



UK GAMES EXPO

2ND TO 4TH JUNE 2023 • NEC, BIRMINGHAM, UK



All About Games
CONSULTING

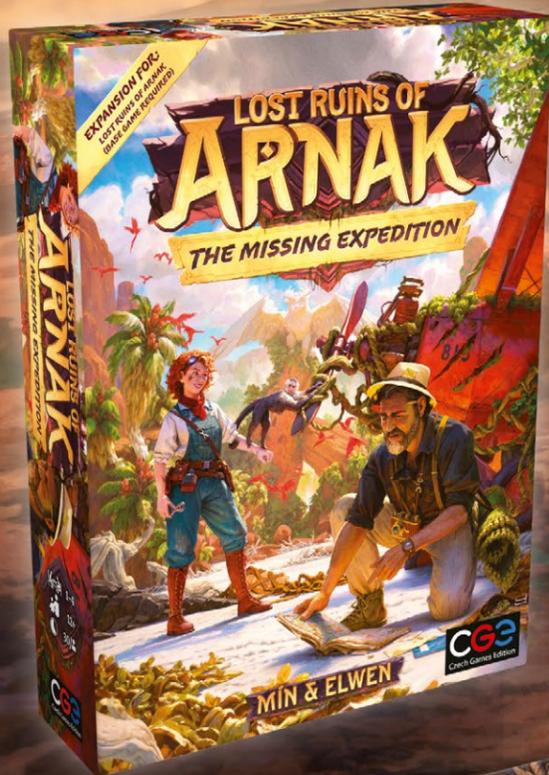
MAJOR SPONSORS



ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



STAND 2-420



OPENING TIMES

TRADE HALLS
 Friday: 9am – 6pm
 Saturday: 9am – 6pm
 Sunday: 9am – 4pm

OPEN GAMING AND TOURNAMENT SPACE IN NEC HALL 3
 Thursday: 7pm – 11pm
 Friday: 9am – Midnight
 Saturday: 9am – Midnight
 Sunday: 9am – 6pm

OPEN GAMING HILTON LIBRARY ROOMS
 Friday: 10am – Midnight
 Saturday: 10am – Midnight
 Sunday: 10am – 5pm

ROLEPLAYING ROOMS IN HILTON HOTEL
 Friday: 9am – Midnight
 Saturday: 9am – Midnight
 Sunday: 9am – 7pm

SEMINARS
 Open during scheduled sessions – see pages 9.

LIVE SHOWS
 Open during scheduled sessions – see page 15.

 **HOW TO GET HELP OR RAISE CONCERNS**
 see pages 6-7

Mention below hashtags at the show on your social media posts and we will reshare the best ones!



#UKGAMES EXPO 2023

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NEW SCENARIOS COMING SOON!

Be among the **first** to experience two new scenarios at **Stand #1-702**



GOOOOAL!

The Catanians have been gripped by Soccer Fever! Lead your team to victory in this new scenario for CATAN®.

EXPLORE HAWAI'I

in this scenario for all fans of CATAN – Seafarers™.



Tony, Richard and the UKGE team welcome you to the 2023 UK Games Expo. Please leave the world behind, relax and enjoy yourself.

UK Games Expo occupies around 40,000 sqm of space. We are expecting over 500 exhibitors, hundreds of tournaments, role playing game, live entertainment, seminars, workshops, cosplay and living history events. If it seems a bit bewildering, we have got you covered.

Before you head into the halls, take a moment to read through the Guide section. Also pick up a copy of the Jolly Thinkers First Timers Guide for top show tips as well as the separate map pack, featuring detailed maps of the NEC Halls and the Hilton Hotel. Now follow us as we describe where you can find all the fun. NEC Hall 1 is one of our two trade halls where you will find represented every type of tabletop game. Left at the entrance there is a help desk and merchandise stand. At the back of the hall is the Panda Game Manufacturing Publisher Designer area featuring playtest areas and a business and press zone. On the right hand side is a shop & drop, where you can leave your purchases.

Hall 2 is our other trade hall. Its help desk is located to the left of the entrance. In the centre of this hall is the Family Zone which consists of the Haba Children's zone, the Blue Orange Let's Play Zone and the Dungeons & Dragons Children's Roleplaying area. Towards the rear you will find our Main Stage and the Cosplay Zone and a Shop and Drop.

Hall 3 houses the ticketing desks and a Food Court at the entrance and a large Open Gaming space, board game Library and Event Desk near the centre. Towards the rear is the tournament zone. Book in at the event desk. The world's largest Bring and Buy occupies much of the right side of the hall. The Tote Suite hosts a Warhammer Laser Tag event. The Piazza Suite is where the seminars and Publisher & Designer track events take place.

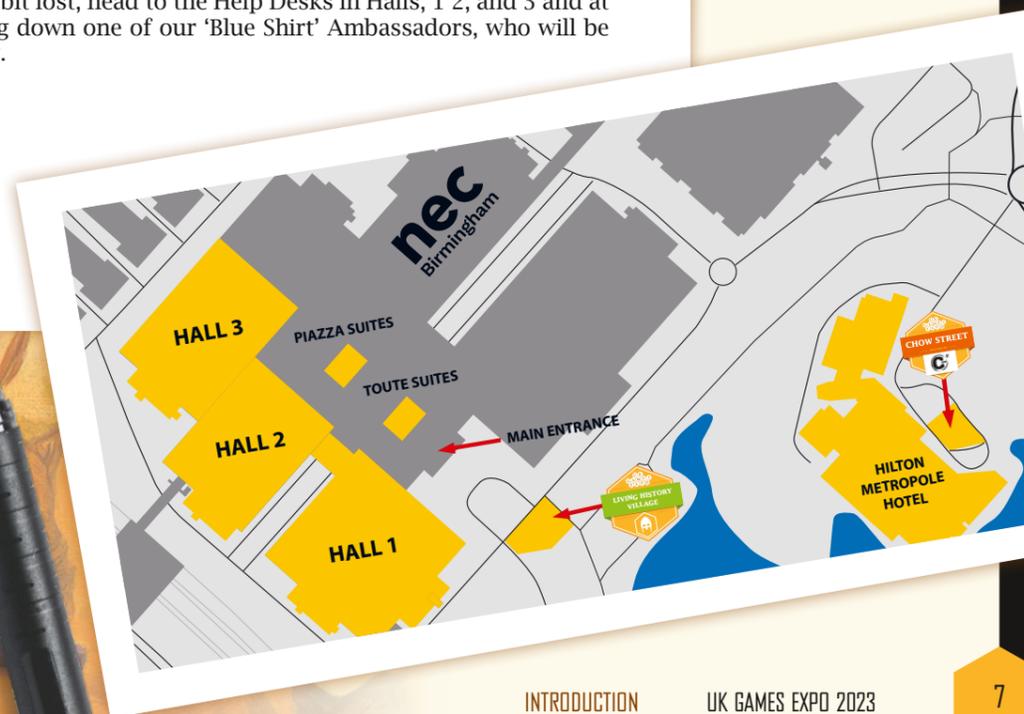
The lakeside area is where you will find the Living History Village.

The Hilton Hotel houses open gaming space, roleplaying games and the majority of the Live Entertainment shows sponsored by Paizo. Pick up tickets at the event desk or buy online. There is a large food court in the carpark.

If you're still feeling a bit lost, head to the Help Desks in Halls, 1 2, and 3 and at the Hilton. Or just flag down one of our 'Blue Shirt' Ambassadors, who will be happy to help you out.

Dive in and have fun.

*Richard Denning
&
Tony Hyams*



NEW TO UK GAMES
EXPO?

THEN PICK UP OUR
FIRST TIMER GUIDE
AT THE ENTRANCE



HALL 2 HELP DESK STAND 2-T45

LOST CHILD POINT

OR ALERT ANY VOLUNTEER OR NEC SECURITY



1-T57
2-T45
3-416
HILTON - LIBRARY

UKGE help desks are located in all three of the main NEC Halls and in the Hilton library. They are manned by UKGE volunteers who will be happy to answer any questions you may have. You can also stop any volunteer who will be wearing a UKGE logo shirt. These are either yellow (general volunteer), Sky Blue (Ambassadors), Green (Team leaders). They will do their best to aid you in anyway they can.

If playing in a tournament or Role Playing Game you can speak to the tournament officials or in Role Playing Games each room has a room captain designated by their tables yellow cloth. If you would like more information then visit the website or use the QR code shortcut for this section.



HALL 3

or a game you have borrowed from the Board Game Library. With over 2500 seats available you are sure to find a place to sit and play. Game Toppers are Open Gaming sponsors and have provided high quality, neoprene table topper game mats to enhance your Open Gaming experience. If you need more players then use one of our 'More Gamers Needed' flags from the Board Game Library, and put it on the table to attract other players. Open Gaming is free to anyone with a UKGE pass, please note that tables cannot be reserved. Hall 3 will be open from 7pm - 11pm on Thursday night, so early arrivals can get a pre-show gaming fix. There won't be a Board Games Library at that time, but you can play any games you've brought with you.

There are two Open Gaming Areas at UKGE. One in Hall3 of the NEC and the second in the Palace and Kings suites of the Hilton Hotel. These areas are available for you to play any games you have with you. This may be a game you have brought from home, a game you have purchased at the show

NEC HALL 3	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	7pm - 11pm	9am - midnight
HILTON HOTEL	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	9am - midnight	9am - 6pm
HILTON HOTEL	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
		10am - midnight
HILTON HOTEL	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	10am - midnight	10am - 5pm

£3	CONDITIONS
	Store in a bag or container
	50cm x 50cm x 50cm
	Collect by close of hall
	Non collected items are donated to charity
Store items at your own risk	

If you find yourself in the position of having too much to carry or want to store your purchases while you play a game or go for food then the "Shop & Drop" is ideal for you. For £3 you can store your purchases in the supplied box which measures 50cmx50cmx50cm. See conditions below.

