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EMOTIONS OF GAMES

Adding heart and soul to cardboard bits and pieces







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...when all they want to **do**...

... is to eliminate you?



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"A casual board (or card) game is played in under an hour, set up and taught in under 10 minutes, and requires some light strategic thought. Casual games are not specifically marketed to children, but can be enjoyed by anyone from older children to adults."



Be Evil., ish





Bezier Games, Inc. publishes award-winning party and strategy games, including Werewords, One Night Ultimate Werewolf, The Palace of Mad King Ludwig, Suburbia, New York Slice, and Castles of Mad King Ludwig.

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ThamesAndKosmos.com



Here at the Wild East Game Company we believe that good clean fun builds good clean friendships and it's our mission to help build those friendships through family friendly games.





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StratusGames.com



A body was found in Hyde Park and the commissioner has just put you on the case. It's not your first murder investigation, but with the vague details the commissioner gave you, something about this one feels worse than usual.

You leave the police station, get in your car and close the door. You think about what you just heard. You already know you'll have to speak to the family, and that's never an easy task. You shake off your thoughts, start the engine, and drive towards the crime scene. It's time to get to work.

Chronicles of Crime, designed by David Cicurel, is Lucky Duck Games' most funded board game on Kickstarter to date, with 9,108 backers raising a whopping \$795,244! In the game, 1 to 4 players will work together to solve a number of criminal cases, interview witnesses or suspects, and search for clues in 3D scenes. Enabled by our "Scan & Play" technology in the companion app, each character, location, or evidence is linked to a QR code. This means that each character can become someone else, each district can be linked to a different place, and 3D scenes can be reinvented.

When searching for physical evidence, players may use VR glasses to experience the crime scene as if they were there. While the player looking at the scene describes out loud what they see, the other players try to find the matching evidence categories. After the 45-second session ends, each category is scanned to see if it actually carries an interest to the investigation.







RED COVER STORY

The base game comes with six scenarios (one tutorial and five investigations) for a total of six-to-eight hours of gameplay. Inside the box, there are over 52 character cards, 35 evidence categories, 10 special items cards, 4 forensic contacts player boards, 17 location boards, and 1 evidence board. Expansions coming early 2019 include Welcome to Redview and Noir.

Inspired by the eighties, Welcome to Redview finds its roots in movies and shows such as The Goonies, Twin Peaks, Buffy, or more recently Stranger Things. David Cicurel and Ghislain Masson are both experienced roleplayers and worked together to give a touch of fantasy and dice rolling, building an entirely new kind of

Noir is an expansion authored by Stephane Antequil, a very talented writer with credentials including Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective scenarios and a number of escape room books. For this expansion, we wanted to bring something new to the Chronicles of Crime universe in terms of gameplay and mechanics. In Noir, the whole group is collectively representing a single private detective with unconventional methods.

For the future of **Chronicles** of Crime, more expansions will be coming in 2019, including Cyber Punk and more. Lucky Duck Games will continue to develop more content for the game and make Chronicles of Crime a very immersive experience for its players.





A Tour through Essen SPIEL 2018



Helena Tzioti Geek Mom, Journalist, and Game Promoter



or yet another year in a row, Internationale Spieltage SPIEL (or commonly known as SPIEL) 🗖 in Essen, Germany had record attendance for its annual game fair. In fact, an estimated 190,000 visitors made this year's event the biggest game fair not only in Europe, but also in the world. Some attendees even said that the halls were (in total) 12 times as big as the halls in Gen Con, North America's largest game fair hosted in Indiana. Though I haven't attended Gen Con yet, what I can tell you is this: in my seven years of attendance, SPIEL has grown. From three large halls (one of which was not of significant game importance), this year's game fair had a total of six halls, each fully packed and filled with great things!



Left: Messe Essen, the venue where SPIEL is hosted (photo by Asio otus, Wikimedia Commons); Right: people of all ages enjoy the sights, sounds, and experiences at the fair (photos by Friedhelm Merz Verlag GmbH).

A BRIEF TOUR

One of the main entrances of Messe Essen, where the event is hosted, leads to Hall 3. I start here as it is the hall with the largest publishers. This year, Asmodee prevails. I would dare to say that around one-third of the hall belonged to this colossus. And admittedly it has one of the best-looking booths throughout the fair; thematic presentation for each of its companies, with emphasis on new titles as well as best sellers.

All the big German publishers are in this hall – Amigo, Drei
Magier, Zoch Verlag, Pegasus, and HABA – while other
publishers like AEG, IELLO, and Plan B also have their booths
there. Hall 3 is the more family-oriented hall. That's how I
have it in mind. If you are a casual gamer, a family with kids,
and/or want to find English language games, then Hall 3 is
the first place you need to go.The next hall that really made an impression to me was Hall
6. Games Workshop was transferred there this year and,
suddenly, this hall was turned into the miniatures and tabletop
paradise. Warlord, Steamforged, Para Bellum, Grimlord, and
so many others offered their minis and had beautiful setup
and dioramas for their games. Truly a wonderful sight, even
if you don't play miniatures games.

The rest of the halls were what I would call a joy for the explorers. So many wonderful games; little diamonds hidden in small booths, all beautifully presented. One of the pros of this hall is that the food and snack options are literally everywhere. From sandwiches to spiral potatoes, kebabs, and ice cream, you could find anything to satisfy your needs. Of course, with so many attendees come long lines, especially in snack shops at lunch time. But this is to be expected at the biggest convention around.

Attendees enjoy the latest games on display, from dice and dexterity games to more strategic Euro games (photos by Friedhelm Merz Verlag GmbH).

THE HIGHLIGHTS

My favorite part of the show was sitting down and playing
a game that will be on Kickstarter next year. Vampire: The
Masquerade - Heritage is a legacy board game by Nice
Game Publishing. I had the privilege of having the designer,
Babis Giannios, explain the game and play with us.Another game that really caught my attention was Tainted
Grail: Fall of Avalon by Awaken Realms. (This is also going
to be on Kickstarter soon.) It is a heavier cooperative game
that "combines exploration, survival, character development,
immersive storytelling and card-driven combat and non-combat
encounters into an adventure experience set in an original
universe." I couldn't describe it any better than the publisher.

The game is very fast-paced and streamlined. Giannios explained everything in five minutes and we started playing soon after. In *V:TM* – *Heritage*, you take on the role of one of the ancient vampires. Essentially what you are trying to do in the game is influence different battlegrounds with the characters you have under your command and fulfill the history-based missions. The game plays over 700 years, and at the end of every one hundred years you choose one of the characters, create a unique name for them, and give them a special ability.

I am quite familiar with the *Vampire: The Masquerade* IP, so I wanted to see what this game was all about. I was surprised with how easy it was to learn *Heritage*, but also how deep the game got. Also, don't be afraid of the "legacy" bit — there's no tearing cards or destroying game components. In fact, I don't see a reason why you can't play the game again after the 700-year period. I will be sure to check this out on Kickstarter when the time comes.



