

UKGE

P R O G R A M M E



2025

THE NEC
BIRMINGHAM
ENGLAND



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"OCEAN: 3. NO WAIT! DON'T SAY SHARK... DON'T SAY SHARK..."
- CARDBOARD QUEST

CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF UNFORGETTABLE CLUES

CODENAMES



OPENING TIMES

TRADE HALLS

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

OPEN GAMING AND TOURNAMENT

SPACE IN NEC HALL 4

Thursday: 6pm – 11pm
Friday: 9am – Midnight
Saturday: 9am – Midnight
Sunday: 9am – 6pm

OPEN GAMING HILTON

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 19.

LIVE SHOWS

Open during scheduled sessions –
see page 16 & 17.



Please go to one of our Help
Desks, see page 6

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



#UKGAMESEXPO

#UKGE2025

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All About Games
CONSULTING

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND
(AND BIGGER THAN EVER)

GUESS THE WEIGHT
WIN THE GAMES!

ENTER THE COMPETITION FOR **FREE** ON BOOTH #3A-102



WHERE ARE THE MAPS?
Don't forget to pick up a
Map Pack at the entrance.

WELCOME

Tony, Richard, and the UKGE team extend a warm welcome as they celebrate the 2025 UK Games Expo at our largest show yet.

Spanning an impressive 50,000 sqm and two sites, the UK Games Expo boasts over 700 exhibitors, featuring a plethora of tournaments, role-playing games, and live entertainment. Whether you're into seminars, workshops, cosplay, or living history events, there's something for everyone to enjoy. And fret not if it all seems overwhelming; we've got you covered.

Before you venture into the bustling halls, take a moment to peruse the guide section of this programme for invaluable tips. Don't forget to pick up the map pack, detailing the layout of the NEC Halls and the Hilton Metropole Hotel.

Let's embark on a journey to uncover all the excitement.

NEC Hall 2 welcomes you with a help desk and merchandise stand. Venture further to discover the Panda Game Manufacturing Press and Business Zone, as well as the convenient Travelling Man Shop & Drop for your purchases.

The Family Zone also awaits here, with delights like the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG Children's Zone, Blue Orange Let's Play Zone and the Monte Cook Children's Roleplaying area. The Family Zone is run by Imagination Gaming, who have

trained demonstrators on hand to help kids of all ages! Catch the On Tabletop team at the Main Stage and immerse yourself in the creativity of the Cosplay Zone. Shop & Drop is also available in Hall 2.

In Halls 2, 3, 3a and 4 we have 700 exhibitors in 32,000 sqm of trade space showing game of all sorts for you to demo and, if you like, buy.

NEC Hall 4 beckons with Open Gaming, the Awards area, Paint & Take, Sir Coates Painting Masters Competition, Pile 'O' Games, and the bustling Tournament area. Secure your spot on the website.

In Hall 1 you can explore the World's largest games Bring and Buy and grab a bargain.

Venture to the lakeside area for a journey through the Living History Village, where the past comes alive.

At the Hilton Metropole Hotel, indulge in open gaming spaces, thrilling role-playing games, and captivating live entertainment shows. Hungry? Visit Chow Street, the food court located in the Hilton car park.

Feeling a bit lost? Seek assistance at the Help Desks in Halls 2, 3, 3a and 4 or approach one of our friendly 'Blue Shirt' Ambassadors for guidance.

RICHARD DENNING & TONY HYAMS



HELP DESK

SCAN FOR INFO

LOCATION
NEC Hall 2 2-T47
NEC Hall 3 3-B24
NEC Hall 3 3A-T26
NEC Hall 4 BGL (FFA)
Hilton Library

UKGE help desks are located in all four 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 yellow (general volunteer), Sky Blue (Ambassadors), Green (Team leaders). They will do their

best to aid you in any way they can. If playing in a tournament game, you can speak to the tournament officials or in Role Playing Games each room has a room captain designated by their table's yellow cloth. If you would like more information, then visit the website or use the QR code short-cut for this section.



EXHIBITION SERVICES

SCAN FOR INFO

LOCATION
NEC Hall 3 3-B24

Are you interested in exhibiting at UKGE 2026? Do you need to talk about convention support? Would you like to discuss marketing opportunities? If so, then please visit Exhibition Services on stand 3-B24 to find out how we can help you.

To get in touch about marketing and collaborations then email us at marketing@ukgamesexpo.co.uk.



EVENT DESK

SCAN FOR INFO

LOCATION
Hilton Hotel

Fancy recreating battles from long ago? Perhaps adventuring in a dungeon or exploring the galaxy? Maybe you want to sit back and enjoy a live show or hear industry experts talk about the latest news? Perhaps you fancy seeing a Viking battle or some silly games being played by influencers. Our schedule features hundreds of events. Generally, seminars,

podcasts and talks are free and open to all. Tournaments and roleplaying games and some workshops are ticketed and have an entry fee. The event description will make this clear. To find out more about each type of event read the sections below, ask a volunteer or else go to the Event desk in the Hilton or check in on a help desk.



There are two Open Gaming Areas at UKGE. One in Hall 4 of the NEC and the second in the Palace, Pavilion and Balmoral 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 or a game you have borrowed from the Board Game Library. With over 3500 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. Open Gaming is free to anyone with a UKGE pass, please note that tables cannot be reserved. Hall 4 will be open from 6pm - 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.

Hall 4 also contains the Social Games Zone in blocks NN, RR, SS and TT, with circles for Social Deduction Games like Werewolf and Blood on the Clocktower. Just grab a circle and some friends and work out who is the werewolf.

NEC HALL 4	
Thursday:	6pm-11pm
Friday:	9am-midnight
Saturday:	9am-midnight
Sunday:	9am-6pm
HILTON HOTEL	
Friday:	10am-midnight
Saturday:	10am-midnight
Sunday:	10am-5pm



SCAN FOR INFO

LOCATION
NEC Hall 4
Hilton Hotel
Hilton Hotel
Hilton Hotel
Palace Suite
Pavilion Suite
Balmoral Suite

OPEN GAMING

SOCIAL GAMES ZONE

GIANT GAMES

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.

NEC HALL 4	
Friday:	10am-10pm
Saturday:	10am-10pm
Sunday:	10am-4pm
HILTON HOTEL	
Friday:	5pm-11pm
Saturday:	5pm-11pm



BOARD GAME LIBRARY

LOCATION
NEC Hall 4
Location FF
Hilton Hotel
Palace Suite

SCAN FOR INFO



LOCATION
Outside in Front
of NEC

Visit the Living History Encampment on the grass between the Hilton Hotel, Pendigo Lake and the NEC to experience life in AD 60 and 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

Daily Schedule

10.30am	Dark Ages Weapons Display and Skirmish
11.30am	Romans and Britons weapons demonstrations Only Saturday & Sunday
12.30pm	Hrothgar's Saga and Kiddie Vike
1.30 pm	Gladiatorial combat Only Saturday & Sunday
2.00pm	The Realities of Adventuring
3.30 pm	Main Battle

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.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 2
2-596

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, Who Zone and cosplayers from Wyntercon. They will be based in NEC Hall 2, at Stand 2-596 but will be

wandering the whole show. Don't be afraid to ask for a photo with any of them. 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.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 4 4-X

Practice your lightsaber skills and feel the force flow through you in this live action lightsaber duel area.



The Family Zone is an area specifically designed for families with children aged 5-15. It consists of two areas, the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG 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 with schools all over the country. Imagination Gaming will help you and your family explore games you can play together.



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 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.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 2



LOCATION
NEC Hall 2 2-536



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 minds including school based subjects.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 2 2-436





This annually popular section of the show allows our younger players (aged 5-12), to experience their first chance at the great tabletop gaming genre of Role Playing Games. This year's zone is sponsored by Monte Cook 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.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 2 2-648



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" sponsored by Travelling Man is ideal for you. For £3 you can store your purchases in the supplied box which measures 50cmx50cmx50cm. See conditions below.

of each day

- While UKGE will endeavour to ensure the security of your goods all items are left at the owner's risk.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 1 1-B
NEC Hall 2 2-299
NEC Hall 3 3-B10

- 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



The Traveling Man sponsored 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 2024, UK Games Expo donated £18000 to charity, largely from commission taken on sales. The Bring & Buy is located in NEC Hall 1.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 1 1-B

The Paint and Take Hall 4-E (run by Trans Atlantis Games) is an area where you can sit down and paint a miniature

masterpiece or maybe get some tips and ideas on starting out with figure painting.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 4 4-E



The Pin Collective is a brand-new initiative for UKGE 2025, celebrating the growing world of enamel pin collecting within tabletop gaming.

from this year's Expo, the Pin Collective is a fun and engaging way to explore the event, meet new people, and take home something truly special.

Designed exclusively for UK Games Expo, the Pin Collective offers attendees the chance to discover, collect, and trade unique enamel pins created especially for the event. Each participating exhibitor has designed their own exclusive pin, which are available only from their stand across the show weekend.

Start your collection. Find your favourites. Join the Pin Collective.



Whether you're an avid pin collector or simply looking for a memorable keepsake



LOCATION
NEC Hall 4 4-Z
See the Map Pack for all this year's locations



UKGE 2025 will see the introduction of a brand new charity auction in Hall 4.

Pile 'O' Games Feature Zone (4-F) is where you can purchase a raffle ticket and potentially win a massive pile of games!

Tickets are £1 per ticket or 5 for £4. All monies received will go to our two expo charities, SUDC and the Williams Montessori School Foundation.

The draw for the winning ticket will take place at the Hall 4 Stage (4-Y) at the following times:

- 17:30 Friday
- 17:30 Saturday
- 16:30 Sunday



LOCATION
NEC Hall 4 4-F



HAVE YOUR SAY



EVERY PERSON WHO VOTES WILL BE ENTERED INTO A DRAW TO WIN SOME OF THE AWARD WINNING GAMES!

The UK Games Expo People's Choice Awards recognise and celebrate quality and excellence in new games and products in the tabletop marketplace. All submitted games are rated by a panel of expert judges chosen by UKGE. These judges select Judge's Award winners in 19 different categories of game, with the winning entries then going on to form the shortlists for the four categories of People's Choice Award. You can then vote for your favourite game in each short-list, with the winner of each category receiving a coveted People's Choice Award.

THERE ARE FOUR CATEGORIES TO VOTE IN WITH EVERY SHORT-LISTED ENTRY A WINNER OF A JUDGES CHOICE AWARD.

WHY VOTE?

- Help your favourite games get exposure and reach new audiences.
- Shape the future of gaming by making audience preferences known.
- Be in with a chance to win award-winning games*

AND THE CATEGORIES ARE...



HOW TO VOTE

It's simple - you can vote online or at the show, from 09:00 on Friday until 12:00 on Sunday.

Simply scan the QR code to vote in our web-app using your UK Games Expo account. Or vote at the show using our handy interactive screens in the awards space at NEC Hall 4, section K.



VOTE AND BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING

Every verified individual who votes in the UK Games Expo Awards 2025 will be in with a chance to win a selection of games featured at the awards. All you have to do is vote!

ATTEND THE AWARDS

Come to the main stage in Hall 2 at 3pm on Sunday 1st June to find out who the winners are at the award ceremony

* Subject to terms and conditions. Over 18s only. Only one entry per person. Winner is randomly selected by computer and will be notified via email. No purchase necessary. See: <https://www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk/terms-policies/> for more information.



LOCATION
Outside Hilton Hotel

There are a number of options for grabbing a meal, a snack or a drink. The popular Chow Street food stalls return for 2025 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 4 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 Resorts World are some 15 restaurants and cafés.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 2
2-108

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 is a friendly group of board/card game designers and playtesters that meet regularly in many UK cities.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 2
NEC Piazza Suite

These events are aimed at an audience of artists, writers, publishers, designers 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, panels, networking

events and opportunities for budding designers to pitch their ideas to publishers. Please also visit the Panda Game Manufacturing Press & Business Zone in Hall 2 (1-102) where Media, Press, Publishers and Designers can meet. They can conduct interviews, pitch designs and discuss upcoming plans. There is no charge to use but tables are unreserved.



GAMES IN EDUCATION

BY LIZ CABLE



You know that boardgames are brilliant. You're already sold. You're here at the biggest boardgame convention in the UK and you're taking time out to read an article about games in education. You need no persuading. However, you may want to persuade others. You may be wanting some support to setup a boardgame club at your kid's school, or in your workplace, or find an alternative to the death-by-introduction next time you do team building or a training session. If like me you are an educator, you might be wanting to see how you can use table-top games to support learning and bring something different to your classroom. Perhaps you're grappling with the biggest question of all: How can boardgames change the world?

Since Covid, as a university lecturer, I have noticed an increase in the decline of students' social skills that started with the rise of the smartphone. My colleagues across the country agree that a fear of group work, of discussion and of presenting is noticeably prevalent in our current cohorts of students. Meanwhile one of the top reasons students give for dropping out of university is a lack of friends, or sheer loneliness. The rise of AI has meant a move away from easily plagiarised assessment formats such as essays and reports, making room for new types of assignment. The instant gratification of smartphone apps has teachers focussing on how to capture and maintain the interest of learners. The latter issue is further exacerbated by a lack of cultural touchpoints – not just between the learner and teacher who will always be a generation or two apart, but between the students themselves. As teenagers have greater autonomy to discover and follow their own interests, as well as access to all the specialist content in the world, there is much less of a shared cultural experience between them, if any. It's getting harder to find the common interests and experiences which would provide some elements of cohesion even amongst students meeting for the first time. It's getting harder to build community. Many course leaders still trust in getting-to-know-you activities that can induce such horror that participants leave and never return. Hands up who doesn't cringe when someone suggests an icebreaker?