- All items must be stored in a bag or container (One can be supplied)
- They must fit in a box 50cmx50cmx50cm
- They must be collected by close of trade hall each day (no overnight storage)
- Any items not collected are donated to charity at the end of each day
- While UKGE will endeavour to ensure the security of your goods all items are left at the owners risk.



1-1152
2-880
3-424



2-676

If you're interested in hearing more about what's going on in gaming make sure to head over to the Main Stage which can be found at Stand 2-676. The Main Stage will play host to live interviews and giveaways from the OnTableTop crew throughout the weekend. There is a Cosplay photo opportunity here each day at 12.30 It will also be the location of the annual UK Games Expo Awards Ceremony at 3pm on Sunday, giving you your chance to hear about the best games from 20+ categories.

NEC HALL 3	FRIDAY
	10am - 10pm
	SATURDAY
HILTON HOTEL	10am - 10pm
	SUNDAY
	10am - 4pm
HILTON HOTEL	FRIDAY
	5pm - 11pm
	SATURDAY
HILTON HOTEL	5pm - 11pm

The Board Game Library allows you to borrow a game from our collection of nearly 1000 games to play in the Open Gaming Area. If you want to use the library all you need is a form of id, (bank card, driving licence or other photo id), and a £10 deposit. Go to the Board Game Library, they will issue you with a library card and then you can pick a game to play. This year there are two libraries, one at the NEC in Hall 3 and one at the Hilton Hotel in the Palace Suite.



HALL 3
HILTON



1-1184

Planning to run a Kickstarter campaign? A convention organiser? In the games industry? Then visit Exhibition Services on stand 1-1184 to find out how we can help you.

If you would like to promote your release, kickstarter, brand or anything to our audience then please get in touch. We can offer a range of promotional opportunities to suit your needs and give you that increased visibility.

To get in touch email us at marketing@ukgamesexpo.co.uk

EXHIBIT AT UKGE 2024
CONVENTION SUPPORT
MARKETING YOUR BRAND



The Bring and Buy is a second hand market for your old games. You can bring your old games and we will sell them for you, for cash. You pay a small registration fee for each item and 10% of the sale cost that goes to charity. You receive back the other 90% at the show.

Our Bring and Buy is the largest hobby games Bring and Buy at any UK games convention and we believe in the world. In 2022 Expo donated £18,000 to charity largely from commission taken on sales. The Bring and Buy is located in NEC Hall 3.



3-424



HILTON

If you love adventure, then our roleplaying schedule is right for you. There will be 200+ games running across 8 sessions over 3 days in dozens of systems including the popular big named games as well as Indie systems. Designed so you can just turn up and play there are games for complete beginners and veteran players. Check the description of the game for details. The RPG's take place in the Hilton Hotel. The full schedule is on the website, but you can also head to the Event Desk in the Hilton Palace Suite or in Hall 3 NEC where you can book or ask for advice. Games cost £5 a ticket and last for about 4 hours.



These events are aimed at an audience of artists, writers, designers and publishers and others in the industry and focused around creating, designing, making, and selling games. We have partnered with Panda Game Manufacturing and Playtest UK to bring you a dedicated Publisher & Designer Track, offering playtest tables, game design and marketing seminars, and panels, networking events and opportunities for budding designers to pitch their ideas to publishers.



PIAZZA SUITE



1-384

PLAYTEST

The Playtest Zone is an area specifically designed to allow game designers and members of the public to test new games that are still in the design phase of their production. The gamers get to play new games before they are published, give their input and maybe get a playtesting credit. The designers gain valuable feedback to help them develop their games further.

PLAYTEST UK

Playtest UK is a friendly group of board/card game designers and playtesters that meet regularly in London, Cambridge, Newcastle, Brighton, Cardiff, Leeds, Enfield, Bath, Norwich, Edinburgh, Reading, Birmingham,

Sheffield, Oxford, Bristol, Dundee, Cornwall, Southampton and SE London. (It's free to join and attend.)

PLAYTESTERS

- Just sit down to play new games. There is no charge.
- Give your feedback.
- Prototypes will be in various genres and difficulties; there should be something for everyone to try. No sign-up necessary.
- Playtest feedback forms will be provided on the day on request.

Our Seminars explore and celebrate the fun of gaming and the games industry. For the full schedule see the events pages on the website by scanning the QR code. All these events will take place in the Piazza Suites, comprising the Panda Game Manufacturing Theatre Room (Piazza 5 to 7), The Meeple Workshop Room (Piazza 1 to 2) and the Dice Room (Piazza 3) and Board Room (Piazza 4). These are all located off the same corridor, near NEC Hall 2. Don't forget our Ambassadors are on hand to help you if you get lost - look for the pale blue UKGE shirts.



PIAZZA SUITES

HILTON PAVILLION



CHILDREN'S ROLE PLAYING ZONE

SPONSORED BY



2-850

This annually popular section of the show allows our younger players, (5-12 years), to experience their first chance at the great tabletop gaming genre of Role Playing Games. This year's zone is sponsored by Dungeons and Dragons and features a number of fantasy themed adventures. No previous experience is required and the games are free on a first come first served basis. At an hour long they will fire up your child's imagination as they take their first steps into the world of RPGs.

OUR CHILDREN'S ROLEPLAYING ZONE RUNS GAMES FOR AGES



5-12



MAIN STAGE

SPONSORED BY



COSPLAY PHOTO OPPORTUNITY
DAILY - 12.30PM

COSPLAY PARADE
SATURDAY - 11.30AM

All around UKGE you will encounter characters from movies, TV, anime, comics, and games brought to life by our wandering cosplayers. These are provided by the Galactic Knights, Sons of Skaro, Moose Events and cosplayers from Wyntercon. They will be based in NEC Hall 2, at Stand 2-794. Don't be afraid to ask for a photo with any of them. One of the best opportunities for photos will be at 12:30pm each day at the Main Stage in Hall 2. On Saturday from 11.30 to 12.30 there is a Cosplay parade around all the halls. If you want to join in and come along in costume this is most welcome. However, for the safety of all of us check the online rules particularly around the carrying and display of weapons.



COSPLAY



2-794



CHOW STREET

PROVIDED BY



OUTSIDE HILTON

There are a number of options for grabbing a meal, a snack or a drink. The popular Chow Street food stalls return for 2023 in the open area at the front of the Hilton Metropole hotel. Here you can find a variety of tasty and affordable options including vegan and vegetarian offerings. Inside the NEC, there will be a food court in Hall 3 as well as restaurants in the trade halls. Outside in the Piazza there is a Cornish Bakery, a Starbucks, a Subway and a Wetherspoons. Over at Resort world are some 15 restaurants and cafes.



HABA CHILDREN'S ZONE

This zone is perfect for those families with younger gamers or that may be new to the UK Games Expo. This zone will have a huge range of games that are ideal for younger, inquisitive school based subjects and outcomes.



LET'S PLAY ZONE

Here the whole family can come and relax, surrounded by games that one of our team will be more than happy to teach you. We will have a range of games, from favourites such as Pandemic' to 'Kingdomino'. We will also have a range of themed games in the zone that will include all your favourite heroes and films alongside the amazing range of family and educational games we know you love.

The Family Zone is an area specifically designed for Families with children aged 5 - 15. It consists of two areas, the HABA Children's Zone for younger players and the Blue Orange Let's Play Zone for the older kids. The whole area is run by the Imagination Gaming team who work in schools all over the country. Imagination Gaming will help you and your family explore games you can play together.

HABA has a long history of producing award winning, fun games that are still great for parents to play with them. Blue Orange are a leader in producing games for teens and we are sure you will find something amazing to play.



FAMILY ZONE

SPONSORED BY





HALL 2



LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

SPONSORED BY



TOUTE SUITE

With a range of live shows designed to appeal to our UK Games Expo audience, you can see comedy, really clever things and some pretty daft ones as well as sing-a-longs, daring dos and daring don'ts, all with audience participation as well as a gang of comedians and performers to entertain. Live Events are mostly held at the Pavillion Room in the Hilton Metropole Hotel this year so give yourself 15 minutes to arrive and find a seat.



SOME SHOWS SELL OUT QUICKLY SO BOOK EARLY TO AVOID MISSING OUT!

TICKETS ARE ON SALE AT THE EVENT DESKS IN NEC HALL 3 AND THE HILTON HOTEL

DAILY SCHEDULE

10.30am	Dark Ages Weapons Display and Skirmish
11.30am	Romans and Britons weapons demonstrations
12.30pm	Hrothgar's Saga and Kiddie Vike
1.30 pm	Gladiatorial combat
2.00pm	The Realities of Adventuring/Hnefatafl Competition.
3.00 pm	Main Battle Romans vs Britons or Saxons vs Vikings

Visit the Living History Encampment on the grass between the Hilton Hotel, Pendigo Lake and the NEC to experience life in AD 60, and in Ad 950. In the camps you can find out more about life in the past. In the Arena there will be demonstrations of weapons and battles. The groups include Ardenweard, a Warwickshire based group of Vikings, Regia Anglorum Anglo-Saxons and The Vicus Romans and Ancient Britons. The Encampment is open from 10am till 5pm each day. The full time table is on the website and in the event listings.



LIVING HISTORY VILLAGE



OUTSIDE IN FRONT OF NEC

3D PRINTING FOR TABLETOP GAMING

BY ROBIN ELLIOT



Over the last few years 3D printing has emerged as a game-changing technology that has transformed several industries, including tabletop gaming. With its ability to produce highly detailed and customizable game pieces, miniatures, terrain, and other accessories, 3D printing has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for hobbyists and gamers alike.

In this article, we look at the ways 3D printing is benefiting the tabletop gaming hobby, from enabling greater customization to improving game play. We will also take a closer look at some of the top 3D printing resources and communities for tabletop gamers and offer tips and advice for those looking to get started with this exciting technology. Whether you are a seasoned tabletop gamer or just getting started in the hobby, read on to discover how 3D printing can take your game play to the next level.

