

## Spiel '07 Report

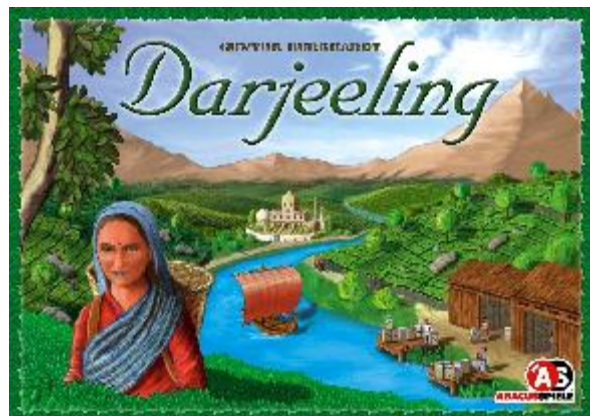
### Version 1: 10th November 2007

Every year I find that the Spiel games fair re-energises me – the new games and the enthusiasm of all the visitors are a real tonic for the jaded gamer. This year was a bit different as I had business meetings, which meant less time to play games – though I got to see just as many. So my initial report will be briefer than usual – I will expand it as I play more of the new games, though. Keep an eye on the website ([www.pevans.co.uk/Reviews/Spiel2007.html](http://www.pevans.co.uk/Reviews/Spiel2007.html)) for updates.

First off, the show seemed quieter than usual with fewer people cramming the walkways – though there was still a huge crush when the doors opened at 10. The organisers, Friedhelm Merz Verlag, report that there were some 148,000 visitors over the four days (only 2,000 down on last year). They saw over 500 new games from publishers in some 30 countries. Spiel really is international these days – even the catering staff now respond in English, despite my best German.

Now on to the games. As usual I'll do this by publisher, in alphabetical order. This puts 2F Spiele at the top of the list. Friedemann Friese's new game this year is *Filou*, a fun card game about cats. Apparently the German equivalent of "a pig in a poke" is "the cat in the sack". This is a bluffing game where players aim to get cats, but don't know how valuable the cat will be until they get it. Or it might turn out to be a rabbit – or even a dog. It's a quick-playing game and Rio Grande is producing an English language edition as *Felix*.

Abacus was revelling in winning the prestigious *Spiel des Jahres* this year for Michael Schacht's *Zooloretto*. As you'd expect this was going great guns throughout the show. The company's newest game, though, was *Darjeeling* by Günter Burkhardt. This looks very interesting – not least because of all the playing pieces. Such as the chute down which the 'demand markers' roll. Players collect tiles and match them up to make tea chests, which can then be loaded onto ships. At the beginning of the next turn, players score points according to which ship their tea chests are on. First to a hundred points wins. The tiles are initially laid out to represent India, China or Sri Lanka, each of which has its own challenges and makes for a different game. It looks well worth trying.



Amigo had half a dozen new games. The two board games are *Gangster* (designed by Thorsten Gimmler) and *Patrizier* (Patrician, by Michael Schacht), both of which are being published in English by Mayfair. The first is, as the name suggests, about



elements to the game. Designed by Roman Mathar, this is a nicely produced game with some evocative artwork. The same is true of the second game, *Die Jagd nach dem Gral* (The Quest for the Holy Grail). Four groups are hunting the Grail – the Assassins, the Knights Templar, the Rosicrucians and the Illuminati. Players move the pawns around the board – providing they're prepared to reveal more influence over the pawn. Yes, this is a development of Eric Solomon's classic *Sigma File*.

Ted Alspach was at Spiel with the *Age of Steam* expansions he publishes as Bézier Games. This year's crop includes several on mounted boards, to the same standard as the original game. These cover Europe/America, plus the intriguing Mississippi Steamboats/Golden Spike, both of which are rather different from the usual game. Bézier also has two pairs of cardstock boards for Caribbean islands, which are 1 and 2-player games. Also on display was *Ultimate Werewolf*, a set of cards and player aids to help up to 31 people to play Werewolf. It includes a number of new roles.



1001 Karawane before exploring

Peter Burley had a prototype of his new game, *Kamisado*. This is an intriguing game played with coloured pieces on an 8 x 8 grid of coloured squares. When you move a piece, the colour of the square you land on is the colour of the piece your opponent must move next. The object is get a piece to the far side of the board, which is far more challenging than appears. Achieving this gives a player a more powerful piece for the next round. Simple, clever and very colourful.

