while chatting with your opponent as you play. Once you have the basics of the game down, it doesn't consume so much of your attention that you can't enjoy a beer (or a nice cup of tea) and a pleasant conversation while playing. Same goes for *Scopa*, a classic Italian card game I've grown to love over the past 15 years.

Perhaps this is another way to define a casual game? I certainly think it's one that needs more exploration by modern designers. So many of the classic games have this casual aspect which (I think) has helped them stand the test of time. And it's certainly a big reason I play them so often."



Photo provided by Scott King Photography



"*Pandemic* is the most frequently played board game in our home. It's a no brainer, who wouldn't relish in the illustriousness that can only come from saving the world from deadly diseases?"

This game is an emotional roller coaster each time it's played [. . .] The one thing that is consistent in every instance is that *Pandemic* keeps you on your toes and lures you back time and time again."

— Stephanie Love

Next Issue: What game did you hate at first but now love?

Send your ideas and photos to editor@CasualGameRevolution.com and you could be featured!

HAUNT THE HOUSE

JOSH & HELAINA CAPPEL

AT RETAIL
AUGUST 2018

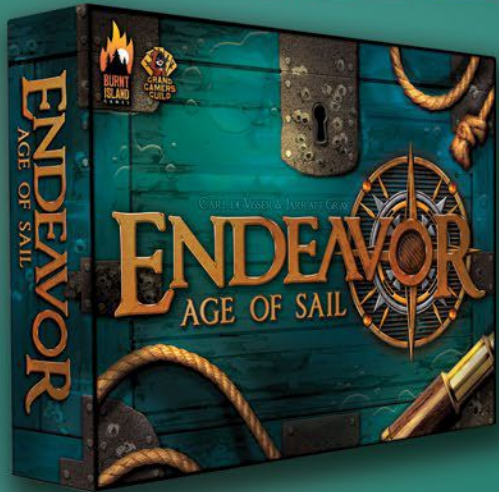


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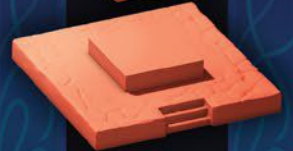
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