At this year's UK Games Expo Leeds Trinity University is sponsoring the first ever Academic Track to bring together boardgame & TTRPG designers, teachers, academics,

students, researchers and parents to scope out these issues, and begin a conversation about how analogue games can help. We want to explore what ideas, projects and partnerships can be formed going forward.

From a game designer's point of view, access to academic research can inspire, inform, or even transform the nature of a game – perhaps improving playability, extending the audience and adding buzz that increases earning potential. Research funds can also pay for development and dissemination. For this to happen, we needed game designers to come forward and become involved and included in research bids and grant proposals. There's a history of making educational games by re-skinning Monopoly or Trivial Pursuit, whilst the current crop of co-operative games, mega games, social games, social deduction games, folk games and more provide so many better options.

HOW CAN BOARDGAMES CHANGE THE WORLD?

I'm currently working on several serious games or game-based learning projects for all stages and ages: "Breakout!" a table-top escape game about immunology for primary school students (who doesn't love a game about poo and tapeworms?); "100 Citizens" – inspired by TTRPGs and megagames where we're using real world data to create character cards that can be used in settings from health care to policing, as well as for interprofessional education; similarly "Born in Bradford" – a research programme about what keeps families healthy and happy – is being turned into a game-show boardgame created by university students that's aimed at an audience of high-schoolers. "A Day in the Life" is a megagame about a community at imminent risk of flooding, designed with the generous help of the UK megagaming community, and "D & D & Philosophy" is a one-shot created by an undergraduate to teach higher order thinking skills,

as well as introduce fundamental ideas of Philosophy. All of these will be free to print and play in some way as part of the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement. I also have high hopes that Jubensha – a style of scripted murder mystery from China - might prove a useful assessment format, given the exam-style questions at the end to determine the scores!

There are a lot of other playful and game-based projects on the go, and many more in the planning stages, but how do you find out about them? How do you find out what projects are upcoming, and what research bodies are putting money into that might result in a game-based output? Colleagues at the Playful Learning Association are just starting to put together the Playful Collaboration Database, a compendium of OER games and playful activities for adult learners, which will be freely accessible to all online. This is just one of the projects featured alongside 20 or so others for you to play with and learn about during the academic track on Sunday, and on the Games in Education stand.

We'll also be asking how can we use table-top games to

- Build community?
- Teach and encourage learning, especially social and higher order thinking skills?
- Share research in accessible ways?
- Provide authentic educational experiences and assessment?
- Solve wicked problems?
- Work towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals? and save the world?

If you're interested in the answers to some of these questions, and keen to investigate some free game-based and Open Educational Resources come along and join us on Sunday 10 'til 2 – you'll need to book a free ticket on the website (scan the QR code for more details). We're also on the "Games in Education" stand in Hall 2 (2-113), which is at the back of the playtest area if you'd like to drop by for a chat at any time over the weekend.

If you are reading this programme after the event look for #GamesinEdu25, the UKGE hashtags or find me on socials.

Happy gaming.



For tickets please go to Event Desk in the Hilton Library, or see the UK Games Expo website. You will also need a valid UKGE entry ticket to attend these events. Tickets are subject to availability.



SHUT UP & SIT DOWN
- LIVE AND DANGEROUS

Shut Up & Sit Down are back and they're doing something on a stage, that hasn't yet been determined exactly!



Friday 12:30 - 13:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

OFF WITH YOUR HEAD

Can you save the kingdom from the curse? Find out in this interactive comedy game-show.



Friday 13:00 - 14:00
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre
Saturday 16:00 - 17:00
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre

THE DARK ROOM

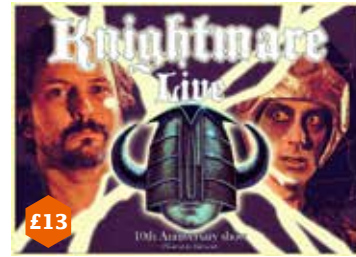
You awake to find yourself in a dark room! And you'll be here til ya die!



Friday £13 21:30 - 22:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite
Saturday £17 21:00 - 23:59
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

KNIGHTMARE LIVE

Light the beacons! Rouse the villagers! Gather all your courage... for the smash hit comedy show is back!



Friday 20:00 - 21:00
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite
Saturday 18:00 - 19:00
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre

NO ROLLS BARRED PLAYS
GIANT WAVELENGTH

Think you would be on the same wavelength as a bunch of silly comedians?



Saturday 12:00 - 13:00
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

NO ROLLS BARRED PLAYS
GIANT TELESTRATIONS

Come and see a bunch of comedians drawing and guessing extremely poorly.



Friday 14:00 - 15:00
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

WEREWOLF: LIVE

A chaotic, adrenaline-fuelled hour of desperate defence, hilarious accusations and unparalleled mob justice.



Friday 14:30 - 15:30
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre
Saturday 16:30 - 17:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

HOW TO REMEMBER
(ALMOST) ANYTHING

A combination of Tom Crosbie's signature collection of useless skills, and a talk on improving your memory.



Friday 15:30 - 16:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite
Saturday 13:30 - 14:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

QUESTINY

Unleash your inner bard or barbarian, and prepare for an hour of epic laughs and unforgettable adventures!



Saturday 15:00 - 16:00
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

BLOOD ON THE
CLOCKTOWER: LIVE

Whether you're a Clockers expert or new to the game, there's guaranteed laughter and nonsense aplenty.



Saturday 19:30 - 20:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

ROLL BRITANNIA -
YOUR ADVENTURE AWAITS

Have your say in how this unique adventure unfolds in an improvised D&D oneshot!



Saturday 20:30 - 21:30
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre

JULIETTE BURTON
- GOING ROGUE

Get going with a geek girl living her best nerd life. Join her on a journey from cosplay to confidence.



Friday 16:00 - 17:00
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre

Saturday 19:00 - 20:00
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre

THE MAGIC OF
TERRY PRATCHETT

Join author and comedian Marc Burrows on a journey through the life and work of Sir Terry Pratchett.



Friday 17:00 - 18:00
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

Saturday 17:30 - 18:30
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre

JOLLYBOAT

Cult hit Jollyboat play their geeky, pun-packed comedy songs!



Friday 18:30 - 19:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

Saturday 14:30 - 15:30
NEC Piazza 5 - Meeple Theatre

SHUT UP & SIT DOWN'S
CARDBOARD COURTROOM

Returning with our world-renowned formula of getting you to tell us things about your lives and then literally judging you.



Sunday 10:30 - 11:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

NO ROLLS BARRED PLAYS
'HUGE' AND CUES

Come and show off your colour knowledge with the comedians from No Rolls Barred.



Sunday 12:00 - 13:00
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

JOHN ROBERTSON PLAYS
WITH THE AUDIENCE

A rare scripted stand-up set from Mr John Robertson, best known for his joyous obscenity and geeky ranting.



Sunday 13:30 - 14:30
Hilton Hotel - Sandringham Suite

SEMINARS



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 in the NEC concourse, these are all located off the same corridor, near NEC Hall 2, and on Stage B in Hall 4.

Don't forget our Ambassadors are on hand to help you if you get lost – look out for pale blue UKGE shirts.



SEMINARS

PLAYING IN THE BOMB'S SHADOW	Friday 11:00am – 12:00pm	NEC Piazza 1 Panda Room
HOW TO NOT SUCK AT D&D	Friday 11:30am – 12:30pm	NEC Hall 4 Stage B
HOW A GM CAN CHOOSE TO ENJOY IMPROV TOO	Friday 12:30pm – 13:30pm	NEC Piazza 1 Panda Room
IS IT REALLY GREEN? ECO-DILEMMAS IN GAMES	Friday 15:30pm – 16:30pm	NEC Piazza 1 Panda Room
A SEAT AT THE TABLE: WOMEN IN TTRPGS	Saturday 10:00am – 11:00am	NEC Piazza 5 Meeple Theatre
IS TABLETOP GAMING GOOD FOR YOU?	Saturday 11:00am – 11:30am	NEC Piazza 1 Panda Room
WRITING FOR ADVENTURE	Saturday 11:00am – 12:00pm	NEC Hall 4 Stage B
MINING BRITISH FOLKLORE FOR TTRPGS	Saturday 12:00pm – 13:00pm	NEC Hall 4 Stage B
PLAY GIANT RINGS IN THINGS WITH THE DESIGNER!	Sunday 11:00am – 12:00pm	NEC Hall 4 Stage B
THE HIDDEN SUPERPOWER OF TABLETOP RPGS	Sunday 11:00am – 12:00pm	NEC Piazza 3 Board Room
BEYOND CARDS: MASTERING THE TCG MENTAL GAME	Sunday 13:00pm – 14:00pm	NEC Piazza 5 Meeple Theatre
PLAYING SOLO	Sunday 13:00pm – 14:00pm	NEC Piazza 5 Meeple Theatre

PODCASTS

POLYHEDRON COLLIDER CAST LIVE	Friday 10:30am – 11:30am	NEC Piazza Suite 4 – Dice Room
WHOSE TURN IS IT ANYWAY LIVE!!!	Friday 12:00pm – 13:00pm	NEC Piazza Suite 4 – Dice Room
MORRUS' UNOFFICIAL TABLETOP RPG TALK	Friday 14:00pm – 16:00pm	NEC Piazza Suite 4 – Dice Room
DUMMIES & DRAGONS – THE D&D QUIZ SHOW	Saturday 12:30 – 13:30pm	NEC Hall 4 – Stage B
A GAME OF ONE'S OWN LIVE – HAUNTING	Sunday 13:00pm – 15:00pm	NEC Piazza Suite 3 – Board Room

WORKSHOPS

ORGANISER KNOWLEDGE SHARE	Saturday 16:00pm – 17:30pm	NEC Piazza Suite 1 – Panda Room
MAGIC: THE GATHERING – THE ECHOHACK!	Saturday 18:30pm – 21:30pm	NEC Piazza Suite 3 – Board Room
MAPPING YOUR FANTASY WORLD	Sunday 11:00am – 12:00pm	NEC Piazza Suite 1 – Panda Room



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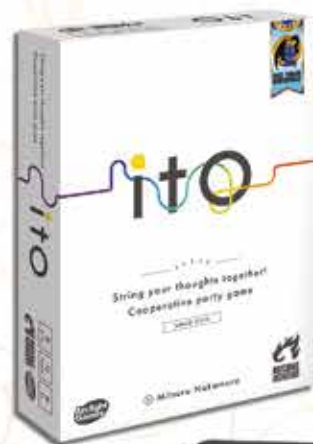
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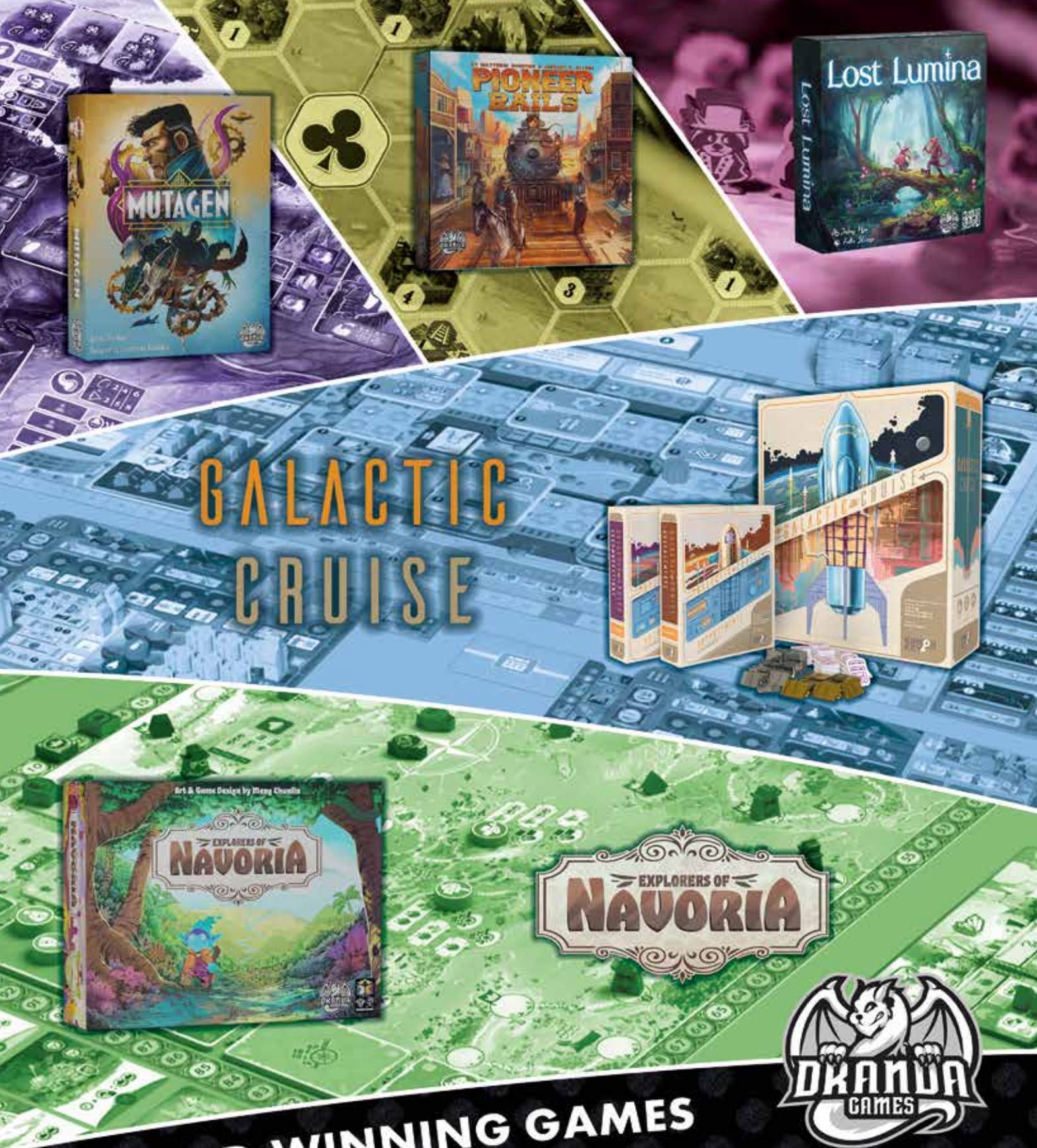