Cwali had Corné van Moorsel's new game, *Gipsy Kings*. Like many of his games, this has hexagonal tiles and wooden sticks. In this case, though, they're rather bigger than usual. It's a thirty-minute game aimed at a family audience and that's as much as I know.

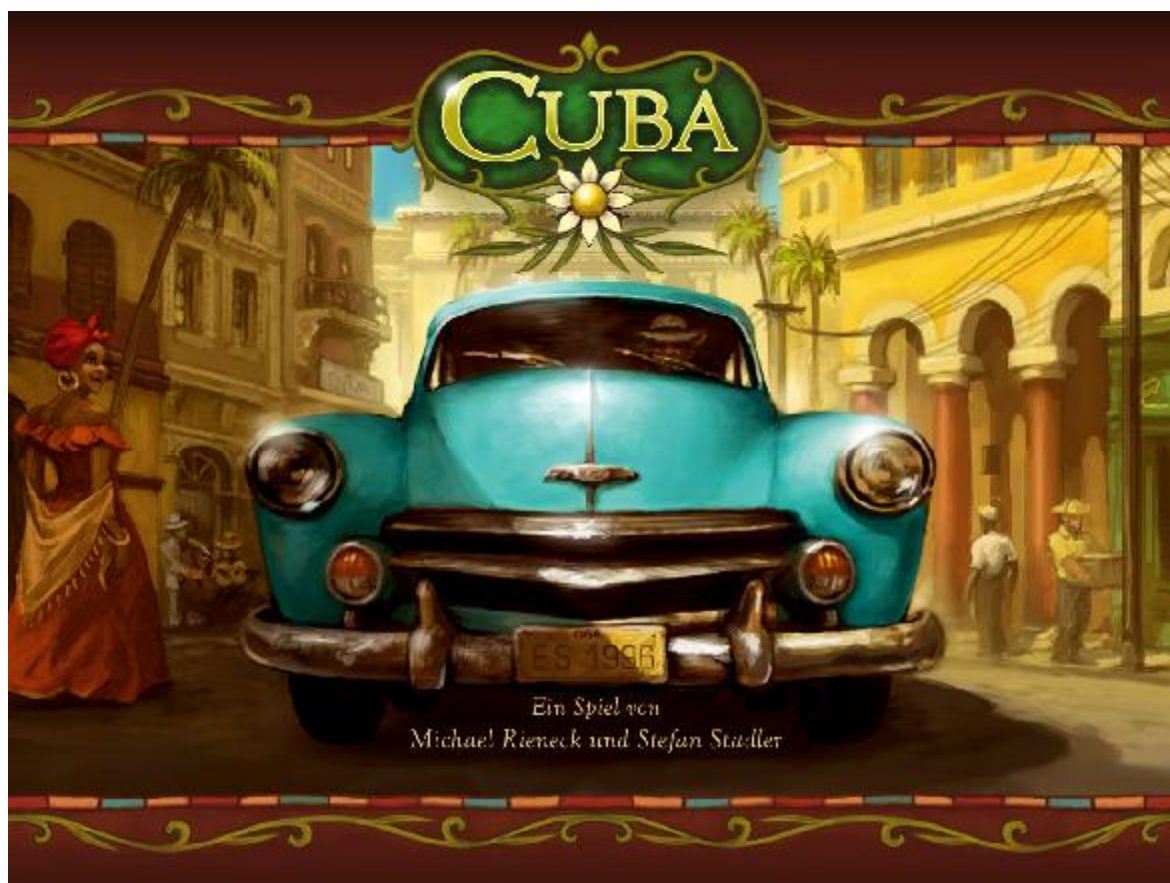


After the appearance of Czech Board Games last year, we have a new publisher this year, Czech Games Edition with two new games. *League of Six* is the one attracting most of the attention as it's a strategy game. Designed by Vladimír Suchý, the theme is tax collecting in medieval Europe. It looks very interesting, too, but I haven't played it yet.