WHERE TO BEGIN

Getting started with 3D printing can be a bit intimidating, but with the right approach it can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Here are some tips to consider when getting a 3D printer:

Research and compare

Before making a purchase, take the time to research and compare different 3D printer models. Look at factors like price, build volume, resolution, and user reviews to determine which printer will best meet your needs.

Start small

If you're new to 3D printing it's a good idea to start with a smaller and simpler project to get a feel for the technology. This will help you build confidence and develop your skills before moving on to more complex designs.

Learn the software

Familiarize yourself with the 3D printing software you'll be using to design and slice your models. There are many options available, so choose one that is user-friendly and meets your specific needs.

Consider maintenance

Like any piece of equipment, 3D printers require regular maintenance and cleaning. Consider the amount of time and effort you're willing to put into maintenance when selecting a printer.

Join a community

There are many online communities and forums dedicated to 3D printing where you can connect with other enthusiasts, share designs and tips, and get feedback on your work. Joining a community can be a great way to learn from others and get support as you start your 3D printing journey.

WHAT CAN I PRINT?

There are many things you can 3D print for your tabletop gaming hobby and so much is available from the internet. Miniatures is an obvious place to start! Whether you want to replace your wooden meeples with resin figures or populate your tabletop with monsters and adventurers for your RPG game, 3D printing can augment that gaming experience. Wargamers are finding the rise of 3D printing especially useful as creating large armies can be much cheaper than buying miniatures via retail. Resin printers are excellent at creating miniatures with a high fidelity.

Terrain is an excellent way to quickly bring your adventures to life. There are copious numbers of dungeon tiles, buildings and walls to print. FDM printers are cheap and excellent at pumping out thematic terrain pieces and are a great place for beginners to start.

Game pieces, tokens and dice are especially useful for boardgames and can be highly thematic. Creating your own 3D printed tokens to represent various items in your game, such as potions, coins, and keys, is a great way to add flavour to your boardgames.

Accessories, such as dice towers, card holders, and trays for organizing your game pieces, can make setting up a game a breeze and are a worthwhile investment for that complicated game in your collection.

These are just a few examples of what you can 3D print for your tabletop gaming hobby. The possibilities are endless and you can use your creativity to design and print custom objects that enhance your gaming experience.



RESIN

- + Very detailed
- + Miniature printing
- Messy

FDM

- + Little post-processing
- + Terrain printing
- Fine details get lost

RESIN OR FDM?

There are two main types of 3D printing technologies available for hobbyists: Fused Deposition Modelling (FDM) and Stereolithography (SLA) or Digital Light Processing (DLP) which uses resin. There are pros and cons to both technologies. Resin printing offers higher resolution and can produce extremely detailed miniatures, but it requires more post-processing and can be messy. FDM printing, on the other hand, is less messy and requires less post-processing, but the fidelity of the printing is lower and fine details may be lost. FDM printing is better suited for terrain printing or larger objects where fine detail is not necessary. It's important to choose the right printing technology based on the needs of your project.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The internet is your friend when it comes to finding useful resources. Here are a few :

Thingiverse is a website that allows users to upload and share 3D printable files. There you can find a wide range of 3D printable files for tabletop gaming, including miniatures, terrain, and game pieces.

MyMiniFactory is another website that hosts a large collection of 3D printable files for tabletop gaming. You can find a variety of designs for miniatures, terrain, and accessories.

Patreon offers the chance to support some very talented 3D modelers and designers. You can subscribe to their content for a monthly fee. This can be a great way to get access to high-quality 3D printable files for tabletop gaming.

There are many **YouTube channels** dedicated to 3D printing and tabletop gaming, where you can learn about the process of 3D printing and find tutorials on creating your own designs. These are an excellent resource for the beginner.

Online forums such as Facebook and Reddit are dedicated to tabletop gaming and 3D printing, where you can ask questions and share your own designs and ideas.

TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER

Inevitably, after you have spent time printing some of the many models that are available to download whether free or paid, you may want to take a step forward and learn some 3D modelling software to start creating your very own miniatures, terrain, and game accessories.

Learning to use 3D modelling software can be a great way to take your 3D printing hobby to the next step. While some software packages can be expensive, there are many free options available, such as Tinkercad and Blender. These software packages can be used to design your own custom miniatures, terrain, and game accessories, giving you even more creative control over your tabletop gaming experience.

Of course, learning to use 3D modelling software can be challenging, especially if you're new to the world of 3D printing. However, there are many online tutorials and resources available to help you get started. By following these tutorials and practicing your skills, you can quickly build up your proficiency and create increasingly complex and detailed designs.

Overall, learning to use 3D modelling software can be a rewarding and fulfilling hobby in its own right, and can help you to create truly unique and personalized objects for your tabletop gaming collection. Whether you decide to take the plunge into the exciting and creative world of 3D printing, it is most definitely here to stay!

"Quite simply the best board game cafe around"
@dierolling

"A welcoming and delightful board game
emporium. A genuinely lovely place"
@Trywingames

Find us on social media @thediceboxcafe

Let The Good Times Roll



Become part of the ever growing Dice Box family. With the support of our expert team, you can live out your dream of running your own board game cafe. A bright, relaxed and welcoming space for the whole community. Enjoy good games, great company and amazing food and drink.



Get Your Dream
Rolling Now!

THE
DICE
BOX



Tom Crosbie: The Performing Nerd	Hilton Pavillion	Friday	15:30-16:30pm
	Panda Theatre	Saturday	14:00-15:00pm
The Dark Room	Hilton Pavillion	Friday	21:30-22:30pm
The Dark Room TILL YA DIE!	Hilton Pavillion	Saturday	21:30-23:30pm
The Dark Room for Kids	Hilton Pavillion	Saturday	15:30-16:30pm
The Noise Next Door: Game On	Hilton Pavillion	Friday	14:00-15:00pm
The Noise Next Door Game Night!	Panda Theatre	Saturday	18:30-19:30pm
No Rolls Barred	Hilton Pavillion	Saturday	12:30-13:30pm
Notflix	Hilton Pavillion	Friday	17:00-18:00pm
		Saturday	14:00-15:00pm
Knightmare Live	Hilton Pavillion	Saturday	20:00-21:00pm
Jollyboat	Hilton Pavillion	Friday	20:00-21:00pm
		Saturday	18:30-19:30pm
Questiny	Hilton Pavillion	Friday	18:30-19:30pm
Live Reading of City of Thieves	Hilton Pavillion	Saturday	17:00-18:00pm
Werewolf Live	Panda Theatre	Friday	15:30-16:30pm
		Saturday	17:00-18:00pm
Just One Live with Paul Grogan	Panda Theatre	Saturday	20:00-21:00pm
Breaking Infinity	Cineworld in Resortworld	Saturday	18:30-21:30pm
People who play silly party games	Hilton Pavillion	Sunday	13:00-14:00pm

FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Some shows are highly recommended for a family visiting together. Tom Crosbie: the Performing Nerd and the Noise Next Door, Game on! are suitable for any audience and aimed at families with children from around 8 upwards.

The Dark Room for Kids is a version of The Dark Room suited for older children who might see a 12A movie for example and contains some swearing at times.

All the other shows are aimed at older teens and adults.

DILUVIUM

SAIL TOWARDS NEW ISLANDS
RESTORE THE MIGHT OF YOUR CIVILIZATION!

4X game
in 1 hour

- 🕒 15'
- 👥 1-4
- 👤 10+

PORT ARTHUR

Fight with your fierce fleets
and plant your flag in Port Arthur!

14+ 2 40'

WHERE'S MY MAP?

Don't worry! We've saved you a copy at the entrance. Or simply check out the digital version. Can't find it? Ask one of our volunteers to get you sorted.

HALL 1 OPENING HOURS

TRADE HALL
Friday: 9am - 6pm
Saturday: 9am - 6pm
Sunday: 9am - 4pm

HILTON

OPEN GAMING (HILTON)
Friday: 10am - midnight
Saturday: 10am - midnight
Sunday: 10am - 5pm

HALL 2 OPENING HOURS

TRADE HALL
Friday: 9am - 6pm
Saturday: 9am - 6pm
Sunday: 9am - 4pm

HILTON

ROLEPLAYING (HILTON)
Friday: 9am - midnight
Saturday: 9am - midnight
Sunday: 9am - 7pm

HALL 3 OPENING HOURS

GAMING & TOURNAMENTS
Thursday: 7pm - 11pm
Friday: 9am - 6pm
Saturday: 9am - 6pm
Sunday: 9am - 4pm

OTHER AREAS

LIVE SHOWS
See page 15

SEMINARS
See page 9

LIVING HISTORY VILLAGE
10am - 5pm

RELIVE HISTORY OR CREATE YOUR OWN STORIES AT OUR **BOOTH 1-406**



VYNESTRA®

STAND 2-479

ANCIENT HISTORY MEETS HIGH FANTASY

In This Inclusive D&D 5e and Pathfinder 2nd Edition Compatible World and City Setting

Channing Jones

GALACTIC ERA

UKGE stand: 2-384

"NOT THE USUAL 4X SPACE GAME."

WALTER M. (PLAYTESTER)

galacticera.net

EARTH

A NEW ENGINE BUILDER FOR 1-5 PLAYERS

With a near-infinite number of tableau combinations, discover a world of new synergies and connections with every game!

Simultaneous play - while the active player earns a major benefit, all other players benefit, too.

K Over **10,500** amazing supporters!

AVAILABLE NOW

insideUP GAMES DEMO@BOOTH 2-532

INTO THE WILDS

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2023

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 **Wayland Games**.CO.UK

*PRODUCTS PURCHASABLE AT UKGE 2023 WILL DEPEND ON STOCK AVAILABILITY AND MAY NOT INCLUDE THOSE ADVERTISED.
**TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY, VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE DETAILS.
ONLINE PRODUCT AVAILABILITY IS WHILE STOCKS LAST.