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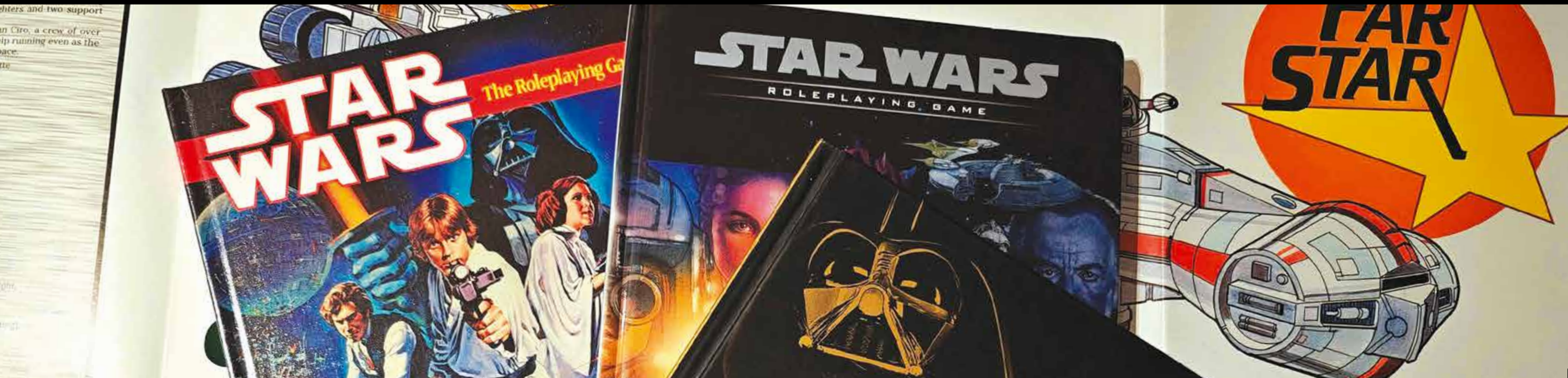
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ON A TABLETOP FAR FAR AWAY



LET'S LOOK AT THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STAR WARS AND TABLETOP GAMING.

The year 1977 saw the release of two things that would change the lives of pretty much anyone who attended the UK Games Expo: The Basic Set for Dungeons and Dragons and a small, independent science-fiction movie called Star Wars. Blockbuster franchise movies and TTRPGs are connected in more ways than simple age, however.

One of the things that made the original Star Wars movie so successful was the way it didn't tell the whole story. Little hints of a larger world dotted here and there meant that the world of Luke and Leia felt lived in and well-grounded. The audience knew nothing of the Clone Wars, but the characters in the movie nodded sagely when it was mentioned, all the more to create an illusion of a deeper world. George Lucas's genius was to tell, not show. The audience would imagine a deeper world.

And imagine we did. With the enormous success of the first movie (and its eventual sequels)

came an awful lot of merchandise and a hunger for the audience to know more. Lucas's bluff was called. This led to a novel called A Splinter of The Mind's Eye by Grand Master of Science Fiction Alan Dean Foster. Lucas had initially considered turning the book into a sequel to the first movie until he had much better ideas and a much bigger budget. Whilst the first trilogy was still being made, it was down to the odd children's book and a rather fun Marvel comic book series to expand the Star Wars galaxy, a task neither was really well suited for.

Then, West End Games released Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game in 1987, and suddenly, everyone had a back story. Tabletop games need setting information and narrative to work; the entire industry is based on providing a game master with as much material as possible for them to use or ignore as required. Legendary games designer Greg Costikyan created what was, for the time, a loose and fast rules system and filled the

book with more detail about the greater Star Wars galaxy. The books would even contain 'in-universe' adverts for things such as R2 Droids and TIE-Fighters.

Supplements for the game included the Galaxy Guides, which took us from Tatooine to Endor in a series of illustrated pamphlets. Anything that was on screen was fair game. For example, the first galaxy guide has a complete profile of Kabe, the bat-like alien that we see for about five seconds at the cantina. And the two women with big hairdos in the same bar? Complete profiles that tie into Han Solo and Lando Calrissian's background. All to provide story seeds for a busy Games Master who might not have had enough time to prep this week.

The game was an enormous hit, with many industry awards and strong sales. It also changed the world of Star Wars forever.

Lucasfilm had come to see the books as a resource for future projects, so much so that when

Image: Instagram – palaeopats_books

they decided to have another go at the novels, they directed authors to West End Games for source material. Hugo Award-winning author Timothy Zahn received 'boxes of source books' when he was writing Heir To The Empire, a novel that would not only introduce the world to Star Wars villain Grand Admiral Thrawn but would also kick off a whole range of tie-in books that expanded the world further.

This created a virtuous circle of sorts; Zahn's books would be later turned into gaming supplements, and those supplements would be read by other Star Wars tie-in writers. The story seed/plot-hook ideas from the supplements would be included in official guidebooks and encyclopaedias. And this is why Star Wars now seems so intricately detailed; material that was intended to be used as a throwaway idea for an evening's dice rolling and improv has become woven into the fabric of one of the greatest fantasy works to date.

Other writers picked to produce books for Star Wars at this time would come from script-writing backgrounds, TTRPG backgrounds or be Sci-Fi authors in good standing. (There were quite a few Hugo or Nebula Award-nominated authors involved). These folks would contribute to what became one of the largest collaborative storytelling projects in science fiction, all because tabletop gamers had established a backbone from which they could work.

When Lucasfilm considered producing the prequel movies, they tried a dry-run of sorts with a spin-off story called Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire, set between the films The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi. It would do everything the other movies did in terms of spin-off media but lack an actual film. So we got books, games, etc and the TTRPG supplement, which was also written as a 'bible' for the project. Gaming books are a good fit for such things; they have details, statistics and artwork, after all.

BY ED FORTUNE

West End Games lost the license for Star Wars in 1999, but by then, a lot of canonical material had been established. So much so that Lucasfilm created a complex diagram of what an 'Expanded Universe' was and what the core of Star Wars was. Anyone working on future projects had the legacy of the old RPG and the tie-in books to contend with.

This all changed when George Lucas sold it all to Disney in 2012. The entertainment mega-corporation reset the canon, confining much of it to "Legend" status, making all the old stories optional in terms of canon. Disney picked out whatever it wanted to make future movies, books and games. But the legacy of the original TTRPG remains. From the appearance of Thrawn in the recent Star Wars: Ahsoka TV series to the ubiquitous Imperial Frigates that first turned up in Galaxy Guide 6: Tramp Freighters, Star Wars is a franchise built by gamers, for gamers.



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PAINTING COMPETITION

Get ready to feast your eyes on some of the most stunning miniature painting in the hobby – the Sir Coates Painting Masters competition is here, and it's bigger, better, and more vibrant than ever.

Run by the world-renowned Duncan Rhodes Painting Academy, the Sir Coates Painting Masters competition has been a standout favourite at past events, drawing in talent from across the globe and delivering truly jaw-dropping entries. This year is no different, except that the standard just keeps rising.

But perhaps the best part? All entries will be on display throughout the entire weekend. Whether you're a casual hobbyist, a curious newcomer, or a seasoned painter, you'll be able to admire the incredible craftsmanship up close, get inspired, and maybe even start planning your own entry for next time.

JUDGED BY LEGENDS

The competition will be overseen by a stellar panel of judges, led by none other than Duncan Rhodes himself – legendary painter, educator, and co-founder of the academy. Duncan brings decades of experience, a sharp eye for detail, and a deep appreciation for the miniature painting craft.

Joining him are: Michael Anderson, 19-time Golden Demon winner; Sam Rowlands, Monte San Savino champion and painter at Trans Atlantis Games; and Roger Yates, co-owner of the academy and miniature enthusiast.

These judges will not only be evaluating entries, they'll also be available throughout the weekend. Pop by the display, see the incredible miniatures, and don't hesitate to chat with the judges. They're always happy to talk painting, give feedback, and share their passion with fellow hobbyists.

COVETED PRIZES

Winners will receive the highly sought-after Sir Coates trophies, a mark of painting excellence, and the best in show will take home the Sir Coates Painting Master Award.

COMPETITION CATEGORIES TO CHECK OUT

There's a place for every painter and every kind of miniature.

Single Miniature: For any human-sized character, from lone soldiers to heroic leaders, including those on bikes, beasts, or smaller vehicles.

Squad/Unit: A showcase for group dynamics and cohesion.

Enter any group of three or more models, whether on foot or mounted.

Vehicle: Tanks, walkers, flyers and anything in between. From gritty realism to alien tech – this is the category for machines of all kinds.

Monster: A celebration of the colossal, the strange, and the fantastical. If it's larger than human size, and mounted on a suitable base, it belongs here.

Board Games: A unique category for fans of boxed games. Eligible entries must come from board games (not wargames) and typically involve a grid or hex map system. Think Zombicide, Descent, or Gloomhaven.

CELEBRATE THE WINNERS

The competition will conclude with a special awards ceremony on Sunday afternoon – at 3pm on the Main Stage in Hall 2 (2-572), where the winners will be announced and honoured. All are welcome, come along to cheer on your favourites, celebrate the talent on display, and take part in one of the most exciting moments of the event.

Whether you're competing or simply admiring, the Sir Coates Painting Competition is a centrepiece of the weekend. Come for the colour, stay for the conversation, and leave inspired.



LOCATION
NEC Hall 4 4-K



Rob Gilmour
Grand Champion
Beachhead 2025

THE JOY OF PAINTING MINIATURES

BREATHING LIFE INTO BOARD GAME WORLDS

In a world saturated with endless entertainment options, it's easy to overlook one of the most tactile and rewarding hobbies: painting miniatures for board games. While rolling dice and strategizing your next move may be the heart of games like Cthulhu: Death May Die, Kingdom Death: Monster, and Zombicide, the soul of these games often lies in the intricate miniatures that populate their worlds. But what if I told you that the true magic happens when you swap your dice for a paintbrush?

Welcome to the colourful, creative, and sometimes chaotic world of miniature painting—a hobby that combines artistic expression, mindfulness, and a touch of personal flair to transform monochromatic figures into vibrant works of art.



If you'd like to give painting miniatures a go. See page 11 for the 'Paint & Take'.

BY PAUL CLEMENTS

WHY PAINT MINIATURES?

At first glance, painting miniatures may seem like an optional, even daunting task. After all, these tiny plastic figures come ready to play, straight out of the box. So, why bother? The answer lies in the transformation. Each miniature is a blank canvas brimming with potential. Painting allows you to:

- **Bring Characters to Life.** Imagine the hulking terror of a Cthulhu Elder God painted in deep, otherworldly greens and purples, its eyes glowing with an eerie red light. Or a survivor from Kingdom Death: Monster, scarred and battle-worn, telling a story of countless encounters. Painting gives each figure a personality and history.

- **Enhance Immersion.** A fully painted board game elevates the entire experience. Your tabletop becomes a cinematic stage where vividly coloured heroes clash with nightmarish beasts. It's no longer just a game—it's a visual and emotional journey.
- **Express Your Creativity.** Whether you're a seasoned artist or someone who hasn't picked up a brush since grade school, painting miniatures is a unique form of self-expression. You can stick to the official game art or unleash your imagination and create something entirely your own.
- **Relax and Unwind.** There's something meditative about the process. The repetitive motions of painting, the focus

required for tiny details, and the satisfaction of seeing your work come to life make it a perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

GETTING STARTED: FROM ZERO TO HERO

One of the most common misconceptions about miniature painting is that you need to be a professional artist to do it well. The truth? Anyone can paint miniatures. All you need is a little patience, some basic tools, and a willingness to learn.

1. THE ESSENTIAL TOOLS OF THE TRADE

You don't need a fortune to start painting miniatures. A few essential supplies will set you on your way:

- **Miniatures:** Start with figures from your favourite board game. Games like Cthulhu: Death May Die or Zombicide have a variety of characters and creatures to choose from.
- **Acrylic Paints:** Brands like Citadel, Vallejo, and Army Painter offer a wide range of colours specifically designed for miniatures. Start with primary colours and a few metallics.
- **Brushes:** Invest in a few good quality brushes in various sizes. A fine detail brush, a medium-sized brush, and a dry brush will cover most of your needs.
- **Primer:** Priming your miniatures ensures the paint adheres properly. Spray primers are quick and easy, but brush-on primers work just as well.
- **Palette and Water Cup:** You'll need a palette for mixing paints and a cup for rinsing brushes.

2. THE PAINTING PROCESS

Now comes the fun part—painting! Here's a step-by-step guide to get you started:

Step 1: Priming the Miniature

Priming is the first and most important step. It provides a surface for the paint to stick to and helps bring out the details of the model. Choose a primer colour that matches your intended scheme—white for bright colours, black for dark tones, and grey for something in between.

Step 2: Base Coating

The base coat is the first layer of paint applied to the miniature. It covers the entire figure and sets the foundation for the rest of the colours. Don't worry about perfection here—just focus on getting an even coat.