What I have played is CGE's second game, *Galaxy Trucker* by Vlaada Chvatil. This is a fun game of space trading played over three rounds. The first thing to do each round is build your spaceship. This is simple: just take a square tile and add it to the grid in front of you – provided the connectors match. You need engines, of course, lasers, shields, crew quarters and storage space. And you need to fit them together. First to complete their ship starts a timer, limiting the time available to other players to finish their ships. Then the ships fly off, dealing with the hazards and opportunities provided by a set of cards – this involves lots of dice rolling. Players gain credits for goods they pick up plus bonuses for being the lead ship and having the 'prettiest' ship. Then they have to pay for any bits that they've lost off their ship (which happens all too often!). Most credits after three rounds wins. Good fun, but it's not a challenging game.

The first of Eggertspiele's new games is *Cuba*, a game set on the eponymous island before the revolution and designed by Michael Rieneck and Stefan Stadler. Each player has a set of cards and plays them one at a time each turn to carry out specific jobs, saving the last one for their votes in parliament. The jobs allow players to produce goods from their plantations, buy and sell at the market, load goods onto ships (for victory points), erect and use buildings. At the end of the turn, the player with the most votes in parliament enacts new laws and players can choose (!) to pay their taxes – for victory points. On first playing, this looks rather interesting. The key to the game seems to be the buildings and I'm sure several strategies will emerge based on different buildings.



Second is the new game from Mac Gerdts, *Hamburgum* (or *Londinium* if you're playing on the other side of the board). This is a terrific game of trading and building up your position within the city. Actions are, of course, limited by the famous 'rondel' mechanism. One of those is brewing beer – this is my kind of game! However, the key to the game is gaining 'prestige' by donating materials and money to the various churches around the city. There are significant bonuses for being the player who finishes each church. The game ends when all the churches are complete and the player with the most prestige wins. Cracking stuff and my favourite of the new games so far.



The large board and many playing pieces (including real brick) of *Hamburgum*

From new Dutch publisher Emma Games is *Wadi*, an intriguing little game of watering the desert. Players try to position their pumps ('shadoofs') to grab water from the flash flood coming down the wadi. Or steal it from their neighbours! The rules give several starting set-ups for the game, which provides plenty of variety. This is the first game from designer Martyn F and is a promising start, though it's a bit abstract for me.

There were another two new games from Italy's Ghenos Games: *Race the Wind* and *Rugby World*. Both are re-creations of a sport, the former being yacht racing (with some very stylish playing pieces) and the latter Rugby Union. Leaving aside the banter about the relative merits of Wales's and Italy's rugby teams, these are both very appealing themes. Yacht racing has been done as a board game before, of



course, so there's a certain familiarity to the game. This doesn't make it any less challenging and *Race the Wind* has a clever way of changing the wind direction plus gusts for players to take advantage of. *Rugby World* comes with teams from the major rugby playing nations (plus Germany) and some clever rules that reproduce the ebb and flow of the game on the pitch. It's probably a good way to learn the rules of rugby, too.

Giochix is a new Italian publisher and had two card games to show us. *Bulp!* has players building a network of water pipes and sabotaging each other. It looks good fun *Medievalia* is more challenging as players strive to develop their medieval manor in competition with the others. Both are the work of main man Michele Quondam.

After galactic domination, Golden Laurel's new game has its tongue firmly in its cheek. *Kill the Hippies* has the players trying to convert (or kill) the most long-haired layabouts. It's a fast-playing fun card game and went down well at Spiel.

*Phoenicia* made its Spiel debut alongside four brand new titles from JKLM Games. *Caveman* is jointly published with the designers, MAG (Make A Game). Players start by with four members of their tribe and use them to collect the resources that are scattered across the board. These give players the advantages of various discoveries (fire, the wheel and so on). Or they can add new members of the tribe, 'cavekids', and hope they survive to adulthood. In addition, players get to use the dinosaurs to stomp on the other tribes! Good clean family fun. ☺

*Power and Weakness* is a two-player game from Andreas Steding (*Kogge, Whisky Race*). Players contend for supremacy in England using knights and magicians



The Caveman island, cavepeople and dinos



alternately. Limited actions mean players have to choose between scoring for the current turn or building their position for the next one. *Scandaroon*, designed by Tony Boydell and jointly produced with Surprised Stare Games, is the card game I played at UK Games Expo (see *TWJO* 76). The decision here is whether to use cards for their points or their special power. Finally, there is *Stop Lights*, a

quick, fun card game of getting colours in a row from Sean Brown and Mr B Games.