Vampire: The Masquerade – Heritage and Tainted Grail: Fall of Avalon



Booths from major game publishers jam-packed with visitors (photo by Friedhelm Merz Verlag GmbH)

TOP 5 GAMES FOR CASUAL GAMERS

152 + I+I+I



Roll-and-write games are really hot now (see page 22 to learn more), so I couldn't skip this one from the list. Getting its debut in Essen by Horrible Games and published by CMON, this is a multiplayer puzzle game. Throughout the game, players try to connect as many exits as they can on the erasable board that is in front of them, while at the same time optimizing the symbols they use. Simply roll the predetermined set of dice in the middle of the table. All players use these dice to determine what kind of routes and roads are available in this round. The more exits one connects, the more points they score.

The game comes in two editions, red and blue. Each has additional dice sets that add special rules to the game. The blue edition adds lakes and ferries, while the red version adds lava and meteors into the mix. Each of those spices up the gameplay, so you'll have a very interesting playthrough with both.



Trellis 2-4 players, 20-30 minutes

Judging by my list, you might have figured out by now that I love great looking games. And oh my, does Trellis look awesome! The game is also incredibly easy to learn. In Trellis, players want to make their flowers bloom down all the connecting vines.

On their turn, each player places a tile on the table that depicts several colorful vines. Players then try to connect vines of the same color so their flowers will bloom. Players claim vines by placing a flower on each vine of the same color. The first player to place all of their flowers wins the game.

I dare say that this is probably my favorite game of the fair. *Trellis* is both simple and elegant — just like a great



casual game should be! This was really a last-minute release for Breaking Games, and it was spot on. Totally in character with the show, which prides its family-friendly and casual character.



Zoar 2-4 players, 30-45 minutes

The beautiful box art and the cute meeples that can carry other components really grabbed my attention in the latest board game from Vesuvius Media. In this game, you play as a tribe leader who tries to retrieve their ancient relic and bring it back to their hometown. But alas — the others will try to stop you!

Players will gather much-needed resources to raise armies and build cities, all the while battling other players for possession of the relic. The first to bring their relic back home or to destroy a specific number of cities wins. It's as simple as that!

The game is a fast-paced race to victory, and after the game is over you'll find yourself wanting to play again. This is definitely a game that deserves your attention.







The River 2-4 players, 30-45 minutes

I left the classic for last. Days of Wonder makes one publication per year, and The River was this year's novelty. In this game, players try to create the best pioneer settlement by developing land along a river bed in their town. At the same time, players collect resources from their area and construct buildings. This has more of a eurogame feeling, as it is a worker- and tile-placement game. As the game proceeds, your workers will have more things to do and more burdens to bear, while at the same time they will need to build elegant towns.

Although this looks like a heavier game, it is fun and simple, offering enough depth to please a casual gamer and hobbyist alike. ⊡



Men at Work 2-5 players, 30-45 minutes

I asked Rita Modl, the designer of Men at Work, how difficult it was to design a dexterity game. Her answer: "Not really!" Well I don't know if it's difficult to make a dexterity game, but building a construction site, let alone making it a safe one, can prove to be a challenge!

In Men at Work from Pretzel Games, you play as a worker on a job site, and you need to carefully construct a tower. Over the course of the game, you need to avoid all accidents and keep your cute workers (with hats) safe. If you are super careful, you may be employee of the month! But if you are not, you might lose a safety certificate, and who wants that?

There's so much to do in this game, and it is so much fun! So, get to work!





STEP BY STEP, STEP BY WORD, WORD BY WORD, TO DEEP ADVENTURE...



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Curt Covert Chief Instigator of Smirky Good Times

There are so many ways to approach designing a game and an inexhaustible well of inspiration available using just a handful of tools. But I'm not talking about dice, cards, or any of the joyful bits that come packed in each box. To add heart and soul to a game, you must reach deeper than the physical pieces on the table. A game only comes to life by being able to engage people mentally, emotionally, and/or socially—and to do that, game designers craft the means to impact players on this level, subtly woven into the fabric of the rules and mechanics of play.



As the owner of Smirk & Dagger/Smirk & Laughter Games, my personal design philosophy centers on narrative and emotional engagement. Stated simply, I want players to 'feel' something as they play – and to lead them on a journey. Tension, joy, fear, surprise, disappointment, and triumph are just a few of many primal emotions that drive us as humans. Tapping into those emotions is what makes playing games more memorable. When done well, the game will spark unforgettable moments that they'll tell stories about, even weeks later.

It can be likened to going out to see a movie. In the theater, you lose yourself in the story, thrill to the action, get caught up in the characters and their plights, cheer their successes and feel the sting of their heartaches. You are able to live vicariously through them, even when passively sitting in the dark. So it stands to reason that

To start, you'll want to decide what you want that If it sounds like I'm writing a script, you wouldn't be far experience to be for players, which is often tied directly off. Like any story, there is a beginning and an end. In to the game's theme. If the players were actually in this the game's setup, you are given the thematic setting world, how do I, as the designer, want them to feel? and your objectives. You are also told how to win - or How do I want it to change over the course of play? how you will lose. What lies between is the tricky part. What rewards can I build in to excite them, and what A designer has to find a way to reliably present a richly obstacles do I place in their path to confound them satisfying experience that delivers on the promise of or raise tension? Faced with this, what pathways will the game's theme, presents important choices to make, and still ends up feeling consistent every time someone you take to determine your fate? Are the stakes high enough to make you care about what happens, so the sits down to play. Obviously, that can't be scripted like act of playing feels more important than simply pushing dialogue in a movie. So instead, designers will create behavioral funnels to guide and curate the experience cubes around a board? they want you to have.



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Here's an example to help illustrate. Imagine you are an adventurer, traveling with a group of other dungeoneers. You have just found the most powerful relic in the known world and it works its unnatural influence on you. You must possess it at any cost — but you must also escape the caverns alive. If you do not work together, you will all die. But if you don't betray them, you will never get the edge you need to win.

This is the story of our rather lethal, semi-cooperative game, *Cutthroat Caverns*. My goal in designing it was to create a feeling of constant distrust, balancing the needs of the many with the selfish needs of yourself.