Step 3: Shading and Washing

Shading adds depth and dimension. Washes are thin, ink-like paints that settle into the crevices of the miniature, creating shadows and emphasizing details. Apply a wash over the entire figure or in specific areas like armour plates, cloaks, or monster skin.

Step 4: Highlighting

Highlighting brings out the raised surfaces and makes the miniature pop. Use a lighter version of your base colour and carefully brush it onto the edges and raised areas. Dry brushing—a technique where you use a minimal amount of paint and lightly drag the brush across the surface—is great for this.

Step 5: Detailing

This is where the magic happens. Add small details like glowing eyes, weathered armour, blood splatters, or intricate patterns. It's the details that turn a good miniature into a great one.

Step 6: Varnishing

Finally, protect your hard work with a varnish. Matte varnish gives a natural finish, while gloss varnish adds shine. This step ensures your paint job stands up to the rigors of gameplay.

FINDING JOY IN THE PROCESS

One of the most beautiful aspects of miniature painting is that it's a journey, not a race. Your first miniature might not look like a masterpiece—and that's okay!

Each model you paint teaches you something new, from colour theory to brush control. Over time, you'll develop your own style and techniques.

And let's not forget the social aspect. The miniature painting community is vibrant and welcoming, with countless forums, social media groups, and YouTube channels dedicated to the craft. Sharing your work, learning from others, and even participating in painting challenges can make the experience even more rewarding.

A PERSONAL TOUCH TO YOUR GAMES

There's something undeniably special about sitting down to play a board game with miniatures you've painted yourself. It transforms the game from a simple pastime into a deeply personal experience. Each figure tells a story—not just of the character it represents but of the time, effort, and creativity you invested in it.

So, the next time you open a box of Cthulhu: Death May Die, Kingdom Death: Monster, or any other miniature-heavy board game, consider picking up a paintbrush. You might just discover a new passion—one that combines the joy of gaming with the satisfaction of creating something truly unique.

After all, why settle for grey plastic when you can bring your board game to life, one brushstroke at a time?



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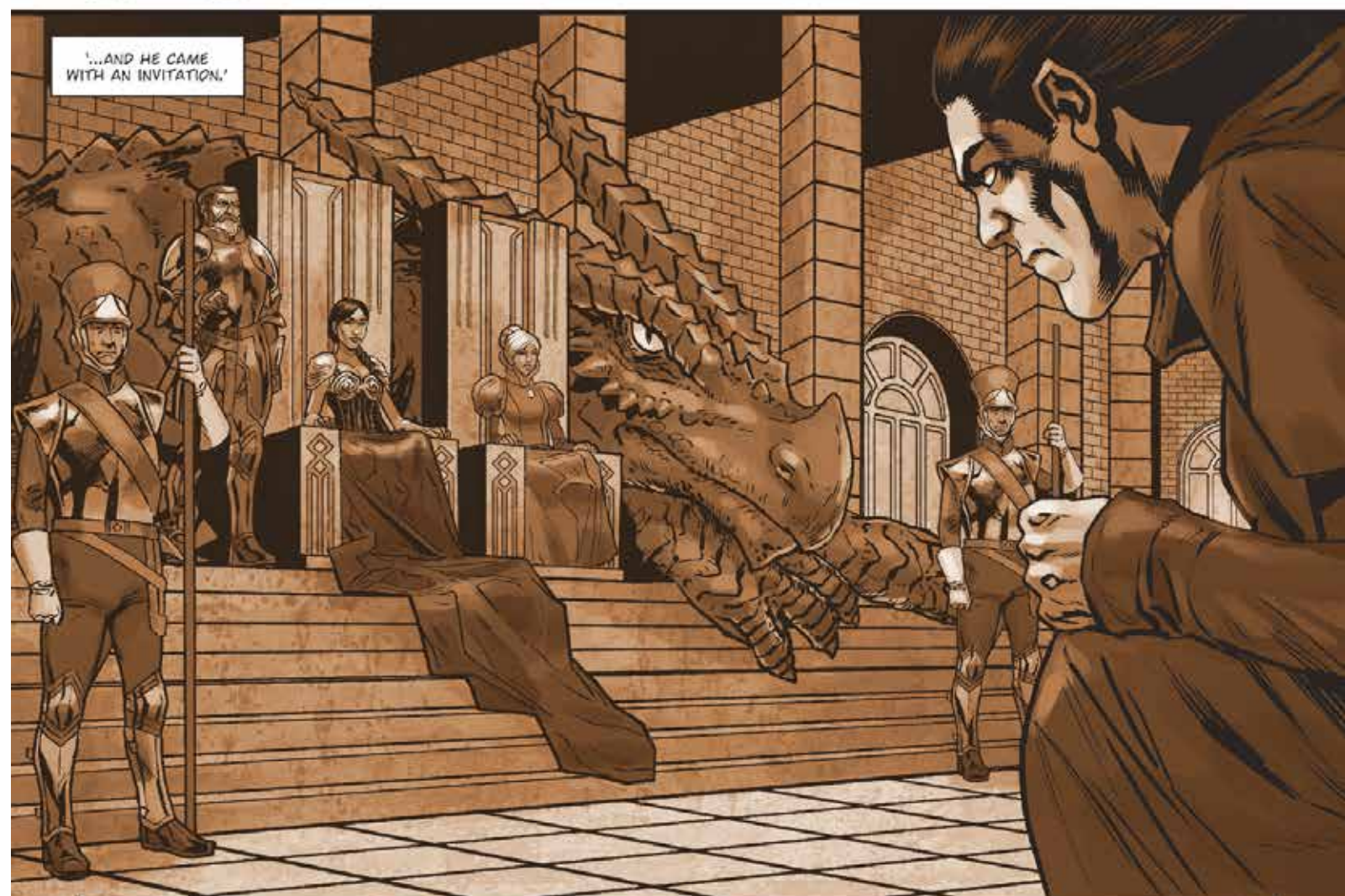


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Board gaming has never been so popular. More games are produced each year with every subject under the sun featured in some way or another. There's so much variety of subject matter and so many ways to play, yet nearly every game shares one aspect - who goes first?

Does it matter? Of course it does. Going first often confers an advantage to that player - the best choice of actions or options so it really does matter who goes first. To compensate for the advantage of going first, there is often a small starting bonus that other players receive for going later in the game.

If we look at how games are started, let's begin with chess. One player holds a chess piece of each player colour hidden in their fists and the other player selects which fist. White always goes first, but this can be evened out by playing several games in a row, alternating first player.

Another common approach is to use rock, paper scissors in two

player games and this produces a quick result. Alternatively, players can toss a coin, which is also quick and simple to resolve. But neither of these methods are any good for games with more than 2 players of course.

In multi player games there are many ways in which this decision is made. Sometimes luck determines who goes first, for example by rolling dice with the highest going first. If there is no way offered in the rules then we often pick up a piece of each colour and randomly drop one from a hand. But the rules of the game often dictate the selection method. And game players obeying the rules means that we follow the way they are written. We seem to follow these rules religiously even when we have a more regular way.

A very popular choice is that the youngest player begins. But why not the oldest player? (Though the extremely well known game called Catan from Kosmos uses

this method). Is it seen that the youngest player has less experience? But at least these methods provide a quick and certain way of establishing a start player.

These days a game often suggests a starting player based on the theme or in some ways linked to the game. There so many different themes and start solutions linked to them so here are a few across the last 20 years or so.

The player who last:

...ate a specific food such as sushi in Sushi Go! (Adventureland games)

...visited a country for Ticket to Ride: Europe (Rio Grande)

In The Captain is Dead (Alderac Entertainment), the person who last watched Star Trek goes first.

Tiny Towns: (Alderac Entertainment) The player who most recently built something with their hands goes first.



Fancy seeing if you get to go first? Why not grab a game from our 'Board Game Library'.



Carcassonne (Hans im Glück): The player who has visited France most recently.

The Mind (Nürnberger-Spielkarten-Verlag): Start with the player who "feels" most ready.

Cards Against Humanity: The person who most recently pooped.

Exploding Kittens (Admagic Games) The player who most recently touched a cat goes first.

A new game called Galactic Cruise (Kinson Games) has the start player as the last person to go on a cruise. Fairly obvious?

In Square One (boardcubator), the player aids include one that indicates the start player, which is randomly given out at the beginning of the game and is a neat way of resolving who goes first.

Another solution used in some games is to bid for first player order using your starting resources. In Space Base

(Kosmos), the player who spent the least money on cards goes first. A similar method is used in Vegas Showdown (Avalon Hill). This method is designed to offset the potential benefit of going first.

But if you don't like using the rules there are other ways you can determine the start player.

There's a game called Start Player (not surprisingly) which has a deck of cards that provide different criteria for determining the start player such as the person with the most 7's in their phone number or the height of the players or even the number of games owned!

And then there are solutions using apps. A board game app called BG stats lets you record the details of your game and has a randomiser included which chooses the first player and is handy if you want to record this (and surely you would if you're using the app).

There's also a dedicated app

called Start Player which you use by each player putting a finger on the app and it selects a player. Probably not popular in Covid lock down, but it's engaging and quick and fun to use as it engages the players when they place their fingers to touch the screen.

Whichever way you choose, it should be a quick and fair decision and probably won't get mentioned until later in the game as you approach the end game.

Many games ensure that you all have the same number of turns which feels right, but some games end abruptly when an event is triggered and then not all players will automatically have the same number of turns. Providing you all know in advance then the start player choice is not so important.

So the start player does matter, but it is not the most significant factor as the main purpose of board gaming is to have fun.

WHO GOES

FIRST?

BY ALAN HOW

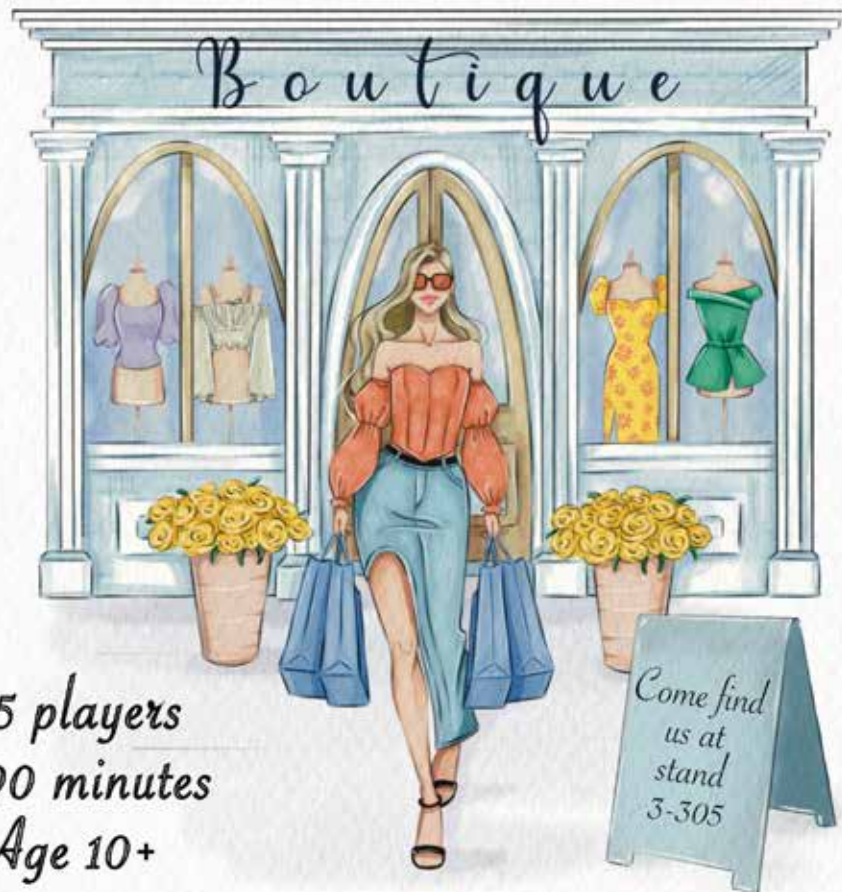
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MINIATURES TOURNAMENTS

- Batman Miniatures Game Tournament
- Battle of Britain Bolt Action GT
- BattleTech – Aces
- BattleTech – Trial of Position
- BHGS Challenge DBMM
- Blood Bowl Tournament: Tacklezone Doubles
- Blood Bowl Tournament: Tacklezone Sevens
- Blood Bowl Tournament: Tacklezone Singles
- Bushido Grand Masters
- Conquest: Last Argument of Kings Tournament
- Halo: Flashpoint UKGE 2025 Tournament
- Leviathans – King of the Skies
- Marvel: Crisis Protocol – Friday Side Event
- Marvel: Crisis Protocol OFFICIAL GT
- Ravaged Coast Blues: Flotsam & Jetsam (Warcry)
- Star Trek Attack Wing 2025 UK Championship
- Star Wars: Legion – Friday Side Event
- Star Wars: Legion OFFICIAL GT
- Star Wars: Shatterpoint – Friday Side Event
- Star Wars: Shatterpoint OFFICIAL GT
- Weapons Free 5
- WorldcryUK: Ravaged Coast Blues (Warcry)

BOARDGAME TOURNAMENTS

- 7 Wonders
- 7 Wonders Duel
- Abalone Simul
- Ark Nova
- Azul
- Beyblade X CCUK Convention Event Qualifier
- Beyblade X CCUK Convention Events
- Beyblade X CCUK National Championship
- Carcassonne 4p
- Carcassonne Simul
- Carcassonne UK Championship
- Catan UK National Championship Final

- Catan UK National Championship Open Qualifier
- Catan UK National Championship Preliminary
- Dominion
- Dominion Simul
- Hive Simul
- Lines of Action Simul
- Rummikub 2025 UK Championships
- Terraforming Mars
- Ticket to Ride
- UK Crokinole Championship 2025
- UK Hive Cup 2025 Finals
- Unmatched UK Championship
- Wingspan

CARD AND DICE TOURNAMENTS

- Altered TCG Convention Event
- Commander CEDH Premier Event
- Commander Scheduled Event
- Disney Lorcana Constructed Side Events
- Disney Lorcana Draft Side Events
- Disney Lorcana Pack Rush Side Events
- Disney Lorcana Reign Of Jafar Sealed
- Flesh and Blood Draft 1
- Flesh and Blood High Seas Sealed - SC Promo 1
- Flesh and Blood High Seas Sealed - SC Promo 2
- Flesh and Blood – New Player Event 1
- Flesh and Blood Pro Quest +: High Seas Sealed
- Forest Shuffle UK Championship
- MTG Collector Pack Chaos Draft
- MTG Mystery Booster 2 Draft
- MTG Vintage Chaos Draft
- One Piece Pirate Cup Side Events - Group A
- Star Wars: Unlimited Convention Event
- Star Wars: Unlimited Constructed Side Events
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A RETURN TO THE UK

BY PETER D. ADKISON

I am humbled and honored to be a guest at this year's UK Games Expo!