WWW.WAYLANDGAMES.CO.UK

Game Design by Vincent Verhoeven

Illustrations by Diego Sanchez

Armillary Games

at stand 2-1107



ASTRO NAVIGATORS



BACK NOW ON
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THE JOY OF WORKER PLACEMENT

BY ADAM RICHARDS



INTRODUCTION

You don't have to take too many steps down the board game rabbit hole before you hear the term "worker-placement" thrown around. If you've never heard it before, it could sound very industrial and authoritarian, and in some ways, that's exactly what it is. Worker-placement games normally task you with collecting resources and spending those resources to perform different actions or trade them in for fancier resources. Most of the time you do this by placing your little meeple onto a space on the game board, and then getting whatever *stuff* that spot promises you in return.

In essence, you've taken one of your meeples/dice/anthropomorphic hedgehogs and assigned them to a place to do some work. Hence the term worker-placement. Clever, eh? It's widely used in a huge variety of board games and has been for at least the last couple of decades. Worker-placement must be doing something right, but where did it come from, and why is it still so popular today?

If you ask any self-respecting board game nerd where worker-placement first started, you'll get a few common answers. For a lot of people - myself included - their first experience with putting workers on a board was with [Stone Age](#) (Bernd Brunnhofer). It's a beautiful game, and while it's undeniably lightweight, is still one of the best examples of the mechanism in its purest form. [Agricola](#) (Uwe Rosenberg) and [Caylus](#) (William Attia) both came before it, and both are often given as examples of being the first worker-placement game. Neither of these is the true daddy, however, and there's no need for a daytime TV paternity test. The real genesis of worker-placement as we know it happened right at the end of the last millennium, however, with both [Bus](#) (Jeroen Doumen & Joris Wiersinga) and [Keydom](#) (Richard Breese) hitting shelves in 1999. They can fight amongst themselves to decide who was the first.



THEME MATTERS

You might find yourself thinking "I'm a real fan of worker-placement, so I'll enjoy anything with it in". The reality, however, is that worker-placement is just a mechanism, and how much you enjoy it can depend on not only the type of game you're playing, but also the game's setting. Many modern games limit player interaction to just blocking a worker spot and preventing someone else from using it. Playing an older game like [Caylus](#) or [Troyes](#) (Sébastien Dujardin, Xavier Georges, Alain Orban) might come as a bit of a shock if you're new to

the hobby, because of how downright mean they can be. Stealing others' workers or knocking them out of their places might not be your cup of tea, and the same essence of "maybe it's not for everybody" is true for each game's complexity and theme too.

You might like games that aren't too taxing. [Lords of Waterdeep](#) (Peter Lee, Rodney Thompson) is a reasonably light game that's easy to teach and play with your family, while [A Feast For Odin](#) (Uwe Rosenberg) with its 60+ action spaces and multiple routes to victory is enough to leave some people curled in the foetal position, sobbing. Your significant other might hate Sci-Fi with a passion, but love Period dramas, which puts Vital Lacerda's masterpiece [On Mars](#) out on its backside, while holding the door open for the Austen-inspired delectation of [Obsession](#) (Dan Hallagan). Maybe you're of the opinion that cutesy creatures are lame, but time travel is awesome. In which case it's a dismissive buh-bye to [Everdell](#) (James Wilson), and a big "Hello, gorgeous" to [Anachrony](#) (Dávid Turczy, Richard Amann, Viktor Peter).



WHY DO WE LOVE IT?

So we know that worker-placement games cover the full spectrums of complexity and theme. From light to heavy. From dry and industrial to rich and fantastical. But have you ever taken the time to think about why we enjoy them so much? What is it about a worker-placement game that scratches that ludological itch

we have? What is it that tickles our dopamine receptors? This near-universal love for plonking meeples on a board isn't the same for other mechanisms. I know people who can't stand drafting, hidden roles, auctions, and negotiation. Yet 've never heard somebody say they have a strong dislike of worker-placement. Why is that?

I believe the particular enjoyment comes from the idea of ownership. In an area control game, my focus is on the shared board. I might add pieces to it, but it's one-way. I don't necessarily get anything back in return. Bag-builders, in contrast, are very personal, but there's a lot of chance involved which can ruin your plans. In a worker-placement game, however, when the game starts, we all have the same potential. We all have workers. We all have options. But I choose to go to that worker spot. My worker mines those crystals, harvests that wheat, and recruits that butler. My worker takes those things from the central pool and brings them home with them, back to me.

How many times have you played one of these games and heard fellow players - or maybe even yourself - say "My guy is going here, so I get that thing"? Worker-placement is a game mechanism which amplifies player agency. It adds another layer of investment to the actions you take. When things go badly you can (and often will) blame something else - somebody took the spot I wanted, there were fewer florins available than I realised - but when it goes well... hoo boy. The look of sheer delight in your neighbour's

eyes when you *don't* occupy the spot they wanted, is telling. Marvel at the speed they place their meeple in that empty spot, lest you invoke the sacred rite of takesies-backsies.



HERE TO STAY

Worker-placement never rested on its laurels, and the simple 'place a person, gain a thing' formula has been tweaked and tampered with over the years to keep it interesting. [Village](#) (Markus & Inka Brand) has a fantastic mechanism where workers grow old and die, and even then there's competition for plots in the graveyard. [The Manhattan Project](#) (Brandon Tibbetts) lets you place your workers in other players' bases as spies, blocking spaces and using their worker places as your own. [Anachrony](#) sees you borrowing resources from the future, on the proviso that you later have to send them back to your past self.

[Barrage](#) (Tommaso Battista, Simone Luciani) mimics the time it takes for your engineers to do their work by putting them on a wheel, which turns over time, rendering them unemployable until they return. [Euphoria](#) (Jamey Stegmaier, Alan Stone) has dice as workers. The dice values represent their intelligence, in a tongue-in-cheek game where you want to keep your workers stupid and happy. [Targi](#) (Andreas

Steiger) uses a grid of cards instead of a board and rewards you with the goods at the intersections of the rows and columns you claim, in addition to the cards you place your meeples on.

As I write this, 28 of the top 100 games on BGG use worker-placement in them. We're not just talking about old, stalwart games that have their roots so deeply embedded in the hobby that they'll never shift, nor are we just lauding the latest hotness. The full range is represented, from the old-timers like [Caylus](#) and [Le Havre](#) (Uwe Rosenberg), right through to recent hits like [The Lost Ruins of Arnak](#) (Min & Elwen) and [Dune Imperium](#) (Paul Dennen). There's no denying its appeal.

Every game I've mentioned here is brilliant in its own way, and I have no hesitation in suggesting you check them out. If you're new to the hobby, I especially recommend checking out some of the older titles I've talked about. Some may be more simple in their execution, but they might just surprise you with how ruthless and unusual they can be. More recent games have started to blend other mechanisms in, so if you fancy a bit of deck-building along with placing workers, try those too. Keep an open mind and you're bound to find something you love.

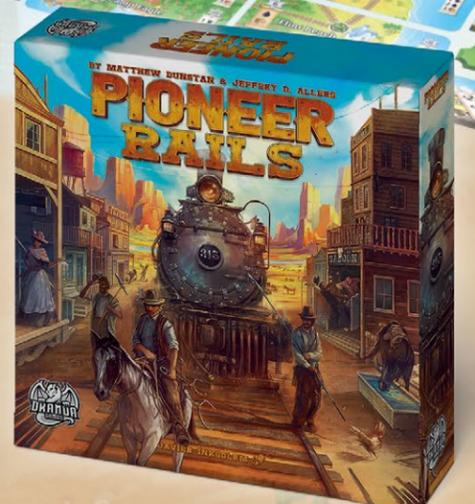
Worker-placement is here to stay. Being your own boss is a lot of fun, it seems.





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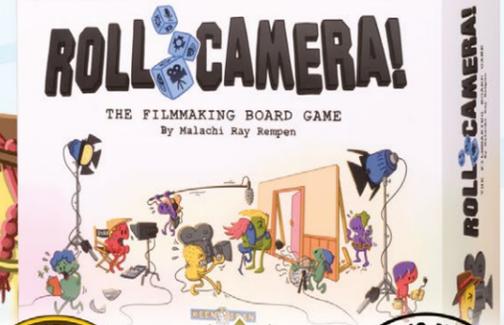
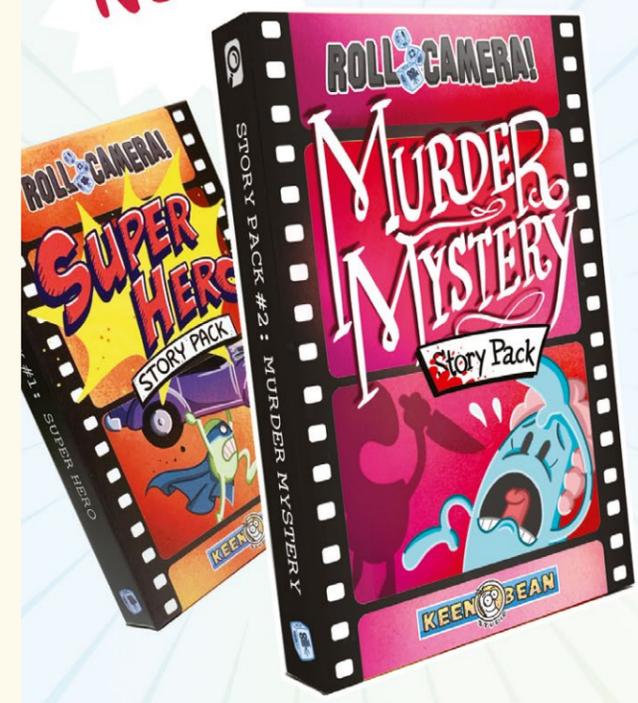
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GROWING UP GYGAX

BY LUKE GYGAX

As the son of Gary Gygax, the co-founder of Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), I am often asked, "what was your childhood like in such an unusual home environment?" I was puzzled as to how to respond to that question at first, as to me it was normal and all that I knew. My earliest memories are of playing games with my father, family members and friends. As I reflected upon this question and thought of conversations I had with thousands of gamers, it became apparent that my experience is unique. I am Patient Zero for tabletop role playing games (RPGs). I was raised on D&D and never knew a time in my life without gaming. I was born in November, 1970 and I am the fifth, and youngest, child of Mary and Gary Gygax. My father published D&D in January, 1974 but he started crafting the game in 1972.