The very real threat of death (player elimination) from the creatures you encounter pushes people to work together in earnest, keeping everyone alive, at least until the end of the game. But throughout, I weave as many devious reward systems as possible to tempt players to act in ways contrary to everyone's interests but their own. It verges on being a social experiment, but the reliably consistent result is that the game elicits a somewhat sinister joy in planning the demise of others, outrage at the transgressions of others - and laughter over how far players will go to win. And when people leave the table, Cutthroat Caverns they aren't talking about how they optimized play to better encourages cooperation their score, but instead are talking about the drama, the to defeat enemies while highs and lows, and what they experienced in story terms. also including devious



Of course, the experiences and feelings you elicit from your luck' mechanics can add the drama of risk/reward players will vary widely. As previously mentioned, the scenarios which heighten tension. A lurking 'hidden experience will be consistent with the game's theme, and traitor' is a wonderful device in creating unease and can range from the pathos of wanting to save helpless suspicion. There is a heroic drama to 'one player vs. animals, to the boisterous laughter of a social party game, many' scenarios. A simple timer can raise tension, an unknown-but-serious threat can evoke fear. Want a to the tension of walking blindly into the unknown. But for each, the designer will make certain behaviors more or heartwarming feeling of wellbeing and community? Try less attractive – and therefore more likely – by creating a mechanic that encourages player appreciation, which reward and punishment systems as behavioral funnels. is great in games asking players to be creative. Forcing ridiculous mistakes gives rise to laughter. These are just a few examples of common mechanics and how they Many existing mechanics have been used to great

effect in creating emotionally driven game play. 'Push can make players feel.



The narrative doesn't need to be literal. You needn't add actual story text in the game to create narrative. In most cases, it is sufficient to place players into the world of the game, give them the context, and let them loose to improvise the action as new challenges or pathways to success emerge. It's about creating a flexible story arc Tower of Madness introduces tension by requiring players into the act of playing the game. to remove Cthulhu's tentacles (which hold up marbles).

reward systems.

all strikes the player who wounded most in the Round for 10 LP

Yet a mechanic is only a means to an end. A 'jump scare' doesn't necessarily make a truly frightening horror movie, it is just an emotionally evocative tactic. Similarly, it is the skillful use of game mechanics woven into a compelling narrative that makes the game immersive. Like any good story, a game needs proper pacing, rising and falling action, complicating circumstances, a building climax and dramatic conclusion. You become the hero while the antagonist is played by the other players or the game itself.



players' actions on each turn.

Theme Building Exercise

For example, if you have a game about paramedics unique every time yet consistent in the narrative it tells saving lives, the pace should be swift, the tension and the emotions it evokes. constant. Perhaps you place in a timer, theme it as an EKG measuring patient heart-rates. You struggle to treat Naturally, none of this is intended to take place in a patients in time, manage supplies for their treatment vacuum. Board games are social experiences, after and send them to the hospital (rising and falling action), all. In creating the game's narrative, objectives, and when suddenly you don't have the supplies you need, mechanics, you are also creating the laws which govern the time to treat them drops severely, or a patient is how players will interact with one another. So make in critical condition and has to be saved now - or them consistent with all you have built. How players dies. The clock is the enemy, and only by pushing hard are pitted against one another or come together to and taking a few risks will you emerge as the best achieve a goal is integrally linked to the feeling of play. paramedic in the city. In this example, the narrative is Look for opportunities to allow players to bounce off directly tied to the mechanics and the actions a player one another, adding to the narrative cues and emotional needs to take as they play. So, it is never a rote script, impact of their decisions. They will immediately be more but a construct that leads players to act in certain ways, invested in the outcome and delight in every moment.

Below: Cards from Smirk & Laughter titles Koi and Before There Were Stars...











In the end, it's the careful blending of narrative and Curt Covert is the owner of Smirk & Dagger Games. For mechanic, of applied logic and emotional resonance, the past fifteen years, Curt has been causing a stir with and the orchestration of player interaction that can emotionally-charged gameplay, and is the inventor of make a game suddenly more than just an interesting Cutthroat Caverns, Tower of Madness, and Nevermore, mental puzzle. Stir the emotions. Place players in the just to name a few. Smirk & Laughter, his new sub-brand, center of a tale they control. Take a moment to find continues that tradition for a broader audience than ever. the heart in your game, both as a designer and as a player, appreciating the fullness of the creator's work in a whole new way. 🔝





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Roll Models Yahtzee and the Rise of Roll-and-Write Games



Dann Albright

Freelance Journalist and Lifelong Board Gamer

There's something immensely pleasing about the sound of dice clattering on a table. Maybe it's the tension inherent in the sound, the held breath as each die slowly decides whether to bestow blessing or curse. Or maybe it's just that so many people grew up playing—and loving—Yahtzee.

There are few games that are more easily recognizable alternatives for fans of roll-and-write games (of which than Yahtzee. Even the name of the game has made its Yahtzee is one – don't worry, we'll talk about what that way into popular culture. means in a moment).

And it's no surprise; Yahtzee is a great game. It's easy Let's check out a few modern dice games and see what to learn, fun to play, and offers plenty of variety. But they have to offer to fans of the venerable dice-chucker. Yahtzee is also showing its age. There are now lots of





What Are Roll-and-Write Games?

Just like it sounds, roll-and-write games have players consider games that use cards instead of dice to be rolling dice and marking something down on a roll-and-writes. Or you may not be marking things on scoresheet or card. In Yahtzee, players choose a scoring a scoresheet – there are other ways to keep track of category and mark their score on the sheet. your rolls.

In other games, you keep track of other things. In Roll In general, though, you'll have some dice and a Through the Ages by Eagle-Gryphon Games, your rolls scoresheet. If you have those two essentials, then you determine the resources and workers that you can use have yourself a roll-and-write game. (Okay, maybe you to build monuments. Reiner Knizia's Decathlon requires need a writing utensil to mark the scoresheet, but that players to use their dice to compete in athletic events. doesn't need to be in the box.)

Interestingly, the roll-and-write genre isn't always quite so straightforward. For example, some people

The Classics

The roll-and-write genre has been around for a long But not all roll-and-writes were sold as standalone games, time. Yahtzee was first sold in 1956, but is still popular and often they came in packages with other games. For 63 years later. Kismet, similar to Yahtzee but including example, the horse-racing game The Great Races came colors on the dice, hit the market in 1963. But it's quite in 1974's The 6 Pack of Paper & Pencil Games, a few of likely that roll-and-writes were around long before then. which were dice games. Commercially packaged and The history of dice in board games goes back to 3,000 promoted roll-and-writes reemerged in the early 2000s BC, so it's almost certain that people came up with dice and have been have been on a roll since then. games that used a scoresheet.

Modern Roll-and-Writes

Reiner Knizia's Decathlon was released in 2003 and featured 10 short dice games that, you guessed it, were designed around each of the decathlon events. This collection was released for free through his site (and is still available!) and helped herald a new age of rolland-write games beyond the Yahtzee reign.

Before the rights to Catan were sold to Asmodee, Mayfair Games looked to capitalize off the height of the Catan craze with the release of their Catan Dice Game in 2007. Shortly afterwards in 2008, Roll Through the Ages rolled out, and the momentum of roll-and-write games has picked up ever since.