It was all arranged for me to be a guest back in 2020, but then, well, we all know what happened in 2020. I'm delighted that I'm finally making good on my promise to be here with y'all. I can't wait to arrive in person and see for myself how Richard and Tony have built such a great convention in the beloved UK.

I've been asked to write this article to explain, "who the heck is Peter Adkison, and why should we care?" Well, I'm not sure how much you should care, but I'm happy to share my story.

I'm a serial entrepreneur in the tabletop games space. The first company I founded was Wizards of the Coast, in 1990. Whew, what a ride that turned out to be. My intent was to simply publish roleplaying products, like *The Primal Order*, which was a book on playing gods in RPGs that I wrote with a lot of help from other WotC alums, like Steve Conard and Beverly Marshall Saling. But fate took us in a radically new direction after I met Richard Garfield, who invented *Magic: The Gathering* and, miraculously, trusted my fledgling company to publish it.

After publishing *Magic* in 1993, WotC rocketed into the stratosphere. These were heady, halcyon days, a wild ride with a tiger by the tail. Within two years, *Magic* was the biggest game in the market, and *Wizards of the Coast* went from obscure startup to center stage. As *Magic* gained distribution in markets around the world, I suddenly had not just an obligation, but an opportunity, to travel the world and do what I could to help *Magic* find its way into new markets and flourish.

It was this opportunity that brought me to the UK for the first time in 1995, where I attended a perhaps nearly-forgotten UK games convention, Gen Con UK. I immediately fell in love with the UK gaming scene. UK gamers are among the

most passionate gamers you can find anywhere in the world. You love your games, and you love sharing your opinions about games! And since I also love games and sharing opinions about games, I'm sure I'll make some new friends while I'm here, and hopefully see some of the friends I made all those decades ago.

While I'm on the topic of great memories of time spent in the UK during the 90s, I'm honor bound to give a shoutout to Dave Alsop, Jared Earle, and the rest from *Nightfall Games*. We collaborated for a bit in those days, shared an office in Glasgow, and created some wonderful memories together.

Magic: The Gathering and UK gamers weren't the only amazing things that happened during my time at *Wizards of the Coast*. We also acquired TSR in 1997, a company some of you will remember as the original home of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Since

I started WotC to produce RPGs, acquiring D&D was like taking an acting class and then finding yourself cast in the next *Lord of the Rings* movie. I was the proverbial kid in the candy store, a lifelong fan of D&D who was suddenly the guy in charge of where it would go next. On day 1 I announced we would publish a new edition, and two years later, 3rd Edition D&D was published. And it was a big hit! And we also rolled out the d20 license, making the D&D rules available to all RPG publishers.

For the grand finale of my time at WotC, we brought the *Pokémon* trading cards out of Japan. First to the USA, then the rest

of the world. Within two years, we had rights for *Pokémon* in all languages other than Japanese, in all countries other than Japan.

I always thought that it's a good idea to quit while you're ahead, so after selling *Wizards of the Coast* to Hasbro, I left in 2001. And then, I entered what I affectionately call "my rock star days," when I traveled the world and did most of the things we imagine rock stars do—except for playing music. Fortunately, I somehow managed to survive Ibiza, Rio, and Burning Man, and started pining for a new business project.

When I left WotC I told my successor, Vince Caluori, "Eventually, Hasbro is going to decide there are some bits of *Wizards of the Coast* that they don't want, business units they think are off strategy. When that happens, please give me a call, I might be an interested buyer."

Sure enough, in 2002, Vince gave me a call and asked me if I'd be interested in buying Gen Con. Oh, did I forget to mention that when we (WotC) acquired *Dungeons*

& *Dragons* we also ended up with Gen Con? D&D might have been the prize, but Gen Con was a helluva cherry on top. I've always loved this show, and how it's so important to the history of tabletop games. So, yes, I jumped at the chance, and I've owned Gen Con ever since, with some shrewd business partners and an incredible staff.

I've done a few other things along the way. For a time, I was involved with a girls trading card property, *Bella Sara*, and in recent years I've spent a fair amount of time playing games on Twitch. I've also been developing my old D&D campaign, *Chaldea*, through a series of short films, online streaming events, and just recently, our first-ever feature-length movie, *The Ballbarians Christmas Special*. You can watch it on youtube.com/@worldofchaldea!

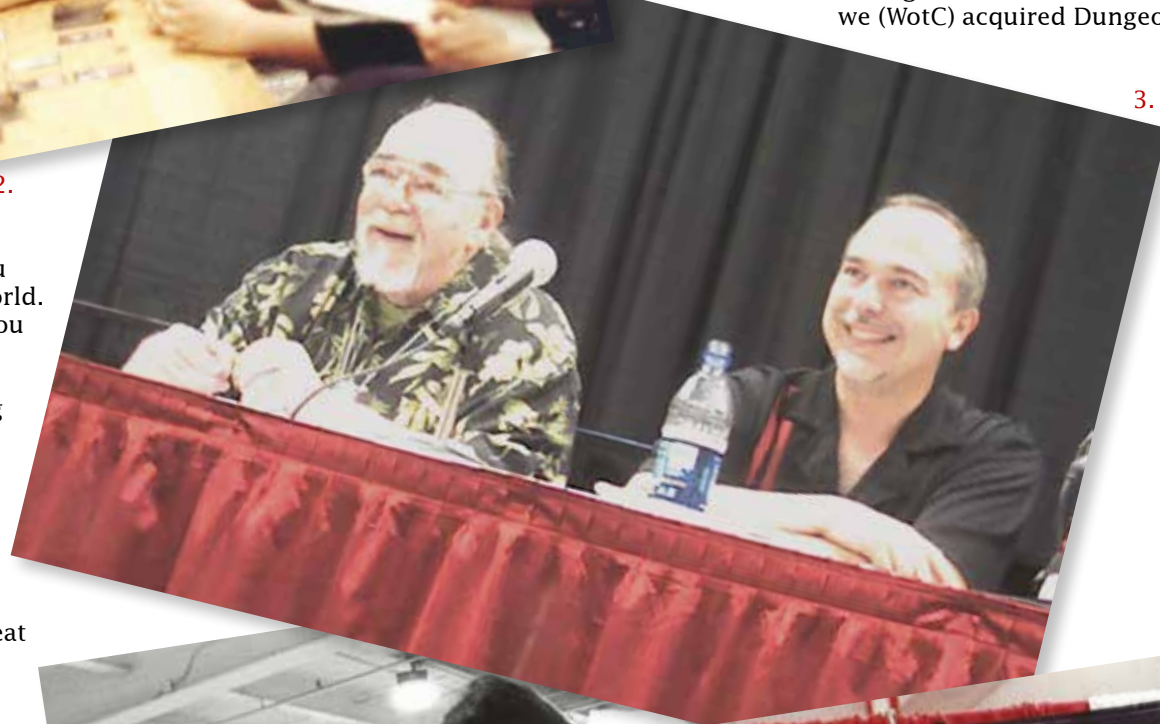
Well, I guess that brings us to here and now. I can't wait to walk the halls of UK Games Expo, try a few new games in the trade hall, bump into old friends, and share a pint with you!

Photo 1 and 4: *Ice Age* Pre-Release in Toronto, 1995.

Photo 2: First MtG tournament, the "World Championship" at Gen Con the weekend it was released, in 1993.

Photo 3: Me with Gary Gygax.

Photo 5: Signing the *White Wolf* deal



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THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF

A GAME CRAWLING WITH POSSIBILITIES

25 years ago, I had a sudden Eureka moment while experimenting with a drawing program on my shiny new Mac. I pulled out a six-sided shape, and something clicked. A memory from 18 years earlier flooded back. It was the spark that led to the creation of Hive. Though the official design date is 2000, the journey began in 1982.

It all started with a film I saw, a comedy about two old friends who reconciled their long-standing feud, over a game of chess in the park. While the movie's name escapes me, I vividly recall the idea it gave me: a game without a board—just pieces that could be tossed in a bag and played anywhere. Enthralled, I abandoned the film and immediately cut small square cards from white paper. I scribbled Chinese words like "Pig," "Dragon," "Rat," and "King" on them, creating a crude prototype for a chess-like game. The pieces had unique movements, similar to Hive—the Rat moved any number of spaces, and the King moved just one space, making it the central piece that needed to be surrounded to win.

Though the game was playable, it didn't have the "wow" factor, so it was soon put away and forgotten—until years later.

Fast forward to the year 2000. At the time, I worked as a carpenter, spending my days building roofs, hanging doors, and hammering nails. But I dreamed of being a game designer. Every lunch break, I'd trade in my hardhat for a mental one, sketching game ideas. If you were to refurbish the buildings I worked on, you might find hidden sketches on the back of plasterboard: drawings of insects, movement patterns, and ideas for what would eventually become Hive.

I experimented with different combinations of pieces—Ants, Spiders, and others—trying to get the balance just right. The hexagon was the perfect shape, and that's when the idea of insects and arachnids clicked. The name Hive came next, and the game's theme was set. From that point on, I refined the game and its rules, preparing it for the moment when I could share it with others.

However, I didn't know where to find players. The internet was still



in its infancy, and there were no board game cafés or conventions that I was aware of. My only option was to seek out local chess clubs. That's when I found Finchley Games Club in North London. I had no idea such a place existed, but after a brief phone conversation, I was invited to bring my game for a test play.

I arrived to find a welcoming clubhouse filled with all kinds of games—racing games, card games, and even games about building roads and settlements. I was introduced to the members, settled down to a game of Settlers of Catan, handing over my prototype of Hive. The founders and a few other members took the game to an adjacent table and began reading through my handwritten rules. They didn't want me to explain it—they wanted to figure it out on their own.

I watched them play from a distance. They reset the game several times, playing over and over, and after about four or five rounds, they came over to talk to me. Their first words were unexpected:

"We hate you."
"Pardon?" I was stunned. They explained that they had never played a prototype of any game without finding something to criticize. But with Hive, they

found nothing to fault. In fact, they said it was excellent. They were so impressed that they offered to buy the prototype from me on the spot and encouraged me to produce and sell it. One of the founders also gave me the strapline: a game crawling with possibilities.

That night, I left the club feeling on top of the world—but also unsure of what to do next. I didn't know anything about game production or marketing. All I knew was carpentry. So, I did what I knew best. I found a local cabinet maker who reluctantly agreed to craft 22,000 hexagonal blocks from beechwood in small batches. He wasn't thrilled to be making tiny game pieces instead of furniture, but he agreed to help.

I also tracked down a sticker company to print the silver and blue hexagonal stickers and a box manufacturer to create the packaging. My wife and I, along with a few good friends, spent countless weekends sanding the wooden pieces, applying the stickers with tweezers, and packing the games into boxes. We did this in batches, powered by endless tea, biscuits, and fried chicken.

Eventually, the first batch of Hive was ready to sell. With no real marketing budget, I relied on word-of-mouth and game clubs like the one in Finchley. Friendly local

BY JOHN YIANNI

You can meet John at the Gen42 Games stand at 2-840, NEC Hall 2.



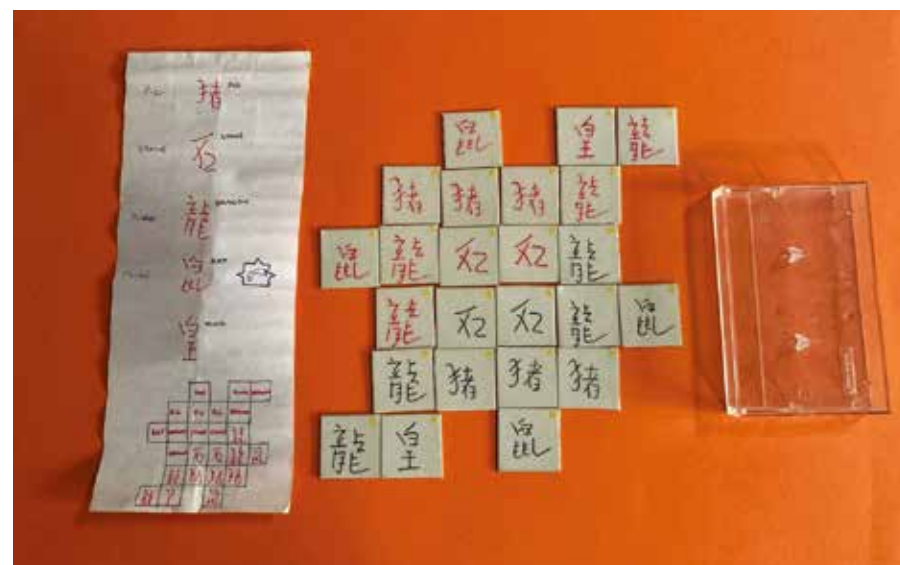
games shops took a few to try and slowly but surely, the game gained traction, and Hive began to grow.