Gary Gygax

My first game of D&D took place in 1975 when I was four years old. Our home on 330 Center Street in Lake Geneva was a cramped three-bedroom affair that housed seven people, my father's tiny writing room and his shoe repair business in the basement. The D&D game was at our battered dining room table. I sat at the table with a group of older players like brother Ernie, Jim Ward, Rob Kuntz, Mark Ratner and Tim Kask. The party of heroes was in a thorp by the name of Hommlett where they heard rumor that evil was taking root. The heroes rested while preparing to explore the ruined moat house nearby. They gathered at the Inn of The Welcome Wench, purchased supplies (you never can have enough 10-foot poles) and sought out men-at-arms. This was a tactic in the early days as D&D is rooted in wargaming. I played one of the hired swords, a local lad named Otis, who was strong but not too bright. What they didn't know was my Dad gave me a secret mission, "You are not just a man-at-arms." He told me, "You are a ranger in service to the Druid of the Wood. You are a special fighter who knows nature well and can track others. I had a secret and special powers. What more could I ask for? We set off towards the moat house and I got to roll dice and have a lot of fun playing. The other players soon discovered Otis was far harder than a normal man-at-arms and he wasn't as dim-witted as he pretended at first. Once the party had proven that they were there to defeat the resurgent evil forces, I revealed my identity and purpose.

I continued playing Otis the Ranger with my father and the assorted designers, artists, friends, and local game enthusiasts who frequented our dining room

table. After we cleared the moat house, Otis decided to join the party and fight for the forces of weal in their struggle against darkness across the Flanaess. I spent the next few years playtesting adventures such as Steading of the Hill Giant Chief, Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl, and Hall of the Fire Giant King. Imagine being a lad and going through those modules jampacked with giant class monsters to slay! I played Otis through the next set of scenarios in that famous series, Descent into the Depths of the Earth, Shrine of the Kuo-Toa, and Vault of the Drow. After successfully concluding them, Otis was a very potent 10th level Ranger Lord and I was about nine years old. Of course, we didn't just play RPGs in the Gygax household, we played all sorts of games together.

My father loved games in general. He had shelves full of games, and books on games on those shelves as well. Dad started his career as a designer by modifying other

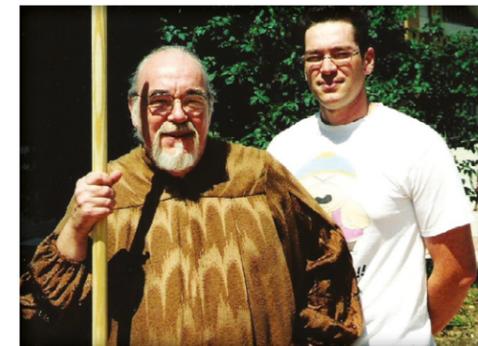
games like Diplomacy variants such as Crusadomancy, Hyperborean Age Diplomacy, and Khanomancy, as well as lots of miniatures rules and a few wargames like Alexander The Great and Little Big Horn. He also loved card games, chess, railroad games and, well, almost any game. We had a family game night for a while where we would all play board, card and tile games. Dad showed me how to play chess, shogi, go, mahjong, poker, cribbage, backgammon, senet, Awful Green Things From Outer Space, Source of the Nile, Chainmail, Operation Overlord, Gettysburg and so on. Games were more than a pastime; they were front and center to my father's livelihood and his hobby. Games and gaming were firmly entrenched in our lifestyle.

I didn't know it at the time, but games help you sharpen your mind and practice skills such as thinking ahead and accounting for variables, managing resources, negotiating with others, persuasion and more. D&D and other RPGs have great influence on their players, and it left an indelible mark on me. My schema for viewing the world was based on D&D mechanics with powerlifters having 18 (00) strength and glib politicians with high charisma reaction adjustments. I still look at leaders and categorize them in the nine-box alignment diagram. Sure, these may be simplistic, but they are a good way for me to quickly understand them. I discovered that others do the same and thus D&D is a Common Tongue for nerds to communicate complex ideas quickly.

One of the things D&D helped me learn was resilience. I loved playing Otis and had done so for about 5 years before disaster struck. I won't go into the details here, but Otis found an ignoble end trapped at the bottom of a deep pit with no way out. I was upset that I lost my first character, I may have even shed a few tears, but I loved spending time with my dad so much that I rolled up another character a few days later. That new character likely has a somewhat more familiar name. Melf was meant to be a throw away character, but I quickly embraced playing this lower level elven fighter/magic-user. I was old enough to read the spells and figure out how to employ them. My siblings were growing up and were not there to play which led to a lot of solo adventuring with my dad through Castle Greyhawk. These adventures are some of my most precious memories of my father.



One thing that irked me as a player was the tactic I saw used over and over in different encounters. Melf would open a dungeon door, roll 1-3 on a d6, and discover orcs, brigands, or other denizens of the Mad Archmage's dungeon along with their leader oft times a spell caster. The "meat shields" would rush forward to engage Melf in combat, and if you remember the old style of play, you had to declare your actions BEFORE rolling initiative. If I decided to cast a spell, lost initiative and was struck for even one point of damage the spell failed and was lost. In the Vancian Magic System, casters had to memorize each spell and note it in advance on their character sheet. If you had one magic missile or sleep spell you didn't want to waste it. The enemy caster had no such problem as I was busy fighting his henchmen. Getting hit with magic missiles or other nasty spells wasn't much fun and I knew I had to come up with a solution. I told my father that I wanted to magically affix a vial of acid to arrows so I could shoot the opposing caster. If I caused even one point of damage for a few rounds they would be neutralized. We spent time going back and forth on the spell's effects and eventually deciding how long it took to research, how much gold it cost and a die roll. Thus we created Melf's Acid Arrow and other spells and magic items over the years.



Upon reflection, I am proud of ten-year-old me for being able to come up with a tactic to overcome the obstacle. These skills served me well, especially in my career as a soldier in the US Army. I got to playtest and help create many ideas with my dad. The bullywug was my idea after playing in the creek in the back yard of our farm. I came to my father with the idea for GW1, The Legion of Gold, after watching cartoons on a Saturday morning. It was great to engage in imaginative play with my dad and have much published in official products. I believe that my experiences with D&D are not that much different than many others at their core. We were learning and honing real world skills unwittingly as we shared hundreds of hours of fun with friends. Many fantastic worlds were created and enjoyed by small groups who formed strong bonds of friendship at the table that last a lifetime, and that is truly magical. Playing D&D bestows benefits

on most, if not all, players. It improved my reading, vocabulary, basic math skills, public speaking and problem-solving. In addition to the individual benefits one gets from playing, the game also provides a sense of community. It seems incredible to me, when I think about it, that what my dad created in our little home on Center Street in the quiet resort town of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin has influenced millions directly and hundreds of millions of people indirectly, if not more.



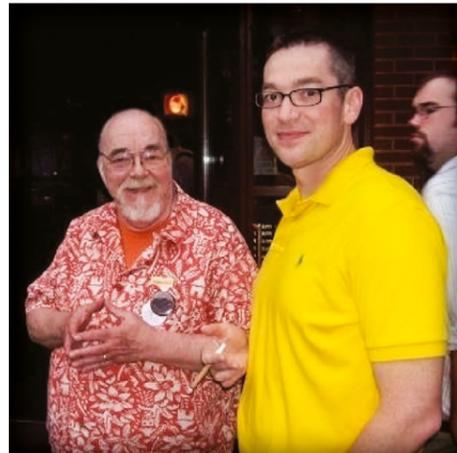
During this gathering, Gary Con Zero as it's now called, people began sharing their stories about how it changed their life for the better and often times saying thank you. At first, I was uncomfortable receiving thanks for something my father did, however in time I realized that since my dad was no longer here, they are telling me, his son. I learned to humbly accept their thanks and listen to their stories. Dungeons & Dragons has the power to influence in ways I had not contemplated. People with learning disabilities told me they saw the artwork on the covers of the AD&D books and it motivated them to overcome the problem. They wanted to read and play this game, and now they are doctors, lawyers or another profession. The introverts had a welcoming place where they could practice social interactions in the guise of a game. It helped many who had traumatic situations as young people not only cope but learn to become empowered, to have agency in their lives. What I was learning anecdotally in the late 2000's is now well-known. D&D is used by many therapists to help people. D&D gives every one of its players some benefits whether it be as simple as an expanded vocabulary, rehearsing skills that will benefit them as they navigate the real world or helping them overcome disabilities or trauma through role-play. What a revolutionary game!

It is the realization my father's widespread influence on popular culture that motivates me to organize Gary Con every year and to extoll the virtues of D&D far and wide. I look forward to traveling across the pond to be a Guest at UK Games Expo. Thank you to Richard Denning, Tony Hyams and the rest of the folks running the show for inviting my family and me. Please stop by and say hello to us at the Gaxx Worx booth sometime during your weekend.

Game On!
-Luke Gygax

I didn't fully realize the impact D&D had on people until much later in life. As an eighteen-year-old, I wanted to have my own identity and not be defined by my father. I joined the military and created my own career and persona separate from gaming. Despite this, I remained close to my father and considered him my best friend and I still consider him my best friend even though he isn't with us anymore. We shared many hours together creating worlds, saving a village or kingdom or even the world. Perhaps it was my closeness to my dad that made it hard for me to see his achievements. Regardless of why, it was not until my dad was no longer here that I began to understand the profound impact D&D had, and continues to have, on so many people.