There are now over 120 roll-and-write games listed on BoardGameGeek, ranging from simple family games like Gamewright's Qwixx to more complex games with Catan Dice Game features a settlement building goofy themes and fantastic art, such as Avenue by theme just like the original game.







Aporta Games. There are tie-ins to other series (like the Castles of Burgundy dice game), free print-and-play games (Utopia Engine), popular franchises (The Lord of the Rings: Journey to Mordor), and more. With lots of options, you might not know where to start if you're looking to move beyond Yahtzee. So find yourself a pencil and let's look at some of the more popular roll-and-write options that are available today.

Ganz Schön Clever

1-4 players, 30 minutes

Don't worry, you don't have to be able to pronounce the name of this one to enjoy it. And if you're looking for an upgrade to *Yahtzee* that has a similar feel, it's a great choice. It recently gained some acclaim as it was nominated for a Kennerspiel des Jahres ("Connoisseur-Enthusiast Game of the Year"), selected and announced by the Spiel des Jahres committee.

In this game published by Schmidt Spiele (yes, its German), you'll need to roll dice and check off different scoring opportunities on your colorful scoresheet. But you'll also need to be careful, as your opponents can take any dice with values less than the one you scored. So if you score a 6, all of your other dice are fair game.

This keeps everyone involved in the game at all times, and makes you think more strategically about which dice you score and when.





Qwixx

2-5 players, 15 minutes

If you like *Yahtzee* but want something a little different, give *Qwixx* a try. Players throw white and colored dice in an attempt to cross numbers off of their scorepad, and everyone participates on every turn. There are different colored tracks that correspond to the dice.

Sounds simple, right? Where it gets tricky is that you can only cross off a number if it's to the right of all crossedoff numbers in the same row. So you'll have to choose which numbers to cross off based on how early in the game you are, the numbers you've already chosen, and what your opponents are doing.

This is a quick game that doesn't require a whole lot of strategic thinking. It's great when you want to play something fast or for introducing kids to dice games.

The Castles of Burgundy: The Dice Game

1-5 players, 15-30 minutes

Whether you've played the popular *The Castles of Burgundy* or not, this is an enjoyable roll-and-write by alea (*No, it's not capitalized – The Editor*) that requires a bit more spatial strategy than other games in the genre.

Each player gets a small map with a variety of hexes on it. From there, you choose dice to fill those hexes, and do your best to maximize your points. Players who strategically complete color-blocked areas will score the most points.

Though it might sound complicated, it's still a simpleyet-entertaining game.

The Castles of Burgundy: The Dice Game offers a simpler alternative to the original board game.





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Roll Through the Ages: The Bronze Age

1-4 players, 30-45 minutes

This is the first in the *Roll Through the Ages* series by Eagle-Gryphon Games, and it's considered to be one of the best. During their turn, each player gathers resources and workers by rolling dice (this game comes with fantastic wooden dice that are a lot of fun to roll). Those resources and workers can be put to use to build infrastructure and monuments. You'll also want to collect commodities along the way.

In many ways, *Roll Through the Ages: The Bronze Age* is similar to other games on the list, but the civilization-building theme is a fun deviation on the genre and adds a bit of worldbuilding. (And don't worry – even though it shares a name, it's not nearly as complicated or as long as *Through the Ages*.)

In Roll Through the Ages, players roll dice to obtain commodities and workers to build up their civilizations.



Want More Dice Games?

There are plenty of other roll-and-write games gaining Then there are very creative games like Seasons and popularity that are also worth looking into. Some of Pulsar 2849 that add other game mechanics into the these include Welcome to..., Qwinto, and Railroad Ink. mix, ratcheting up the challenge, strategy, and altering the payoff.

If you'd instead like a dice game that you can sink your teeth into a bit more, you have plenty of options. Dice- In the age of immersive miniature games or expansive to deal with.

Games like Sagrada and Roll Player serve as a fun And, of course, there are plenty of games that you can introduction to this mechanic, but you can get into much play with just a few dice and little else! more strategic games, too. Troyes and Grand Austria Hotel are on the heavier end of the spectrum. And if Start exploring the world of dice games, and you'll open you're looking for a "dice building" series, Quarriors by up an entire world of six-sided fun. ⊡ WizKids is hard to beat.



Play Torpedo Dice now! All you need are some dice and writing utensils. See the complete rules on page 31.

For more scoresheets, download the free print-and-play at: StratusGames.com/torpedo-dice

Torpedo Dice

2-4 players, 15 minutes

If you want to start playing roll-and-writes as soon as possible, this is a great choice – because we have included a copy of it in this issue! You can find the scoresheets on the pages that follow, with more scoresheets available as a free download (the rules are on page 31). Designed by our Editor-in-Chief specifically for Casual Game Insider, this game facilitates direct player interaction in a way that is not commonly found in the roll-and-write genre.

In Torpedo Dice, you roll the dice and draft one to determine the formation of your torpedoes, then select the locations on your opponent's submarine where they will hit. Your submarine's systems (such as the propeller or engine) can be activated to modify your die and take a better shot. Your goal is to destroy your opponent's systems before they do the same to you.

But be careful — if you're too aggressive, you may find yourself running low on spare torpedoes and dangerously close to losing the game. It's a fun balancing act for players of all ages.

drafting games let you choose from a pool of dice to deck-builders, the world of dice games may fly under complete actions, giving you more strategic decisions the mainstream radar. But the genre is large and ripe for exploration. Roll-and-writes can be a refreshing step with a surprising amount of complexity and challenge.













A Roll and Write Game by Chris James For 2 to 4 players, 15 minutes, ages 8 and up Download scoresheets at StratusGames.com/torpedo-dice

YOUR MISSION

Be the first player to destroy your enemy 's submarine by targeting all 7 of their ship 's vital systems — but if you run out of spare torpedoes, you will lose this battle!

Gameplay

Starting with the youngest player and continuing clockwise, players take turns rolling the dice. Then all players take the following actions, in order:

1: DRAFT

Beginning with the active player and continuing clockwise, players choose one of the dice and place it near their scoresheet. After all players have chosen, there will be one die left over.

2: MODIFY (optional)

Players optionally choose <u>one</u> of their submarine 's <u>active</u> systems (shown on their dashboard at the bottom of the sheet) to modify the die they have chosen. A system is only active if the toggle switches underneath it are filled in. If a system has been destroyed (crossed out), it can no longer be used or activated. (For an easier game, consider all systems activated at the start of the game.)

3: Shoot or activate

Players shoot torpedoes at the enemy submarine on their scoresheet (which represents the player to his or her left). They do this by filling in spaces in the same formation as the pips shown on their die (as if it were a 3x3 grid). See "Shot Formations".

A shot fired on a system space is a hit! (These spaces are outlined in red, and they must already be empty.) Anything else, including non-system spaces, water, or a space that was filled in previously, is a miss. For each space that was a miss, the player firing the shot must cross out a spare torpedo. For example, if 4 shots were missed, 4 spare torpedoes must be crossed out!