Encouraged by the owner of Leisure Games, we took as many games as we could pack in the back of our car, and drove to our first Essen games fair in Germany. The highlights of the show for us were, Hive voted best game at the fair, and selling all our stock, nearly 400 games.

Over the years, Hive has evolved from a simple prototype into an internationally recognized and loved game, with expansions, tournaments, and even books written about the game. It still amazes me how much depth players find in a game that only has 28 pieces, and no board.

Now, 25 years later, I look back on that humble beginning with immense gratitude. The journey has been filled with surprises, challenges, and moments of pure joy. What started as a simple idea whilst watching a film, has turned into a beloved game, and I am so thankful for the support of the early players who believed in it and helped it become what it is today.

As I celebrate this 25th anniversary of Hive, I'm reminded of the one thing that has always been true: it's a game crawling with possibilities.



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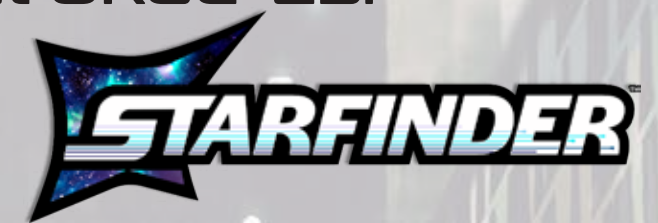
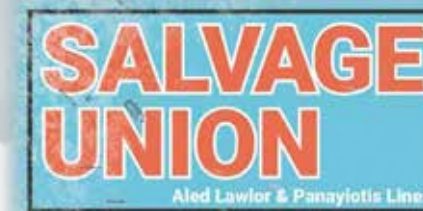
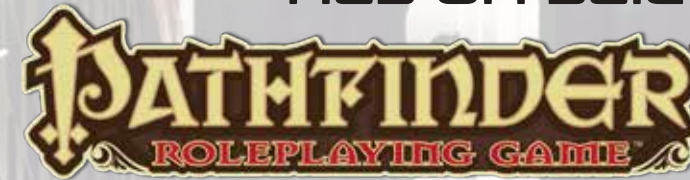
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THE BOARD GAME COMMUNITY AT ITS BEST

BY SIDONIE BISHOP

on behalf of Minty Noodles Ltd.
NEC Hall 3, stand 3-B27

Creating a board game, something many of us have dreamed of doing. Pondering what we would do if only we had the time, money and, honestly, energy... As a board game lover, the fantasy of creating our very own square in the metaphorical quilt of the board game industry is so enticing. So enticing that some of us are even mad enough to do it. However, more often than not, you take the leap and realise you're not quite a gilded patch, cohesively stitched, but maybe a slightly tattered hankie that's fallen down the back of the sofa... but things are changing.

We began our foray into the world of board game design last year. Big-eyed and full of ideas, we soon found, like many, that development can be a lonely and overwhelming process, as the magnitude of the task at hand gradually dawns on you. With long hours spent ideating and designing alone, you often miss the opportunity to bounce ideas off others. All the while, juggling

your new role as designer, marketer, content creator and logistics expert, to name a few. So, in a bid to feel less alone in our development bubble, we sought out a community, and to say that we were blown away would be an understatement.

It became evident that the board game developer space is one that is steeped in a type of welcoming spirit that is near impossible to find in other industries. It started out by finding a plethora of free online resources from sites such as Board Game Design Lab and developer blogs like the one from Stonemaier Games, which enabled us to confidently begin our journey. Unlike many other industries, a sense of gatekeeping was near absent. Maybe it's because board games are innately social activities - we want people to play games, and we want people to play them with. Meaning, if there's more people making board games, there's more to play... a win-win solution really. With our board game beginning

to take shape and feeling more confident in our knowledge, we wanted to try and escape our solitude and find other makers who were embarking on this journey. That's where we found BoardGameProtoHype (BGPH). This small but mighty group, started by designer Evan Wilcock (@sleepless_knights_games), began life as a collection of developers on Instagram with the simple ethos of sharing ideas. What grew was a welcoming collective of over 100 designers and developers from across the globe, at many different stages of production. From those who are fully published to those building their first prototype. We've met in person, played each other's games, and supported one another through times of board game burnout. As member Steery Games puts it:

"BoardGameProtoHype is what made us feel like our game belongs to a real community, and that was crucial to the growth of our project." A sentiment we couldn't agree with

more. For us, this community has not only provided support but has also built our confidence as designers. It's become a sounding board for ideas, offering both the intellectual and emotional backing.

With any space or community, seeing yourself reflected in it feels important. As a female-led board games company, this was an aspect which was admittedly daunting. Even though in board games audiences, women and men are equally represented (51% vs. 49%) according to research done by YouGov, in the designer space it's not nearly as balanced. A recent study performed by board game academic Dr. Tanya Pobuda found that out of the top 400 top-ranked board games on BoardGameGeek, 96.7% of them were developed by men. However, since discovering this community, it has been encouraging to connect with many strong voices advocating for greater representation for all board gamers and developers. Whether that's being more mindful about representation in our games, or

making a conscious effort to create a welcoming space for minority voices, it feels like the community is working to better itself from the ground up.

For women's representation specifically, on an industry level, initiatives such as Hasbro's Women Innovators of Play is providing a designated space for women, inspiring not only innovation but inclusivity also. Board game designer Ellie Dix won an award launched by this programme in 2024. Her design process and knowledge are inspirational, and she goes out of her way to champion and encourage all new designers, but especially those from minority groups. Having these aspirational figures as part of the community is vital for us all to continue to do our best to make this an open space for all kinds of developers and players.

So, after nearly a year and a half as a board game developer, what have we discovered so far? We've found, created, borrowed and shared parts

of that small square we started with and created our own section of the beautiful board game quilt. Yes, we're more exhausted and maybe a little more mad than we were a year and a half ago, but during that time we've made a game we're really proud of, played some incredibly innovative and exciting games that haven't even reached the market yet, met some board gaming heroes and found a community. As an industry that, at its core, is about coming together and spending quality time with one another, we're really proud to champion the space and encourage people to take that leap to make their dream game... even if it's so we have more games to play ourselves.





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MONSTERS ARE PEOPLE TOO

CREATING TERROR IN TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAMES

Precariously perched on the bridge's stone railing, Niómë peered through the window, the way she did most nights. "Tell the story with the Prince again", she whispered, impatiently tapping the stone wall with one of her numerous appendages. Inside the house, the elderly woman sat down to tell the nighttime story to the assembled children. They all stared at their foster mother with vacant eyes, and really the story was wasted on the pitiful creatures. Their little souls had been sucked dry, and Niómë knew by whom, and that was just as it was.

Niómë herself, however, could well appreciate the stories, and here she learned all she could about the world beyond the murky waters of the canals, in which she lived with her brothers and sisters; learned all the things her mother had no time or inclination to teach her. Here she learned all about wolves, and witches, and best of all: princes.

BY MELINA SEDÓ

Meet Niómë, a creature from the Venetian lagoon, with the upper body of a young woman and a lower body made of massive tentacles. She is a thing of nightmares that will snatch you from your bed and drag you into the canal. Niómë is completely crazy and utterly evil. But she is also a loving daughter and sister, who dreams and wishes and feels. She is a person, someone you might pity, if you see past her sharp teeth and murderous ways. Being so incredibly pathetic makes her even more fearsome.

Players love dark and dramatic settings and – as game masters and RPG creators – we strive to fabricate truly terrifying moments. We therefore combine suspense, as well as horrific and eerie phenomena with



actual danger. In our newest work – *Serenissima Obscura* – we also explore how to create a scary mood by using the environment effectively. But what we love most is our monsters and foes.

This is why we encourage storytellers to create backstories and vignettes, not only for the final opponent, but even for the lowliest creature in the shadows. Ask yourselves how your monster became what it is now. How does it function and by what is it fuelled? What makes it loveable? What are its needs and fears? Is there someone it is fond of? History will turn a creature into a character.

Consider how this leads to more vivid roleplay: A game master impersonating Niómë might not just attack the group, but will want to interact or give the players the opportunity to witness the creature in its normal habitat. This can invoke juicy moral dilemmas. We know that in the end, it is "kill or be killed", but a pitiable creature might make the adventurers stop and think: Is this poor wretch redeemable? Do I kill it instantly, or will I try to change it? Is it vile to slay such a poor creature? Or even: Could this have been me, had I been born differently? By making the characters relate to evil, they come to question themselves.

Sure, not all players are into such psychological aspects of roleplaying. Many will just be disgusted by the tentacled lady from the lagoon.

So, let's talk about of the portrayal of evil itself. We believe that the horror of any situation is strongly intensified, by making the monster

more humane. Just remember the "Silence of the Lambs": "Buffalo Bill" Gump becomes so much more frightening as you watch him put on his makeup, talk to himself and give his victim something to eat. His insanity makes him unpredictable and heightens the suspense. Perhaps he will not kill the girl after all! And let's look at Hannibal Lecter himself: The striking contrast between what you know about the serial killer (eats his victims) and how he acts (polite and educated) makes you fear him most. If those two were just silent murderers jumping out of the dark, the entire movie would have been much less scary. Right?

These examples also prove: a fiend does not need tentacles to be

horrifying. Any human can become a monster: The ruthless senator who stops at nothing to eliminate his competitors, or the decommissioned captain who sells children to anyone who is willing to pay the price. Even though they might function "normally" in society, these men are just as depraved as our poor mermaid. Maybe more so because they consciously chose evil over good. So don't underestimate these more mundane monsters. Ultimately, it is the combination of the relatable and repellant that incites terror in roleplaying games. So: dare to create contrasts and discrepancies!

To come to an end, let us get back to the lovely Niómë:

It was still dark in the narrow streets of San Polo, even though Pio Briani could sense the weight of night being lifted from the city. The moonlight provided little illumination, but then again, Pio knew the way quite well. Turning towards the Campo San Polo, he heard that strange whisper again, just like the previous night: "My Prince". He turned, panicked for some reason, the hairs on the back of his neck standing up. He made sure he wasn't standing too close to the small canal at his back, and tried to see if there was anyone hiding in the shadows between the buildings. The last thing he heard before he was suddenly seized and dragged into the water was a wet scrabbling behind him. And the last thing he saw in a dim beam of moonlight before he lost consciousness in the icy water was a nightmarish face with a smile full of needle teeth mouthing "My Prince".



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50TH ANNIVERSARY CHAOSIUM



In 1975, the world of gaming changed forever.

Following a vision-quest and tarot reading, Greg Stafford, an itinerant belt-buckle-salesman and self-described hippy published his first game, *White Bear and Red Moon*. Unable to find a publisher, he founded his own company "The Chaosium" to release his game. At the time, he and his wife were living in a tiny apartment, which they shared with another family. This "house of chaos" as they called it was near the Oakland Coliseum, so Greg combined the words "chaos" and "coliseum" to create the word "Chaosium".

Set in the original Bronze Age fantasy world of Glorantha, *White Bear and Red Moon* reflected many of the wargames of its time—hexes, victory point trackers, and chits. Lots of chits. While both board games and war games would evolve significantly over the decades since the first publication of *White Bear and Red Moon*, it was the game's unique setting, Greg Stafford's mythic world of Glorantha that would have an impact far greater and long reaching than even he could imagine.



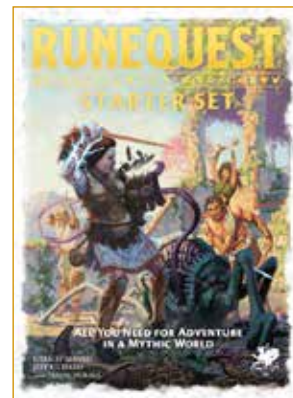
In 1978, Glorantha took on a new form—this time taking the new world of tabletop roleplaying games by storm with the *RuneQuest* RPG. First released at Origins Games Fair that July, *RuneQuest* stood out from the *Arneson* and *Gygax Dungeons & Dragons*—which had hit shelves just four years prior—due to its elegant game design, and its signature fantasy setting.

Being a time before places like *Greyhawk*, *Waterdeep*, or *Ravenloft* were common knowledge of the average gamer, *RuneQuest* gave RPG players of the 70s and 80s a concrete world of myth and magic to explore at their tabletop. Glorantha remains unique as a setting that doesn't draw inspiration only from medieval Europe, nor is it an alternate take on the mythology penned by Tolkien. Glorantha would go on to inspire generations of gamers—even Hidetaka Miyazaki when he created the video game *Elden Ring*.

RuneQuest cast aside many of the approaches most other games took. It had no character classes, no experience points, no levels, and far fewer restrictions on how weapons, armor, and spells could be used.

BY B.W. HOLLAND
WITH MICHAEL O'BRIAN
AND MARK MORRISON

You can visit Chaosium Inc.
at stand 3-832, NEC Hall 3.



The mechanics of *RuneQuest* were completely unlike those of other fantasy roleplaying games. While *Dungeons & Dragons* used a D20 and abstracted Hit Points, through co-designer Steve Perrin's practical experience in the Society for Creative Anachronism, *RuneQuest* introduced a unique roll-low D100 system, and combat mechanics that saw limbs severed and heads decapitated. Every fight could suddenly end with a perfect blow or a disastrous fumble.