My eureka moment happened as I wrote my father's eulogy. It was the outpouring of support and sympathy from thousands of people from all walks of life that sparked my realization. People posted their condolences and spoke about how even though they didn't ever meet my father, they felt a sense of loss for the man who gave them the role-playing game genre via Dungeons & Dragons. Several people even said on social media they had decided to spontaneously make a pilgrimage to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, to pay their respects. I didn't want to invite the public to his funeral, however I wanted those who came to pay their respects to have a place to do so in the company of his family, friends and fellow game aficionados. We reserved a hall, played the D&D cartoon, shared food and drink and did what dad loved so much during his life- we played games!



Luke Gygax holding the photo of his late father at Gary Con Zero

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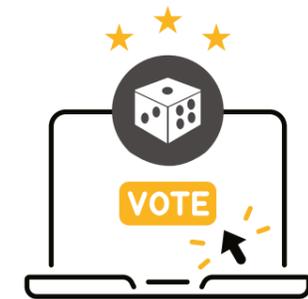
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CULLING YOUR GAMES COLLECTION

BY ROB EDMONDS



Are we board game players or collectors? It's a fine line between both. However, from time to time we need to look at our collection and the multiple shelves they adorn and decide to make way for newer, shinier games.

But how do we decide what goes and what stays?

I recently looked at my 130-strong games collection and prepared to play the culling games.

I started with *that* shelf. Shame, opportunity, call it what you will. It contains games I was excited to play, once upon a time. So what happened? The *cult of the new*, that's what! We watch hours upon hours of creator videos such as The Dice Tower, Rhado Runs Through (he has a LOT to answer for), Watch it Played, and many more. They introduce us to many hot new games, available now or for pre-release and we are like magpies. Adding the next shiny thing to our already bulging nest of shelves, just because we can. I am an adult child with money to burn. Money that wasn't accessible to me when I was a kid.

Where was I? Oh yes, *that* shelf. Be it player counts or time, I just haven't gotten around to playing them. Is it time for them to go? Possibly.

Next are the games I like a lot, but nobody in my immediate gaming groups does. How do they not see the beauty or sheer spectacle of playing these games? Am I really the only person who loves playing them? As much as I have respect for them, they need to go. One of these I have owned twice and was berated by my partner the second time I purchased it. I'm looking at you Flamme Rouge. I adore that game, yet my gaming friends and partner do not!

Since a certain pandemic hit in 2020, my gaming group numbers have dwindled and not bounced back since. It is for that reason that higher player count and party games just don't make it to the table any more.

The culling has begun and so far only six games are in the pile. Those silly little card games I have been gifted over the years by friends and family who know I like games are next. I'm not saying they're not good. Ok, I am. They're awful.

As we are on the subject of gifts, this is a really difficult one. Games gifted to us by loved ones. The ones who know what we like, but they have dulled over a few plays. We hold onto them out of affection and respect for the partner, family members and friends who gifted them. With enough reasoning, *your gift will still bring me joy when I buy a new game with the money*, I'll get away with culling those. Plus, if I do it secretly they'll never know.

Finally, it's the turn of the big hitters. The past number ones on our list of favourite games we have played to death but haven't hit the table in the last 18 months. There's a nostalgia there.

They appear and disappear from the pile. In the end, I come to terms that I'll make new memories and renewed nostalgia with newer games.

It has been a rollercoaster, but I now have 20 games on the culling pile. My target was 30. It was 22 games at one point, but I snuck those 2 games back onto the shelf.

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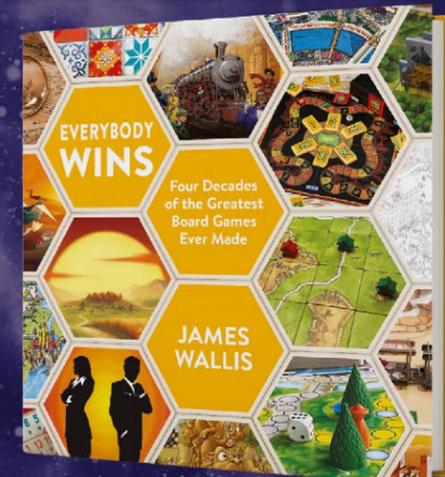
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Natural selection

If you recall your last visit to a friendly local game store, it's likely that you were met with an abundance of beautifully presented nature-themed games staring back at you from the shelves. Why then, like bees to a honeypot, are we being increasingly drawn towards physical board and card games which represent the natural world around us? Many within the industry have proclaimed that board games are more popular than ever, with the terms 'Board Game Renaissance' and 'Golden Age of Board Games' being bandied about for some time now. Market experts back this theory up with industry researchers Technavio predicting that the global market for board games is expected to increase by a further 7.31% by the year 2026.

Newcomers to the hobby are often indoctrinated by means of 'gateway' games. These are games that are typically light in complexity, are relatively quick to play and have a somewhat universal appeal in terms of artwork and theme. Here is where we can identify the first attractor of nature-themed games — they have a tendency to play instinctively. No matter the age, gender, or experience level, a player intuitively knows what they should be doing in a game which represents nature in some form. Games which feature animals and the environment are incredibly accessible too, particularly so for younger audiences, for whom we know how important the role of play is in their development.

One perpetuating stereotype that has likely dissuaded many from delving too deeply into the hobby of gaming for the first time, is that games all too frequently focus on conflict, with the objective being to defeat or eliminate opposing players in order to

win. Sadly, as humans we are no stranger to conflict, and that goes some way to explaining why we have traditionally role-played direct conflict and war in the games that we play. The game of Chess sits amongst the most historically iconic games of all time, and can be traced as far back as the 7th century. Chess directly represents two conflicting factions who are at war with one another. Conflict is taken yet further still in the sub-genre of gaming referred to as Historical Wargaming, in which conflict is represented even more authentically, with players re-enacting actual battles that were fought in which thousands fought until their death.

More recently in the history of gaming, modern Eurogames arrived on the scene in the 1960's. Eurogames are described as a genre of games in which players are typically encouraged to collect and build, rather than directly interact with opponents. Many attribute the birth of Eurogames with the release of the game *Acquire* by publisher 3M. As its name suggests, the objective of *Acquire* is to accumulate more resources than anyone else, instead of attacking and defeating other players. Collecting and building are objectives that align well with nature-themed games, hence another reason why many Eurogames of today are themed around them. The activity of collecting and building is fun, and many modern Eurogames encourage you to build and develop an engine which generates ever-increasing returns as the game reaches its climax. Because Eurogames are so heavily focused on accumulating resources, they often include lots of tactile components such as wooden meeples, which can further reinforce natural themes.

For those who don't particularly enjoy conflict or the thought of winning a game by attacking another player, Eurogames themed around the natural world clearly offer a distinctly different experience. If we take a look at the incredibly popular game; *Wingspan*, by Stonemaier Games, which was released in 2019, there is no doubt that, the until now, under-represented theme

A growing theme

of ornithology has contributed greatly towards its appeal and subsequent commercial success. The heart of the gameplay in *Wingspan* is focused on collecting cards which depict beautifully illustrated birds. The birds look magnificent and so players have a natural incentive to collect more of them. In order to collect more of them and place them on their personal habitat board, which type of resource might you imagine players have to pay - bird food of course! And when these birds are in their habitat, what do they do? Why, they lay eggs, which is exactly what one would expect birds to do!

'The experience' cuts right to the heart of what games offer us, and animals and nature can very easily evoke feelings within us. In the game *Parks*, by Keymaster Games released in 2019, players hike across trail tiles, they can fill their canteen, take photos and rest at campfires. As with *Wingspan*, *Parks* is beautifully illustrated and the simple act of revealing new location cards at the end of each season feels like a reward in and of itself. Carefully stained wooden components cut to the shape of eagles, wolves, rain drops and mountain tops feel delightful to touch and are instantly recognisable as the resource that they represent. Within a well-designed game which represents the natural world, theme, physical components and game mechanics all coalesce to stimulate a deep feeling of immersion.

There is so much scope with themes representing the natural world that there's room to subvert genres. Many will be familiar with the game of *Risk*, first published in 1959. *Risk* is a game in which players unashamedly defeat their opponents by means of colonisation and military expansion. Fast forward to 2017 and the hugely popular game of *Spirit Island* by Greater Than Games has a much more palatable and contemporary take on territory control. *Spirit Island* asks players to co-operatively defend the nature-loving indigenous inhabitants of an island against colonising invaders; who could possibly fail to get behind that notion?!

Another recent and highly prevalent Eurogame from 2021; *Ark Nova*, from Capstone Games invites players to manage a zoo. Much of the game revolves around collecting animals that are then added to the zoo, as you might imagine, but the zoo being built is a contemporary one. You can fund conservation projects, further scientific research, and can even be awarded with points for releasing animals back into the wild. These games are sympathetic to modern sensibilities, and again, promote greater inclusivity.

Our increasing awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us has also almost certainly contributed towards the rise in popularity of games which feature natural themes. In the real world, we now acknowledge the fact that nature can help us to reduce stress and alleviate symptoms of depression; nature essentially makes us feel good, and we do love to feel good! So, in summary; we enjoy nature-themed games because they are experiential, we play them because they are intuitive, we are drawn to them because they have universal appeal and are often beautifully produced, and we return to them because they make us feel great. I think therefore, that we can safely conclude that nature-based and environmentally themed games are well and truly here to stay. And so, for contemporary game designers who've been left to feel a bit empty and uninspired by the thought of repeatedly recycling fantasy and sci-fi tropes, inspiration can be found within the boundless abundance of unexplored space offered up by the natural world; for as we well know, nature abhors a vacuum.