You can choose to activate one of your submarine's systems <u>instead</u> of firing a shot by filling in the toggle switch that matches the number shown on your die (after modification). This system's modifier can now be used on future turns. When you activate a system that has a matching toggle switch, you also fill in that toggle switch.

After all players have finished shooting/activating: if the player to your right has filled in all of the spaces of a system, it is destroyed and you must cross it out on your dashboard — it can no longer be used. Any matching toggle switches on your sheet are filled in, which may activate another system!



The game ends after the shooting phase on any turn when either of the following occurs:

1: SUBMARINE DESTROYED

If any player has destroyed their enemy submarine by disabling all 7 systems on the scoresheet, this player is the winner!

<u>Tie Breaker (for either scenario)</u>: the player with the most spare torpedoes remaining is the winner. If there is still a tie, the winning players share the victory.

A player drafts a 3 and chooses to fill in this toggle switch. It is now activated:



When the above is activated OR destroyed, the matching toggle switch is also filled in:



When both of the above toggle switches are filled in, this system will be activated!





You will need up to 5 standard 6-sided dice (D6) with pips in order to play this game. Give each player a scoresheet and pen or pencil, and put dice in the center of the table equal to the number of players, plus 1 (e.g., 3 dice for 2 players).



2: Spare ammo depleted

If any player has used up all of his or her spare torpedoes and another miss occurs (the "death" space is filled in), the game ends and this player is eliminated from the game (even if the enemy submarine was destroyed). All other players then add up the number of hits + spare torpedoes remaining. The player with the highest total is the winner!





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Sunflower Valley is a creative family board game in which each player will create their own mountain valley. You will draw cute houses, fill pastures with flocks of sheep, plant sunflowers at the foothills of mountains and connect the houses by building roads.



Contents:

- 1 game board
- 20 double-sided sheets
- 6 dice
- 5 dry-erase markers
- 1 first player token
- 1 rulebook

Designed by:

Wouter van Strien & Alexander Shaldin











Justin Spicer Music Journalist and **Board Game Experimenter**

The narrative of start-up board game publishers is often littered by grandiose visions of revolutionizing the industry, or just filling a need an individual (or a group of people) has noticed as a fan of the hobby. While this is not that far off from Keymaster's humble birth in Athens, Georgia, there was something far more daunting at the literal heart of the publisher's beginnings. Founder Kyle Key explains on Keymaster's website: "Keymaster started when I found out I needed open-heart surgery. Leading up to the surgery, I bought tons of board games. All I wanted to do was spend quality time with friends and family through board gaming."

Sidebar: The Games of Keymaster

It's a sentiment shared by gamers across the world – the ability of board games to bridge communication and emotional gaps. The same was true for Kyle, even during such a trying time in his life. Of course, there was a certain sense of altruism that helped alleviate the stress, pain, and worry that accompanies open-heart surgery and the long road to recovery. "I realized just how well board games brought people together and gave them great memories to hold on to. And so, Keymaster Games was born with the hope of doing just that," Kyle summarized.



But so much more has come to define Keymaster as a Yet, Mattox and Kyle note that early success did not board game publisher. It began with Control, Keymaster's erase the early roadblocks while launching a game first offering to the world of gaming. Designed by fellow and, by proxy, a company. The realization was that a Keymaster mastermind and Creative Director, Mattox successful Kickstarter campaign does not automatically Shuler, the game was intended as a proof of concept a publisher make. "We didn't have any contacts in the on many levels: "We started with Control as a smaller industry," Kyle begins, "so we had to work extra hard game that we could test the idea of using Kickstarter to ask questions, investigate, and do our homework to with," explains Kyle. Kyle and Mattox were not the only learn what it meant to be a game publisher." ones who saw this initial vision as a shared experience. Control was a smashing Kickstarter success, earning The challenges that Mattox faced as a first-time game nearly \$75,000 (with a modest \$7,500 goal) to fund its designer was also more material in nature: "There was no way for me to understand how much work physical initial print run.





This is the game that started Keymaster on its publishing journey. The game is for 2 to 4 players and offers a casual variation of arena mechanics. Players are trying to be the first to earn 21 points by managing silver and bronze fuel cells to return their time traveler back into the fabric of time – leaving their rivals lost forever. Each card represents the amount of charge each cell provides, as well as specialty powers that either help you gain more fuel or remove fuel from an opposing player's tableau. A game of Control lasts no longer than 15-20 minutes.





product manufacturing is. I lived in a digital world before that a wisely put together Kickstarter campaign could be this, delivering design projects via Dropbox and email." a tool to leverage in their mission. "We initially thought we'd be putting a few copies of *Control* in envelopes and The uphill battle to make a lasting impression in a sending them to our friends and family," remarked Kyle, growing industry is tough, but Kyle and Mattox kept their "but because it did so much better than we expected, heads down and continued to forge the relationships we realized Keymaster could be an actual business."

necessary to carry out their vision. They also had proof



It also became a sustainable model for Kyle and The continued Kickstarter success coupled with a Mattox's next project: Campy Creatures. Similar to successful Gen Con debut allowed Keymaster to begin the success they saw with Control, Campy Creatures to expand its ranks. "We added more people to the team far exceeded the necessary crowdfunding that was who love our brand, including a Chief Operations Officer needed to get the game into the hands of the eager and a Marketing Director. Their ability to focus on key public. Kyle describes how Kickstarter "allows us to areas of the business operations allows us to focus on connect and grow a community." The success of the game development," explains Mattox. game led the small Georgia publisher to make its Gen Con debut in 2017, where *Campy Creatures* became a He also details the bigger development that Keymaster's word-of-mouth sensation. growing success has allowed. As Mattox notes, "we've



Campy Creatures

Combining light bluffing and character drafting, Campy Creatures pits 2 to 5 players in a race to be the mad genius who collects the highest point total in the form of test subjects. Each player has a deck of cards numbered 1 through 10, each representing a more powerful creature. Test subject cards are unveiled, each with a different value. Players play one of the creatures from their hand. The player with the highest creature value gets first selection, with each descending value able to draft the test subject they wish to collect. Some creatures offer benefits, such as forcing an opponent to take a test subject who may award negative points. Combined with campy 1940's and 50's horror artwork, *Campy Creatures* is an immersive but speedy 20-30 minute experience.

been able to sign and develop games from outside of Keymaster's core group. However, both games fit designers." Keymaster's two offerings from 2018, well with Keymaster's goal of creating quality gateway Space Park and Caper, were from designers outside games that are accessible to everyone.



But the most noticeable trend in Keymaster's expanding catalog of games is the art. The aesthetic choices in the art and presentation of each game, as Kyle explains, "comes from my own professional background as an illustrator." Kyle's background as an artist, coupled with Mattox's as a designer, has led to them seek out artists who share their vision for visually striking and thematically accurate iconography and imagery.