Greg Stafford also pointed out to Game Masters that if the adventurers turn and flee screaming, to not forget that the "monsters get experience rolls too". In other words, the creatures they encounter have their own lives, motivations and connections, and intelligent ones have societies and cultures. This was ground breaking for the early days of RPGs, where even "good" characters seemed to just go round a dungeon killing monsters and taking their stuff.

In 1980 the *RuneQuest* rules were condensed to *Basic Roleplaying*, a 16-page powerhouse that was the engine for all subsequent RPGs. And in 1981, Chaosium published a new game by Sandy Petersen using the *Basic Roleplaying* system: *Call of Cthulhu*.

This would change everything. Again.

Inspired by the cosmic horror pulps of decades passed, *Call of Cthulhu* exchanged swords, tunnels, and goblins for flashlights, forbidden tomes, and twisted cultists. This game offered an investigative horror experience where the player characters were fragile and survival was not guaranteed. The peril was not just not from being eaten by monsters, but from seeing horrible sights and learning more than the human mind can stand.

At the time, many of the short stories that *Call of Cthulhu* was based on were hard to find, making playing the game one of the most accessible ways to engage with the works of H.P. Lovecraft. Indeed, finding copies of those original tales often required the same kind of Library Use skill so often asked of the investigators in the game.

But *Call of Cthulhu* wasn't the only game with a more contemporary setting. What made it stand out was the world, and how the game approached exploring the horrors that humankind could not comprehend. In *Call of Cthulhu*, fighting monsters was a one-way ticket to the morgue, investigators had to hide and use their wits; without extensive combat, the game was pure story and roleplaying—unlike anything else.

Published a full decade prior to horror games like *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *Call of Cthulhu* drew in gamers with a promise of mystery, investigation, and almost certain death. Chaosium games were acknowledged as a seminal influence on *Vampire* and all the *White Wolf* storyteller games—Chaosium was the first company to put story first.

Chaosium flourished throughout the 80s, and continued to be an industry leader by being the first company to expand its games

into literary worlds. *Stormbringer* (based on the Elric dark fantasy novels by Michael Moorcock), *ElfQuest* (from the Dark Horse comic written and penned by Richard & Wendy Pini), *Ringworld* (based on the "Known Space" hard-science fiction of Larry Niven) and of Chaosium founder Greg Stafford's masterpiece *Pendragon* (inspired by the Arthurian legends, but chiefly Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*).

From the early days the seminal UK store Games Workshop imported Chaosium games, introducing them to an all-new market outside of the United States. Games Workshop also covered Chaosium games in *White Dwarf* magazine, leading to gorgeous licensed hardback editions of *Call of Cthulhu*, *Stormbringer* and *RuneQuest*, and original supplements such as *Green & Pleasant Land*. Local UK fanzines also sprang up: *Dagon* for *Call of Cthulhu*, and *Tales of the Reaching Moon* for *RuneQuest*.

It has not always been sunshine and roses for Chaosium, however. The 1990s saw the trading card game boom with *Magic: the Gathering*, *Netrunner*, *Legend of the Five Rings*, *Pokemon*, and countless others lost to time. In 1996, Chaosium broke its own sales records with *Mythos*, a trading card game based on the worlds of the popular *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game. *Mythos* won awards and critical acclaim, but despite initial success, the company was forced to discontinue the game due to an unforeseeable decline in sales after the first set.

Flashing forward to the 2010s, Kickstarter obligations threatened to sink Chaosium once and for all. A group of four fans—now accomplished career men in their own right—pooled their passion and resources and bought controlling ownership of the company. Since 2016 they have not just kept Chaosium alive, but have seen it thrive.

Following the change in management, Chaosium successfully released *Call of Cthulhu* 7th edition to critical acclaim, with the line going from strength to strength, with many supplements winning awards and adoration from the fans—passion for *Call of Cthulhu* has seen it become the world's second most popular TTRPG behind the original *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Chaosium also released *RuneQuest: Roleplaying in Glorantha*, an all-new edition of the classic game from 1978. In 2017 Chaosium further returned to its roots by producing board games again after a twenty year hiatus, winning multiple ENNIE awards with its first two releases. 2024 saw the hugely successful crowdfunding campaign for *Horror on the Orient Express: The Board Game*, due to hit retail shelves in 2025.

Greg Stafford sadly passed away in October 2018, but not before seeing the company he founded ushered into this new, modern golden age of tabletop gaming.

While the visionary Greg Stafford is no longer with us, his spirit lives on in the Chaosium tribe, his passion and masterful game design, and the final edition of *Pendragon*, which he personally considered to be his *Magnum Opus*, which Chaosium published in 2024.

"The first published RPG was Dungeons & Dragons, shortly followed by some other imitative games. Chaosium, however, was never content to imitate but published games that were original in style of play, content and design. We quickly became renowned for our originality and creativity, and were responsible for introducing many things to the hobby that are standard today."

- Greg Stafford, Chaosium Founder (1948-2018)





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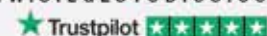
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ILLUSTRATIONS : YURI JANG



PLAY WITH THE CAT CAFÉ KITTIES IN CAT CAFÉ

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YOU WILL NEED

5 six-sided dice / 4 pens / copies of cat tower sheet opposite

GAME PREPARATION

Give each player a sheet and a pen. Put one dice per player plus one extra dice in the centre of the table.

The player who most recently saw a cat becomes the first player in the first round.

ROUND PROGRESS

1. The first player throws all the dice in the center of the table.
2. Starting with the first player and moving clockwise each player picks one dice and places it in front of them.
3. After every player picks a dice, there will be one dice left in the center of the table. All players now mark on their sheets in accordance with the following rules:

1) Players must use two numbers. One is the number on the dice that they chose, and the other is the number on the dice remaining in the centre of the table.

2) One of these numbers determines which item (e.g. 2 for a ball of wool) and the other number is the row in which the item will be marked. (Fig.1) (You can draw a picture of an item or write an item name.)

Example - If your chosen dice shows a 6 and the remaining dice a 4, you can mark the 6th item 'Mouse' in the one of the 4th-floor-hexes. Or mark the 4th item "Bowl" in the one of the 6th-floor-hexes. Note: Only one item in one hex and you can only use hexes that have a number.

3) You can pass without marking an item. In this case, mark O on a single not-marked footprint on the right side of the sheet.

- Function of footprints: You can increase or decrease by 1 the number from a dice, by marking X on the one of the O marked footprints on your turn. (Fig.2)

- Multiple footprints can be used simultaneously.

Example - If the numbers on the dice are 2 and 4, using 3 footprints, 2 can be used as 1 (-1), 4 can be used as 6 (+2)

4) If all player's markings are finished, check there is a player who has completed a column of the cat tower this round.

Completion of the column: all hexes in the column are filled with items one of which must be a cat house

- If the column is completed for the first time during the game, the player(s) who completed should mark O on the large number on the top of that column. Other players place an X on that larger number.

- If the same column is completed during later rounds, those player(s) will mark the small number with an O.

5) If someone has completed three columns, the game ends at the end of this round. If not, the player to the left of the first player starts the next round as the new first player.

GAME END AND SCORING

1. Each player calculates the score for each item. Write the corresponding score in the space where each item is drawn.
2. Add up all items, cats, and column scores (O marked numbers on the columns). The player with the highest score wins. If tied, win together.

EFFECTS OF ITEMS

1. **House:** After marking a house on the sheet, choose a cat that has not been scored yet. Immediately score 2 points for each of the items on your sheet that are shown below each cat. (The items that give the score differ depending on the cat.) Write down the number of points below that cat. (Fig.3)
2. **Yarn:** At the end of the game, players count the number of yarns per column. The player with the most yarns in a column gets 8 points, and other players with at least one yarn get 3 points. If there is a tie for most yarn, each tied player gets 8 points.

3. **Butterfly:** Immediately mark O on two un-marked footprints. At the end of the game, you receive 2 points for each butterfly.
4. **Bowl:** At the end of the game, food bowls give 1 point per each different adjacent item.
5. **Cushion:** At the end of the game, each cushion scores points equal to the number of the hex it is drawn in.
6. **Mouse:** At the end of the game you receive 2/6/12/20 points depending on the number of mice connected in a chain.

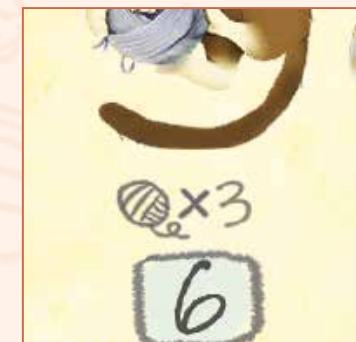
FIG. 1

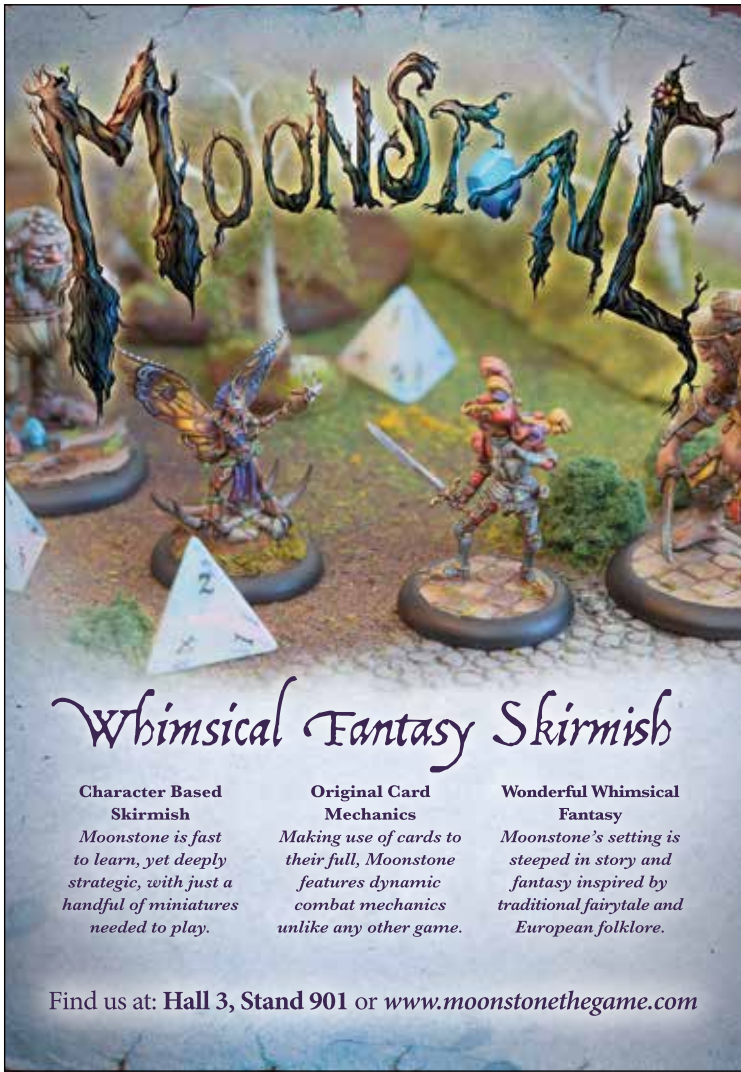


FIG. 2



FIG. 3





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THE DARK ROOM'S GUIDE TO THE UK GAMES EXPO

YOU AWAKE TO FIND YOURSELF WRITING IN A MAGAZINE!

Hello, folks! Hope you're enjoying the UK Games Expo so far! I'm personally enjoying my usual highlights – slobbering over dice I can't afford and getting sucked into playing wargames I can't understand (it doesn't matter if it's historically accurate or historically accurate to a war with space marines in the future - I've got no sense of strategy, I just get bored and start making the minifigs kiss.)

I'm delighted to be back at UKGE, loaded to the gills with three shows this year:

The Dark Room (9:30pm Friday night) – this is the legendary live-action videogame comedy improv show that tours the planet and pays for little things like my rent, heat, food and minifigs who kiss.

The Dark Room Til Ya Die (9:00pm Saturday night) – this is The Dark Room but in a marathon form only available to UKGE! Featuring high-octane in-jokes, special guests and Viking raids, this is the high-octane game show that keeps going

until I'm physically unable to. Featuring copious amounts of pop culture slander and sometimes even actual content*.

John Robertson Plays With The Audience (1:30pm Sunday) – fresh, bright, hungover and dead from the previous show, this is me roadtesting my new geeky/gamer stand-up show for the Edinburgh Fringe and a UK-wide tour that's starting in September! (And honestly, where better to test a new show than with lovely people who completely understand that when you're playing a game that's reality, your day job is just a LARP that's badly designed.)

Aside from that, I'll be wandering about the con, having a wild time! If you're stuck for something to do, here's a stack of things I recommend:

The Live Acts – all the live shows at UKGE are good this year, and funny too! There's Sam See's guillotine game show *Off With Your Head*, improv RPG *Questiny*, Juliette Burton's cosplay stand-up show *Going Rogue*, *Knightmare Live* (celebrating their 10th anniversary tour), the delirious *Blood On The Clocktower*, *Werewolf Live* and internet juggernauts *No Rolls Barred*. *Jollyboat* are bringing their pirate-themed nerd comedy songs and *The Magic Of Terry Pratchett* is as funny as you'd want a show about Terry Pratchett to be. Plus, there's Tom Crosbie, fresh from being on US television and winning a prize from the deeply famous *Penn & Teller*. Oh – and a stack of free shows, too!

*Ha! This, like ever getting something you ordered from Kickstarter, is not guaranteed.

Somewhere, hidden in this programme is a flamboyant potato. Can you find it?