BY DAN BURT
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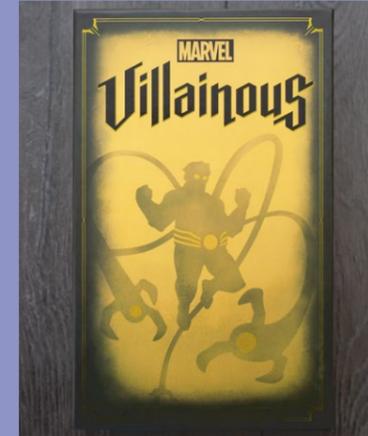


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WHY ROLEPLAY?

Roleplaying games have become a ubiquitous part of our society, but there is still some mystique surrounding them. How do you participate in a game that is played in the collective imaginations of the group?

Hands up who slew a dragon during lockdown? Or perhaps it was an ogre or a minotaur? Are there any vampire hunters out there? These questions are not as strange as they might at first appear. Roleplaying games have boomed in recent years, especially during the Covid lockdowns.

The roleplaying hobby came about in 1974, with the release of 'Dungeons & Dragons: Rules for Fantastic Medieval Wargames Campaigns Playable with Paper and Pencil and Miniature Figures.' Gary Gygax's and Dave Arneson's Dungeons & Dragons was derived from the miniature wargaming hobby, shifting the focus from squads of soldiers to a single person, and set in a fantasy world inspired by J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings.

Dungeons & Dragons, otherwise known as D&D, is the best-known roleplaying game. However, there are thousands of roleplaying games on offer, in every genre imaginable. These vary from the science-fiction space opera of Coriolis: The Third Horizon and science-fantasy of Shadowrun, to the orientalist-fantasy of Legend of the Five Rings and games of personal horror in the World of Darkness series.

WHAT?

Roleplaying games are typically played by three or more people gathered around a table. One is the game master, who is responsible for running the game and spinning the tale. That said, roleplaying games are centred around collaborative storytelling and shared creativity. Just as the game master defines the setting and antagonists, the players dictate the characters' actions.

Players have an almost infinite choice when choosing their characters. The character's background, such as species and career, is of course dependent upon the setting. For example, you are unlikely to find Klingons in Dungeons & Dragons. However, the character's personality and appearance are entirely based upon the player's choice.

Roleplaying can be likened to being a character in a book, film or television series, except that each player takes on the role of a different character

and decides how they will act. The classic Fighting Fantasy books are similar to roleplaying games. The main difference is that players have far more choice in roleplaying games.

In many ways, roleplaying games can be likened to the ancient tradition of telling stories around the fire. Roleplaying may seem like a new phenomenon, but it is actually an ancestral artform. Children have been playing games of Let's Pretend for centuries.

WHY?

Roleplaying games are for everyone, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability and appearance. The only requirement is an active imagination. Roleplaying games were once demonised by conservative and fundamentalist groups in the eighties, which saw the games banned and players ostracised. But now, thanks to a positive media portrayal, as well as fantasy and science fiction becoming popular, most people now realise it is harmless and enjoyable.

However, roleplaying is more than that: it can be incredibly beneficial. Gaming is an inherently social activity that enables people to build friendships, even in difficult times.

When the Covid lockdown came into effect, people were forced to stay at home. It would be fair to say that the isolation was hard for almost everybody.

With players unable to meet in person, they turned to virtual tabletops. These are online platforms that allow people to play roleplaying games over the internet, usually in conjunction with video conferencing tools. However, it was not just existing players who were playing online, but new ones too, intrigued by the social interaction that the hobby offered.



Interest in roleplaying games had been gradually growing, but spiked for two months during the height of the lockdown. D&D was even trending on Google during March and April 2020, coinciding with the first lockdown. People were wanting to play roleplaying games like never before.

The reason for this is that roleplaying games are a tool for enabling conversation, thereby allowing people to connect with their friends. Unlike Zoom calls, roleplaying games provide a platform for driving conversation. It is for this reason that roleplaying games are now being used in therapy; educating people in how to become more confident and socially capable.

The memories of events in roleplaying games inhabit the same space in our minds as those that happened in real life. Players know and understand that it is fictional, but the sense of accomplishment creates positive experiences, building confidence.

Since roleplaying provides a platform for limitless creativity, it can enable LGBTQ+ people to experiment with how they view themselves, their sexuality and their gender. Essentially, the liminal space created by roleplaying games can be used as a safe space for self-discovery.

HOW?

Whilst there are incredibly detailed maps available, at its core roleplaying is a hobby played in the shared imagination of the players. All that is needed are a rulebook, dice, pens and paper. This low barrier to entry makes roleplaying games an easy hobby within which to become immersed. There are also reasonably priced starter sets, such as those for Cyberpunk Red or Alien: The Roleplaying Game, which come with everything

needed to play a few sessions.

Ironically, the biggest hurdle is the time needed to learn the rules of a new game system, as rulebooks are commonly 300-page tomes. This can be off-putting to the unsuspecting, or those who already have busy lives. That said, there is rarely a need to read every page. It is not always necessary for players to read the background sections and some sections may be for game masters only. Focusing on the character creation, skill resolution and combat systems should provide the reader with everything they need to start playing.

Games based on an existing franchise, such as the Star Wars or Lord of the Rings roleplaying games, offer new players a setting that they are already familiar with, removing the need to learn background lore as well as a new system. There are also a multitude of podcasts and YouTube videos about roleplaying games, which enable potential players to gain an understanding of different games. These can range from reviews and overviews of background lore, to recordings of liveplays, such as Critical Role and LA By Night.

Starting roleplaying can be an overwhelming experience for some new players, especially if they are unfamiliar with the hobby. Playing with friends and family members who already roleplay can alleviate some of this trepidation.

There are also hundreds of gaming clubs and game stores throughout the UK, with every city having at least one, as well as the majority of towns having them. These provide ideal venues and can be a fantastic opportunity for new players wanting to experience roleplaying for the first time, but not knowing where to start.

Roleplaying might seem ludicrous at first, due to players describing actions in an imagined setting and there not necessarily being a gameboard, but in this regard it is no different to freeform amateur dramatics or improvised theatre.

Roleplaying games are a fun, occasionally frivolous, but ultimately rewarding hobby. Hopefully you will consider giving roleplaying games a chance. So, who fancies going on an adventure to slay a dragon?

BY PETER RAY ALLISON

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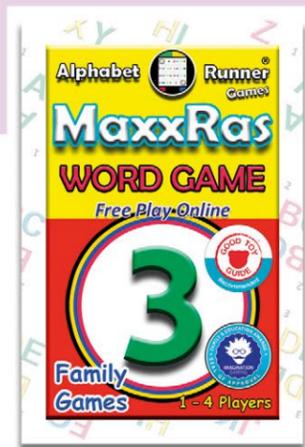
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This is me



I was a good sportsman, but struggled to read and write at school. Because I couldn't read particularly well, I struggled to understand maths questions, but I could do the maths. This made me quite nervous and anxious turning up to these lessons and the only tools in the tool kit I had was my grandads baccy tin, with words in it to help me learn the basics. Not the best and yes, you guessed correctly I had to resit my exams, but I never gave up trying to learn!

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KITCHEN TABLE CONFLICT

BY GRAYDE BOWEN

The traditional miniatures game involved rows of beautifully painted models stretched over a serious expanse of table real estate. For those who do not have regular access to the space required to achieve this; the solution has been scaled down to the kitchen table. The rules books and miniature based board games that go down this route assume a table size from 60cm to 90cm square, 90 by 120cm at a push. Naturally few kitchen tables fit within these ideal sizes but with the possible aid of some overhanging boards these dimensions are achievable without filling the entire room and still leaving space to move around. As a last resort a section of floor space can be cordoned off with a relatively low chance of foot related injuries or breakages. Smaller footprint games are also attractive to shops who can run more gaming tables, attract more customers and promote sales.

The kitchen table solution might only require 10 or 20 character models interacting within the game. There is, however, one space related problem. The models are going to need somewhere to hide. Otherwise any game will drop to a basic 'firstest with the mostest' race-like exercise. Worse still the concept of elevation comes into play. Models can climb up, drop down, find more places to hide. The few miniatures that need to move around the playing field might fit in a small box but the houses, walls and other obstacles the game relies on will need a lot more storage space. The easy way out is to ignore any elevations and use floor plans such as those used in role play and boxed games. Another solution is to use anything to hand, tin cans, breakfast cereal boxes, books. Long ago a set of space combat rules used books laid out as rooms with the spaces between them as corridors. Models could move along the corridors but not enter the rooms for a tight game of cat and mouse ostensibly within a space ship. Home-made terrain is a good option to those with the skills. Also toys can often be re-purposed as static terrain or moveable models.

Many models can be used for several sets of rules if they follow some sort of theme. Having a good set of a single interpretation will be better than several smaller collections. An adobe village could work from the distant past to far future including a sci-fi or fantasy setting. Gamers are not unlike film studios. They have blown the budget on the cast, have little left over for the set and give no thought to the plot. There will need to be some trade-off between the exact shape and size of a building and its utility. Some terrain solutions consist of corridors, walkways and towers in a jumbled layout. Their true purpose is to provide options for moving up, down, hiding and dashing from cover to cover without needing to disassemble half the table whenever a model moves.

After the models and table dressings the rules should come as a final decision because these are most easily and cheaply changed. Most sets can be easily re-purposed into periods beyond their original setting. The base concepts of moving, throwing and dodging remain unchanged. An exception being situations that break the laws of physics; such as the far future or magical realms. Games Workshop recently produced 4 different big box games of Sci-Fi skirmish battles. Necromunda, Shadow War Armageddon, Kill Team and Kill Team (sic). Although the rules of each are different the models could swap out between these and many other games. Many buyers pick these up for the parts as it is substantially cheaper than buying the same bits one at a time. Necromunda and Shadow War

Armageddon were loosely based on the Warhammer 40K rules of the time. Games Workshop later heavily re-wrote 40K making it much simpler. This put Shadow War out of step and it was dropped. Kill Team was initially released with a system of rolling multiple consecutive dice to cause any damage. In many cases a lot of rolling was involved with no overall result. Not unreasonable as if you are hit it is probably going to hurt. The later re-working of Kill Team had the utility of models gradually decrease as they suffered injury. This gave the gamers more sense that the continual die rolling was actually doing something.