The duo of Kyle and Mattox have a distinct art style that Keymaster's Matt Aiken described as "Wes Anderson meets Pink Panther" while discussing Caper during Gen Con 2018. Space Park captures the spirit of mid-20th century U.S. national park promotional materials,



A clever drafting game that allows players to take center stage in their favorite heist movie, Caper is a two-player game with variants for additional players. Players race to draft the best thieves, give them the best gear, and collect the highest victory points from stolen loot. Thieves are played first, and hands are traded after each card is played. The same occurs for the other card types, each player competing to loot one of the three locations on the table. There are elements of set collection involved, and cards reward money, victory points, and special actions. A game of Caper lasts no more than 30 minutes.







Space Park is a 30-minute worker placement game, where 1 to 4 explorers visit one of 7 locations to collect resources, earn explorer points, and collect badges. The goal of Space Park is to collect badges which demonstrate a player's prowess as a primo space park explorer. These badge cards award additional explorer points (needed to win the game) and offer extra perks, such as additional resources or free movement. When one player reaches 20 explorer points, the final round is triggered. After the round is complete, the player with the most explorer points is the winner.



CAN YOU ESCAPE THE ROOM?

NORDLWIDE









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GAME REVIEWS: FUNGEON PARTY

Gather a group of adventuring buddies for a cooperative series of mini games that will test both your speed and dexterity.



Naomi Laeuchli **Game Reviewer and Casual Game Groupie**

Each player takes five dice and chooses a character card, each of which has its own number of health points and a special ability (such as healing two points of damage or letting you skip a quest with no negative repercussions). Players then



choose how many quests they wish to play (a minimum experience point for each completed quest. If you failed, of six) and deal that number of quest cards facedown. you only earn half an experience point per completed Finally, a timer is set for thirty seconds per quest. quest. Players decide how to distribute experience points among players, which can be used to unlock more health Once the timer is started, *Fungeon Party* begins, and the or the option to use their special ability more than once first quest card is flipped. Players must race to complete per game. These changes can carry over to the next the requirements on the card. If they're unsuccessful time you play.

or choose to skip it, the quest is deemed a failure, and the timer runs out.

If you make it through all the quests, then you completed the dungeon! Otherwise your group has failed. Successfully completing a dungeon earns the group one

Fungeon Party By Brian Lewis, David McGregor, Marissa Misura, Tom Jones MSRP 2-5 PLAYERS 3-15 MINS **AGES 14+** LUCK STRATEGY INDEPENDENT INTERACTIVE

players distribute the damage points shown on the card There is a large variety of quests, many of them dexterity among themselves as they see fit before drawing the based (such as one that requires players to flick dice next quest. If any player reaches zero health, you end onto the card, or one that asks for two players to use the dungeon at once; otherwise the game ends when the game's wooden wands to carry a meeple over to the box) while other quests will have players rolling for certain results or trying to total their dice up to a certain sum. There's a creative range and some are definitely tougher than others.

> Fungeon Party is fast-paced, exhilarating, and hilarious. The wide range of quests is impressive and the ability to level your character over multiple games is a nice touch. Some quests need a bit of space to complete and that, coupled with the occasional dice flying around the play area, means that finding the right location to play can prove difficult. But with the right group and the right room, this is a fantastic and fresh party game with a fun theme.





Disney Villainous features stunning components and lovely With too many players, you're going to get a lot of nostalgic artwork that is more than just screenshots from downtime and there is minimal player interaction, so a Disney movies. Each player starts the game by choosing smaller group is preferable. And despite the Disney theme, one of the six Disney villains to play. A villain comes with this isn't really for kids due to the complexity of learning a personal villain deck, fate deck, and a player board the many different types of cards to use and actions that shows four locations and lists the villain's objective. to take. But each villain feels unique and special, with Objectives might include, for example, having twenty power different strategies and game mechanics that immerse tokens at the start of your turn or defeating a particular hero you into the theme of that character. For instance, Ursula has no ally cards, and instead of vanguishing heroes, she at a specific location. must bind them with contracts and move them to certain On your turn, you start by moving your villain token from its locations. There is also a small guide for each villain with current location to one of the other three locations on your suggestions on how to play them, and learning to play and board. Each location shows a certain number of actions, master the different decks adds replayability to the game. some along the top of the board and some along the bottom. Some villains are harder than others, but that's half the You may take any action that is currently uncovered at that fun of this clever game of villainous treachery.

location. There are multiple action types – you can gain power tokens, you can play a card from your hand, such as allies, items, or special abilities (some of these cards may cost power to play). Other actions allow you to move your allies to adjacent locations, or allow you to play a fate card on another player. In this case, you draw two cards from an opponent's fate deck, discard one and play the other. This may mean placing a hero card on an opponent's location, covering the top two actions on that location and making them unusable until the hero is dealt with. To defeat a hero, you will need to use a vanquish action when one or more allies are on the same location as that hero, and their strength number on their cards is equal to or a greater than the hero's. At the end of your turn you draw up to your hand limit. The game continues until a player's objective is completed, and that player is declared the winner.











Between Two Cities is all about cooperative competition. During the second round, players are dealt a hand of Each player is building two cities, one with the player on three double-sized duplex tiles, which each show two their left and one with the player on their right. During buildings. You choose two to play and discard the other. the first round, each player takes seven building tiles. Again you place one in one city and the other in your Everyone chooses two, keeps them facedown, and passes second city. The third round is the same as the first, the rest to the player on their left. All players then reveal only you pass your hand to the player on your right. their two tiles. You must discuss with your two partners Scoring for each city is calculated based on the types which tile you will be placing in which of your two cities. of buildings. Cities are always a four-by-four grid, and you may never place a tile outside of that grid. Tiles must always be Shops score more points for being in a connecting placed adjacent to another tile in the city, and all buildings line, factories score based on which city has the most, must have the same orientation. After tiles are placed, taverns score points for having sets, offices score points you pick up the building tiles passed to you and follow for the number of them you have, park tiles score based the same steps as before. You do this until only one tile on how many are connected, and houses score a point is left in each hand, which is discarded. for the number of building types you have in the city (but are only worth one point if placed near a factory). Your final score is your city with the lowest score, your higher **Between Two Cities** scoring city serving as a tie breaker if needed.

Designed by Ben Rosset, Matthew O'Malley

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Each player must work with two partners to

The cooperation element of Between Two Cities is fascinating. You not only have to work with your partners, but their second cities are also going to affect the choices they will make. Balancing two cities isn't always easy and the decisions during the final round become increasingly more difficult. Until you reach the scoring phase, there is no downtime and the rules for scoring buildings are easy to learn but offer some intriguing strategical choices when placing them. The result is a clever game with a unique concept at its core.