Go Stare At The Vikings For A Bit

– outside, by the lake, is a Viking camp. They fight each other and light fires. Sometimes the geese that live in the lake become annoyed with the Vikings. This is an ongoing saga that I highly recommend.

Behold The Cosplay

– do you like Warhammer miniatures? Do you like them better when they're ten feet tall and contain a Welsh guy dying of heatstroke? Yes you do! Whether it's an outfit they've spent millions of hours making or just somebody running around in a costume they got at the shops, cosplayers are awesome.

Check Out The Stalls

– there's lots of great places to buy boardgames at UKGE, but make sure you check out the independent artists, not only have they spent time crafting art, they're also being brave and sitting next to it. (Top tip: be

polite to the folks running shops, not only are they great people, they've all got weapons that deal +5 damage to dorks who say things like "I can get this cheaper online" or "I could make that with AI".)

Play A Game

– whether it's folks showcasing their new work, or something you found in the boardgames library, you'll be able to find something to play at UKGE. My favourites over the years have been: *Dice Hospital*, *Fire Tower*, *Cthulhu Fluxx*, *Thieves*, a game about bees whose name escapes me but it was 2am and I'm not even sure bees were involved, *The Fuzzies*, *Tsuro*, *Yogi*, and of course, an old favourite, *Standing In The Theatre After The Dark Room Til Ya Die* (Single-player, 20 mins or as long as it takes to apologise to the hotel staff.)

See you out there, Darrens!
John Robertson



See page 14 for more details on the UKGE's live entertainment.

BY JOHN ROBERTSON



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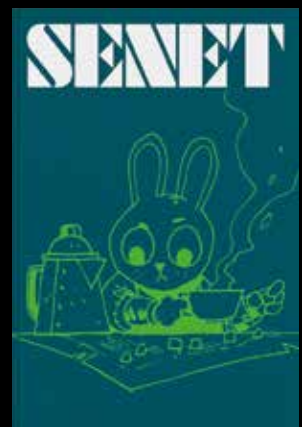
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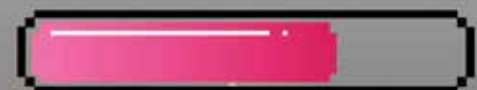
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A TIME TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO GAMING IN ANCIENT ROME

The Roman Forum – a place of crowds, scheming and rivalry - has no greater comparison than a modern board game café. Carved into any flat public surface of marble or stone, the Forum hosts as many board games as it does senate meetings and court cases. To reign supreme over dice and counters, however, any traveller to Rome must read this handy guide of boardgame know-how to blend in without raising suspicions. After reading, you will confidently be able to seek out fellow players, impress them with your play, and build your legacy.

Gaming, as you well know, encourages a healthy dose of socialisation and competition. Roman games are all multiplayer, resulting in time spent with friends, strangers, and perhaps foes. Of course, unless you are travelling to Rome with friends, the majority of your opponents

will be strangers. These will be harder to impress, although innumerable in number. But don't fret, for playing with strangers is incredibly common in ancient Rome, and the perfect opportunity to showcase your wit, cunning and riches.

You may try to win friends, like emperor Augustus did, by gifting them your hard-earned coins to gamble at dinner parties, or perhaps you will remain a lone wolf and wager everything you have. However, keep in mind that gambling is not technically legal, unless it's the festival of Saturnalia.

As poet Martial informs us, Saturnalia is the best time to exchange board game-themed gifts, such as knucklebones, dice, or glass soldiers. These are pretty common in the Roman world, so to really impress, you'll need to splurge on the finest gaming

equipment: like a polished wooden game board with marble inlay (double-sided to maximise your collection) or exquisite playing pieces of precious stones and metals. Alternatively, you can level the playing field by gifting the local cheater a dice tower, to keep all play fair.

Now that you've got your equipment ready, let us highlight some of the best gaming destinations Rome has to offer.

In the streets, you could set your sights on local youths playing games with walnuts – throwing them, placing them or just whacking them together. Yet these childhood games will not solidify your reputation as the one to beat.

Elsewhere in the city, on any street corner, you could try your luck in the caupona: the local pub that feeds all of Rome's common folk.

Unlike yourself, most Romans do not have kitchens at home, and so come to the caupona to eat, drink, and game, before, between, and after work. Here, you're likely to be playing games of chance with dice or tali. Tali are four-sided dice (usually made of knucklebones) that could be used in games similar to poker, where players throw them and wager bets against their showings. The throw that you're looking for here is all four dice showing different sides: the coveted 'Venus' throw. With a bit of prayer to the gods, you may find yourself on a lucky streak. Alternatively, in a simpler game, players throw the knucklebones and try to catch them all (an abridged form of Pokémon, in a way).

If you prefer a more sophisticated establishment, away from the drunken spectatorship of the caupona, the next best location is the baths. They must come with a warning however, that clothing is indeed discouraged. Here, you might try a more relaxing game, such as Terni Lapilli ("Three Pebbles") whilst exfoliating with oil. Or maybe take a stroll out to the palaestra, the baths' exercise yard, to engage in a classic game of marbles. All of Rome's citizens partake in the ritual of the baths. Steaming, overheating, freezing,

and washing their bodies of Roman life's muck. So please, do not feel intimidated if you find yourself dropping the kids off at the pool next to your local Senator. In fact, he may invite you to a game on the inscribed game board between your seats.

Unquestionably, the most urbane of all places to play is the Roman Forum. Here is the bustling centre of Rome's governance; you will find law courts, temples and crowds of people waiting around for the slow proceedings of running an empire. You may find some more inspiring competitors here, those learned and hungry for rivalry, as well as some more aspiring competitors, trying to rise their way up through the social ranks. All along the steps of the law courts, carved game boards are found. While the streets suit childish games of nuts, the caupona drunken games of chance, and the baths relaxing games of dexterity, the Forum is the place for strategy.

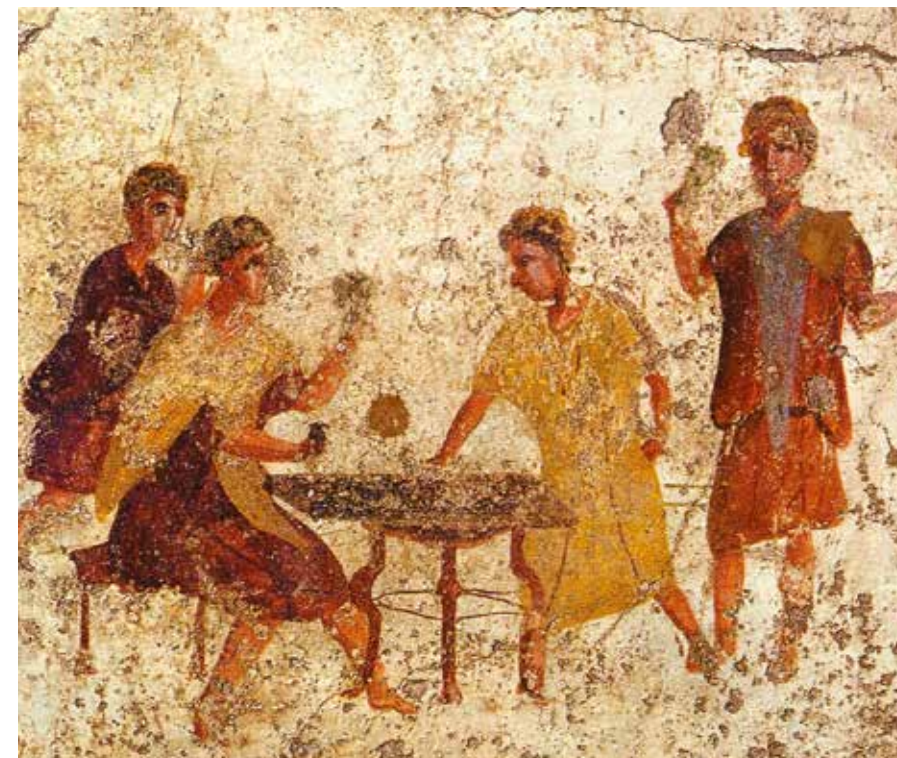
Why not challenge yourself to a Roman backgammon-style game, XII scripta. This game utilises dice to move, and a board featuring three rows of twelve spaces (sometimes six six-letter words in pairs). To really show off your literary skills, you could even draw up a new board with clever

Not quite the ancient Forum
of Rome, but see page 7 for
where you can play games.



wordplay. Or perhaps, if you are seeking the most strategic game Rome has to offer, ludus latrunculorum, the "game of little soldiers", may be for you. This game uses no dice, and so eliminates any aspect of chance. You will need to block players, using coloured counters, and take their pieces, planning your moves many turns in advance. Try not to showboat too much with your board game experience - you don't want to get on the wrong side of Rome's leading personage. As Ovid suggests, perhaps losing occasionally may gain you some favour.

You may have read this guide and wondered, where is the murder mystery game; where can I buy hotels and destroy friendships; where can I inhabit a three-foot sickle-wielding dwarf named Steve? Alas, Roman board games may seem less thematic than the wide variety available to us today. Yet, with all focus on the gameplay itself, it's the perfect place to show off your strategic skills. Board games were used to socialise, to blow off steam, to strengthen relationships, and to challenge status and intellect. Now you too can be the next best gamer in the Roman Forum.



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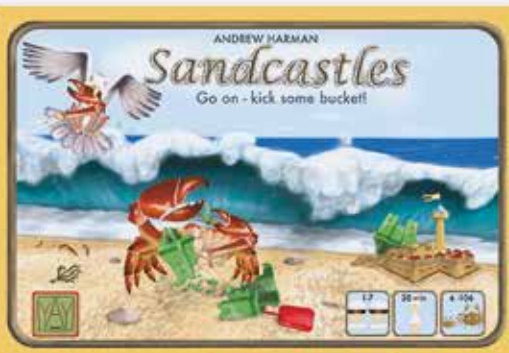
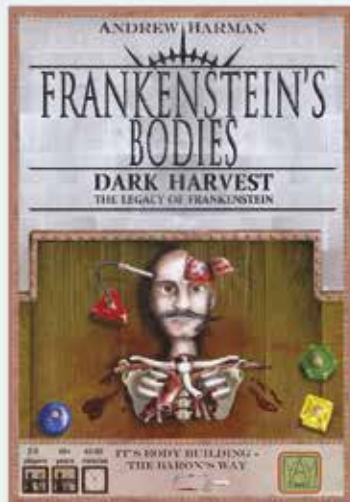
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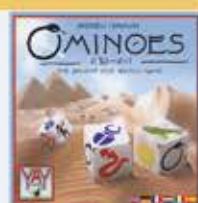
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BY DAVE NORDQUIST
www.MiniWarGaming.com



Never in a million years did I think I'd see a plastic miniature figurine and my mood would instantly shift to a happy one. Absurd right? I'm Dave Nordquist a.k.a. MiniWarGamer Dave, I've been collecting miniatures just shy of twenty years, and I can't get enough of them! But I don't just collect any ol' minis, no sirree, I mostly collect chaos-infused, spiky-armoured super soldiers that spread fear and sow seeds of despair and corruption across the galaxy. Put a chaos lord with skulls and gore in front of me and I'm sold!

I assure you, in real life, I'm not a blood-crazed maniac... well at least I hope I'm not haha. I'm pretty sure I fit that same demographic you'd never suspect would collect such miniatures. You know who I'm talking about right? The "average dude." But we exist in droves and I'm proud to call myself a wargamer.

Back in 2007, I started a miniature wargaming club with my childhood friend Matthew Glanfield and that's when I first laid eyes on a Chaos Space Marine. There was something about the aesthetic that called to me. Perhaps it was the overt rebellious nature of the infantry. They seemed to desire something bigger and better than the status

quo; I was instantly hooked. Over the years I'd collect more and more until eventually I'd acquire thousands of them.

To view my entire collection of demonic miniatures it requires nine 6-foot tables and takes two people about 8 hours to set up. That's if I want to see all the minis neatly lined up in their respective units. I accept that collecting miniatures, especially at the scale I do, can be an obsession. I figure there are much worse things to be obsessed about so it helps me to justify collecting more. Plus, it has afforded me the opportunity to meet fellow wargamers from across the globe. That's something I cherish considering I grew up in a small town and never thought I'd travel the world. I'm fortunate that I get to make YouTube videos and post content about these minis which helps to sustain a larger collection which continues to grow every year.

Storing my collection requires a healthy amount of space and as a default I keep my minis in cardboard trays for easy access. I've been criticized many times for how I store them. People have told me I should enclose them in plastic containers that have lids. I'd rather spend the funds on more

minis if I'm being honest. Plus, by having them out in the open-topped trays I see them on a daily basis and I'm aware of their existence. There's nothing more tragic than a wonderful collection of painted minis stored away for no one to see.

It's my opinion that miniatures are meant to be admired and depending on the intended paint jobs, to be played with too. I once had a game using all of my collection of chaos marines versus a fellow collector named Kyle who owns an absurd amount of Orc-inspired minis he calls Broozers. The battle lasted 4 days and we were exhausted by the end but it was by far the most epic tabletop experience I've ever had!

So the next time you pick up a miniature I invite you to ask yourself a question; ask yourself "does this mini pass the rule of cool?" Let's define the rule of cool as something that looks fun and is pleasing to your eye. If the mini passes this, you might just be a wargamer in embryo waiting to be unleashed on the tabletop through hoards of miniature battles. Who knows, maybe we'll bump into each other at a tabletop gaming convention. Happy wargaming!

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Richard Denning and Tony Hyams would like to thank everyone who helped plan, build and run UKGE 2025 – the largest tabletop games show ever run in the UK. In particular we thank –

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