We do not want to glorify war, people really do get hurt and killed in battle and making a game out of it does not cause that issue to go away. No player is going to be genuinely hurt if playing a tabletop game although their wallet may suffer and it is best to avoid treading on the more 'spikey' models. Still conflict does not need to imply warfare as we know it. Keeping to a film, book or television setting maintains an 'outside reality' sense of disbelief. Games Workshop built up their own game worlds. Cross platform franchises such as Star Wars, Star Trek and Lord of the Rings will attract gamers together with fans of the genre and (almost) everyone will be satisfied that the setting is not real. A game need not necessarily involve the permanent destruction of models. In a super hero setting the defeated villain will re-appear in the town asylum or gaol from which they inevitably escape. There will, however, need to be some means to at least block or distract opposing miniatures or the game will devolve to a race to be the first to complete some task.

Keeping with objectives; a good plot makes a good game. The simplest solution tends to be a case of defeating the opposition's models before they get you. A common variant is to have an objective system. These will work as points to capture and hold or items to be picked up and dropped within the game. The objectives might represent individuals that can move independently of the players. This can be a problem if their actions are completely random as they might benefit one side at the expense of others. Other game ideas include racing off the table or preventing other players from doing the same. There may be some timer or outside influence affecting how the game plays out such as 'The Doctor' solving some problem before the authorities turn up. Often despite all this planning a game turns on one side disabling all the other's models then walking over to pick up the pieces.

Amongst the available rules solutions several are available in a workable format as free downloads. Pulp Alley relies quite heavily on cards to determine activations and game events. The free version includes all the cards and rules for enough casts to get a game going. 7TV from Crooked Dice has the full set of rules available as a free download with statistics for a limited selection of models. The 'One Page Rules' website includes free rules similar but much simpler than Games Workshop's Age of Sigmar and 40K with related army lists. The core rules of the official versions of these systems are also available for free from Games Workshop. The full Star Wars Legion rules are a free download and the required troop and scenario details can be sourced from the TableTop Admiral army builder. With most downloadable solutions some additional surfing is almost certainly required to work out what the various model bits do and how best to make the most use of them.

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FROM DESIGN TO PLAY: THE MAKING OF BOARD GAMES

Board games have been a popular pastime for centuries, bringing together friends and family for hours of fun and friendly competition. However, have you ever stopped to wonder how these games are made? From the artwork and design to the selection of materials and production processes, there is a lot that goes into creating a board game that is both engaging and durable.

ARTWORK

Artwork is a crucial aspect of making a board game, as it is often what first catches a potential player's eye. When creating artwork for a board game, it is important to consider the theme and aesthetic of the game. The artwork should be visually appealing and help to convey the game's story or setting.

Once the artwork has been created digitally, it needs to be converted into printing plates. This involves separating the image into four different colours: Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Key (black). Each colour is printed separately onto the final product using the printing plates. This process is known as CMYK printing and is the industry standard for printing in full colour.

The printing plates used for board games are unique to each individual artwork. While they can be reused for future print runs, any changes to the artwork will require a new set of plates to be made. This means that it is important to carefully review the artwork before sending it to the factory for production. Any changes made after the printing plates have been created will result in additional costs and delays in production.

CARD BASED COMPONENTS

When it comes to card-based components in a board game, such as playing cards, boxes, and boards, selecting the right material is essential. The thickness of boxes and boards will depend on the requirements set out by the publishers, while playing cards have a range of options when it comes to thickness, surface coating, and core.

The core is an additional layer of card in the middle of the playing card, which prevents light from passing through and stops cheating! The thickness of the core and the surface coating can affect the durability and feel of the cards.

Once the right materials have been selected, the card-based components are run through a printer to add the necessary designs and graphics. After printing, the components are coated in a plastic layer which is baked on a high temperature to provide protection against wear and tear during gameplay.

The printed sheets are stacked and aligned before being fed into a cutting machine. For sheets of playing cards, multiple cards are cut from a single sheet, then all the cards are collected together and stacked into a deck. At this point, the cards have sharp corners, so they are put through a rounding machine that cuts the corners into a more rounded shape. This helps to prevent the cards from getting bent or damaged during gameplay.

Once the cards have been cut and rounded, the decks are shrink-wrapped to keep them securely packaged during transport and storage, and also ensures that the deck remains a complete set.

BOXES

The first step in creating a box for a board game is to construct a blank cardboard box. This involves cutting a piece of plain cardboard to the correct size and shape, folding the sides, and sealing them together. The resulting box is a simple, unadorned container.

Once the blank box has been constructed, a printed and cut piece of card with the exterior design of the box is prepared. This piece of card has an adhesive applied to the blank side, and it is then stuck to the assembled blank box.

After the exterior design has been applied, the box may undergo additional finishing touches to improve its appearance and functionality. This may include adding a glossy or matte finish, embossing or debossing certain areas of the design, or applying a special coating to protect the box from damage.

PUNCH BOARD TOKENS

Punch Board tokens are used in many board games to represent various items or resources, such as money, gems, or other game elements. These tokens are typically made from a thick paperboard material and are designed to be punched out from a larger sheet.

Once the sheets have been printed with the artwork, a custom die will need to be made for cutting around the pieces. The die will be used to stamp out each individual token from the sheet of paperboard, ensuring that each token is precisely cut to the correct size and shape.

After the tokens have been punched out, they are collected and inspected for quality, checking for any defects or imperfections in the printing or cutting process, such as misaligned designs or rough edges.

WOODEN COMPONENTS

Wooden components, like meeples, are a popular choice for board game pieces due to their durability and tactile feel.

Meeples are usually made by shaping a rod or dowel of wood into a single long meeple, which is then cut into individual pieces. The shaping process may involve using a lathe or similar tool to carve the wood into the desired shape, such as a person, animal, vehicle and more!

Once the individual meeples have been cut, they are sanded down to remove any rough edges or splinters. They are then painted and allowed to dry before a protective coating is applied. Sometimes games provide stickers instead of painting on the design.

The protective coating applied to wooden components can vary depending on the manufacturer, but it is typically a clear varnish or lacquer that helps to protect the wood from scratches, scuffs, and other forms of damage, and give the meeples a polished and professional look.

DICE

Dice are an essential component of many board games, providing an element of chance and excitement to gameplay. While they may seem simple on the surface, creating high-quality dice that are both accurate and visually pleasing can be a complex process.

Most dice are made from coloured plastic which is injected into a mould and allowed to harden. The mould creates recessed areas for the design of the dice faces.

Once the dice have been moulded, the recessed parts of the face are typically painted with a contrasting colour to make them easier to read during gameplay. This involves applying a thin layer of paint to the recessed areas, which is then wiped or ground away from the raised areas of the dice, leaving behind a clear contrast between the two. Finally, the dice are polished to give them a smooth and shiny finish.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS 1,2 mm

Moisture content is a critical factor to consider when manufacturing board game components, especially wooden pieces. If the moisture content of the wood is too high or too low, it can lead to warping, cracking, or other types of damage to the finished product.

In some cases, components may need to be dried or conditioned to ensure that they have the correct moisture content using kilns or dehumidifiers, which can help to remove excess moisture from the wood or add moisture if it is too dry.

In addition to this, manufacturers may also consider other factors when producing board game components, such as the weight, thickness, and durability of the materials used. They may also take into account the intended use of the game, as well as any safety or regulatory requirements that must be met. For example, a dexterity game for young children may need to be particularly durable and have components no smaller than a certain size.

By carefully considering these factors and taking steps to ensure the quality and consistency of their products, manufacturers can create board game components that are both functional, aesthetically pleasing and safe, while also meeting the needs and expectations of their customers.

So the next time you open a new board game, take a good look at all the parts that make the game and how they came to be.

CHECKLIST

- Beautiful artwork
- Card Design
- Box Design
- Punch Board Sheet
- Wooden components
- Dice
- Other considerations

BY GINO T BRANCAZIO



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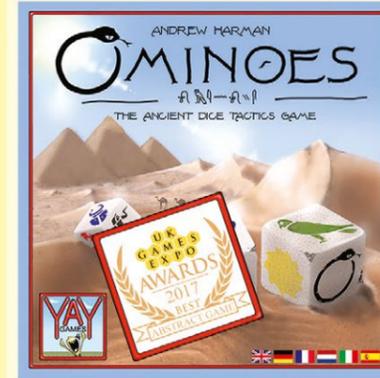
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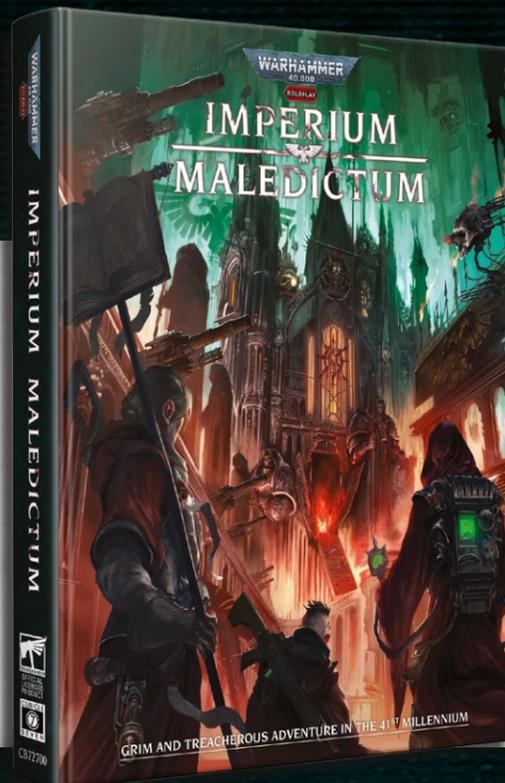


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