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TROM J. K. ROWLING'S WIZARDING WORLD

FANTASTI(

PERILOUS PURSUIT

A MAGICAL GAME OF CHASE AND CHANCE

Several of Newt Scamander's magical beasts have escaped and are running loose in New York City. Players take on the role of Newt, Tina, Jacob and Queenie on an exciting adventure as they try to return all the beasts to Newt's suitcase before they draw the attention of the non-magical community.



THIS FALL!



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Both teams have a screen with four slots. At the start of the game, you slot a keyword card into each one. Each team can only see their own keywords, and each keyword is numbered the clues from the previous rounds. Both teams then reveal one through four. Every round, an Encryptor is chosen on both their guesses. If the opposing team is right, they win an teams. The Encryptors each draw a code card that will have interception token; if the active team is wrong, they receive three numbers on it. The Encryptor of one team will then give a miscommunication token. The active team does not get a clue word for each number. Players will compare the clue anything for guessing correctly. Next, the other team will take words with the keywords to try to figure out what the code their turn and their Encryptor will give clues. If a team has two is. For example, if keyword number three is 'opera' and the intercept tokens at the end of the round, they win the game. On Encryptor says 'singer,' players might guess that the number the other hand, if a team has two miscommunication tokens, three is part of the code. The same clue may never be used they lose the game. Otherwise, a new round begins. more than once during a game.

Decrypto is a clever word game that really forces you to think After the clues have been given, both teams may then discuss outside of the box. The Encryptors need to avoid making their the clues and write down what they believe the numbered clues too obvious or else the opposing team will quickly crack code to be. Since the active team may look at the keywords the code, so the rest of your team also needs to get creative it is easier for them, while the opposing team must go off of when interpreting your clues.

Decrypto Designed by Thomas Dagenais-Lespérance **XX (D) XX \$20** MSRP **30 MINS 3-8 PLAYERS** LUCK STRATEGY INDEPENDENT INTERACTIVE

Some of the rules of turn order and note-taking for the clues become bogged down in the rulebook, but once you've played a round or two, you get the hang of how it works. The sheets included for tracking the clues and guesses are useful and the components in general are thematic and of high quality.

There are many word games out there and plenty of games with clue giving, but *Decrypto* feels like a unique blend of the two — mixing in a clever dose of paranoia as you carefully tread the line of avoiding giving away too much information while needing to discuss your theories with your own teammates. It's a clever and satisfyingly different party game.



Kung-Fu Zoo has two main gameplay modes: Cage Battle Having a mix of modes is a nice element, though we much and Points Battle. For both, the game board is fitted into preferred Cage Battle, with Points Battle offering less the box. At the four corners are holes that represent cages. control over the outcome. Mixing dexterity with the dice Each player takes one animal's four dice – each die face rolling is a clever combination, and the dexterity elements shows a different side of the animal. On each of the box's of the game are really easy to grasp. The dice aren't difficult four edges is a small mark in the middle. When players flick to flick and there aren't a lot of rules to bog players down. their dice into the arena, they generally start by placing it on one of these four points. It is the simplicity that makes Kung-Fu Zoo such an

stunned dice and flick it back in. The last player left with its speed and simplicity. at least one die, after all opponents are either stunned or caged, wins the game. Each animal also has a special ability that can be used once.

Two-player Points Battle mode has players competing to be the first to reach twenty-one points. Each round, players take turns flicking their dice into the arena from any of the starting points around the edge. After all dice have been flicked in, players calculate points based on what side of the animal is showing on each of their dice. Then the player who did best scores points equal to the difference between these two sums. The game offers variations on both of these modes to allow three to four players and a slight change to Cage Battle that removes stunning.

enjoyable game. The components and artwork are both In Cage Battle mode, players take turns flicking their excellent, the rules are easy to teach, and the game plays dice, one at a time, onto the board. If a die lands showing quickly. The experience is so compact and smooth that an animal's feet, it is stunned. If a die is knocked into the result is very satisfying – and knocking opponent dice a cage, it is out of the game. Once all your dice have around and into cages is just tricky enough to make for entered the arena, you may pick up one of your non- some great moments of victory. It hits the sweet spot with



An alien visitor, a kid, and government agents: who will the visitor trust?



One player is the Visitor and another player is the Kid. They're card accordingly. If the Kid was right, they may press their on a team. Everyone else is an Agent who is not working luck and try again with another card. The Kid may choose to together with anyone else. Each player takes seven object stop guessing, in which case the turn ends and they earn one cards. Object cards show a wide variety of objects such as trust point for each correct guess. If the kid guesses wrong, dragons, trees, medicine, or a saw. The Visitor starts the game then the turn ends with no trust points earned. by either drawing one of the rule cards or coming up with a rule on their own. The rule determines which object cards will As trust increases between the Kid and the Visitor, they be allowed past the Visitor's force field. A rule could be almost get rewards. For example, the kid can draw new cards and anything, such as 'objects that are in this room' or 'objects eventually Agents must reveal some of the cards they tested on previous turns. Once trust is at level two or higher, the Kid that are made of metal.' can attempt to prove the rule.

On an Agent's turn, they may either attempt to prove that they know the rule, or they may play an object card to test. In the On the Visitor's turn, they choose one card from their hand latter case, the card is placed facedown. The Visitor looks at and place it face up either inside or outside the force field. it and places it on either the inside or outside of the forcefield. With enough trust, the alien can keep this card facedown, On the Kid's turn, they may show everyone one card and guess only showing it to the kid. To prove a rule, a player chooses if it will be allowed in or kept out. The Visitor then places the four object cards and must say whether each one is allowed inside the force field or not. If the player is correct on all of them, they win the game.

Visitor in Blackwood Grove Designed by Mary Flanagan, Max Seidman



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VISITOR IN BLACKWOOD GROVE

Visitor in Blackwood Grove has an enjoyable sense of progression. The Agents' job starts out easier, but as trust is raised their role becomes more challenging. The rulebook is a bit dense, but once you start playing you learn quickly. Coming up with your own rules and tinkering with their difficulty is also fun and challenging once you're familiar with the game.

Nicely thematic, Visitor in Blackwood Grove is a game of puzzles and deduction and it plays quickly, allowing everyone to try out the different roles.



In the vein of classic card games such as Uno and Rat-a-Tat Cat, Junk in My Trunk is a fast-playing little card game that's a breeze to learn, with memory elements and take-that moments.

Each player is dealt three cards face down in front of them. you peek at junk pile cards, swap them between players, or flip They are then dealt seven cards each (to form their hand) and them so the top card is facedown and the bottom is face up. they choose a card from their hand to place face up on each of the three facedown cards. These are your junk piles. Be Trying to remember how junk piles have moved and been manipulated is important, and there is some light strategy. the first player to get rid of your junk piles to win the game.

either pick up the trash pile into your hand or play onto it 🛛 game can be. 💽 by playing a card (or multiple identical cards) of an equal or higher number than the card that is currently on top. If four identical cards in a row are on top of the trash, the current trash pile is removed from the game. If your hand has fewer than four cards at the end of your turn, you draw. Once the deck runs out and you have no cards in hand, you may play cards from your junk pile. If you are playing a facedown card, you peek at it. If it is not a legal play, you take the trash into your hand. Some cards have special abilities such as letting









UNK IN MY TRUNK

The art in **Junk in My Trunk** is bright and colorful, and it The trash pile is in the middle of the table. On your turn, you is a great example of how fun a good family-friendly card



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MAJOR FUN REVIEW

Monster Crunchis Major Fun!

The Major Fun Award was developed by noted philosopher of play Bernie DeKoven nearly 20 years ago. This internationally recognized award celebrates games that are innovative, easy to learn, fast to play, and fun for players of all ages. Out of hundreds of submissions each year, only 12–15 games earn this honor. You can delve into hundreds of great games for kids, families, and friends at MajorFun.com.

The Concept

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It's Saturday morning. You and your monster friends are Monster Crunch is a direct descendant of a classic card game bored and hungry, so you decide to make breakfast into a genre called a ladder game. Why ladder? Each round, you must battle. Crack open your box of sugary cereal cards and play play a card (or a set of cards) that increase in value - up and as many as you can over the course of three hands. The up like rungs on a ladder. monster who munches the most cereal wins and walks away the champion of breakfast! The game is played in three hands of 12 cards. On your turn

The Components

There are 180 colorful cards divided into five decks. Each deck looks like a box of cereal with a classic General Mills monster: Boo Berry, Count Chocula, Frankenberry, Fruit Brute,

and Fruity Yummy Mummy. Each 36-card deck has 3 cards Eventually, as the numbers go higher and higher, you will be numbered 1 through 12. forced to pass. When you do, you will bank all the cards you played to your bowl. These cards will form your score for the Each player starts with a deck, a matching bowl, and a tile with game. You'll also get a milk token when you pass if you're not your monster's special powers. It's impossible to overstate the last player in the round. Rounds continue until one player how much the bright and attractive artwork draws you into gets rid of all his or her cards. The player that ends the hand the game. And there's an undeniable nostalgia factor. If you're will score 12 points (1 point for each card). The other players of a certain age, the game will almost instantly pull you into will score any cards banked during the hand. Most points after pleasant memories of hours spent staring at these characters three hands wins the game. at the kitchen table with cartoons blaring in the background.



The Mechanics

you will play a single card to your bowl to stay in for the round or you will pass. The card you play must be equal to or higher than the previous card played (climbing the ladder). If I play a 3 to my bowl, then you must play a 3 or higher to your bowl or you must pass.

What Sets This Game Apart?

Monster Crunch adds two fun twists to the ladder genre: milk reverse the rules for a round so players must play cards equal tokens and monster powers. Normally, each round you may to or lower than the previous card. only play a single card to your bowl that must be equal to or Monster powers can have a significant impact on a particular higher than the previous card played. For each milk token you spend, you may play an additional card to your bowl. The round. The challenge and fun comes from knowing when to additional card can match the card you play OR be the next make best use of them. consecutive number.

In both cases, whenever you use milk tokens, you add up the Final Thoughts cards played to form a single number. If I spend a milk token and play a 7 and an 8, the number for the next player is 15!

Monster Crunch provides a wonderful introduction to the ladder game genre. It is innovative but ridiculously accessible. Play a With milk tokens, you can create numbers that are higher card equal or higher than the last one - there's the essence of than the highest numbered card in the deck! Milk tokens the game. But Monster Crunch also gives players permission to bend or break this basic rule. Deciding when and how to add an element of flexibility and play outside the normal rules makes the game more rewarding strategy that's simple to understand and fun to manage. and more fun.



Each monster also has two special powers to use once during the game. Count Chocula, for instance, can



INTERACTIVE

INDEPENDENT



The draw of nostalgia and its bright-and-happy art is powerful and compelling, but without a rock-solid game beneath, Monster Crunch would get soggy and dissolve like cereal left sitting too long in milk.

Lucky for us, Monster Crunch packs a one-two punch filled with Major Fun. ⊡

Ladder Games

Ladder games are a very popular genre both in Asia and in the West and there are many different games played with a standard deck of cards. Zheng Shangyou is the most famous in China.

In the West, it's **President**. Many modern card games have introduced their own spin on this classic: The Great Dalmuti, Gang of Four, Lexio, and Tichu, just to name a few.

Stephen Conway

on duty as Major Fun and host of The Spiel



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#CGIspotlight



Your Jurn

A Spotlight on the Gaming Community



Which game in your collection evokes the strongest emotions? What emotions are they, and why?



"Fog of Love because it takes me through the journey of a new romantic relationship with characters that are not me and yet shaped by me. It's quite a roller coaster with the blunders and fumbles and yet those sweet moments when the two characters are united is so worth it."

- Sarah Reed



"5 Minute Dungeon. The timer drives up the stress because you have to work together, play effectively, eliminate the enemies, and think fast all under 5 minutes. Last time we played, one person started sweating and another's hands were shaking after the game."

— Dwayne Critchfield

Photo by Henk Rolleman



"Survive: Escape from Atlantis evokes anger and frustration because it's devastating watching your meeple ship get capsized by a whale and then eaten by a shark before it's even your turn, so there's no chance for escape. People have been eliminated from the game before they've even had a turn ...

Photo by Kristi Weyland "Photosynthesis! It's so calm and meditative. The design is just beautiful and it's a true pleasure to play <u>— Carmen Christensen</u>

> "In my collection, it would be One Night Ultimate Werewolf. I'm always so happy playing it. There's excitement when you know things others don't know and stress when you're a werewolf and trying to hide among the others. There's even anger when you're being wrongly accused of being someone you know you're not!"

> > Photo by Kristi Weyland

— Molly McKee

H

...It's a very mean-spirited game but a lot of fun with the right people."

— Daniel Gossman

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

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Photos by Scott King Photography

"The Mind. It causes a stress and anxiety that I have not seen in any other game. It's as much an experience as it is a game." — Nick Shipley

Next Issue: What are your tips for a great game night?

Send your ideas and photos to: editor@CasualGameRevolution.com

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— Zac Dumas



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With the rising sun, the songbirds sing. They call to their mates and declare their territory.

You are a forest spirit, gentle and wise, helping your favorite bird color win their sweet berry prize.

Play songbirds into columns and rows. To the loudest songbird color the berry goes!

If your color is losing, don't fret. You can always switch colors last minute.

Will your songbirds reign supreme? Or . . . sing their last song, and flee.





Ask your local store to pre-order the game to get special promo cards!

15

Songbirds







...



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