Lookout Games's *Agricola* was particularly well received by gamers at Spiel. This is a heavyweight game of agricultural development by Uwe Rosenberg. Players start with an empty farm and a two-room hut and build these up through several harvests. At the end of the game, players score points for animals, crops, their house and other developments. I find it interesting that the game is specifically set towards the end of the seventeenth century. Presumably there is some particular reason for this. Despite being only available in German – and with a lot of text on the components – *Agricola* is proving to be very popular. English rules should be available shortly from the publisher and there are already translations on Boardgamegeek.



Just two of the many boards in *Agricola*

Lookout also had what they call the fan edition of *Bohnanza*. This is the original game with rather different artwork provided by fans of the game.

After their debut with *Khronos* last year, Matagot were back with *Utopia*. This has some wonderful model monuments for players to construct across the island on the board. However, I didn't get any deeper into the game.



A new game from Moskito and Karl-Heinz Schmiel is something of an event. The game is *Tribun* and is set in Ancient Rome. I was particularly taken with the cardboard chariot that is one of the components. Again, I didn't get the chance to play it. The English language version (*Tribune*) comes from Fantasy Flight Games.

Pilot Games had a whole raft of new expansions for *Duel in the Dark*, their two-player wargame that was making its Spiel debut. This is a clever game where one player plots a mission for the Allied bomber fleet while the other tries to intercept it with fighters and flak. The expansions provide extra options sides.

*Origins* is a big board game from Phil Eklund and Sierra Madre Games. Subtitled "How we became Human", it traces the evolution of mankind across the planet.



Players develop their hominid and its culture: domesticating animals, taming fire, learning language and so on. Civilizations expand and contract and compete with other cultures. All this and Ice Ages and global warming to deal with as well.



The Game Master's latest is *Rotterdam*, designed by main man Hans van Tol. Players try to manoeuvre container ships across the board (the eponymous port) so that goods are delivered to the right place. What's good for one person doesn't necessarily help another, so these ships can end up anywhere. A highlight of Spiel was the 'live action' games played on The Game Master's stand each day. The Game Master also had a new edition of *Skyline of the World* with improved artwork and rules.

From Valley Games is another game about ships and containers called *Container*. Designed by Franz-Benno Delonge and Thomas Ewert. This is a rather counter-intuitive game. Players win by collecting containers in their section of the central island. However, these can only come from other players' ships, whose contents are auctioned off when they reach the island. Players load their ships from other players' warehouses, paying the asking rate for what's on offer. They stock their warehouses by buying the containers produced in other players' factories. This is potentially a very subtle game as players try to influence others to bring the containers they want to the island. They also have to make sure they have enough



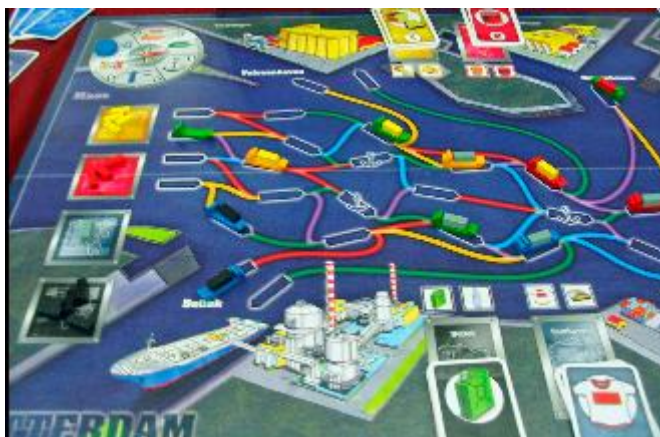
money – though they can take out loans at any time, at the cost of paying interest each turn. *Container* was pretty popular at Spiel and sold out. Valley Games has also re-printed *Hannibal*, the classic wargame of the wars between Rome and Carthage.

Martin Wallace's new game from Warfrog is *Brass*, which was previewed at UK Games Expo (see *TWJO* 76). This looks very interesting as it's about the

Industrial Revolution in Lancashire. It's played in two halves, once with canals and then with railways. I look forward to trying it out. Martin was also showing off the limited edition of *Mordred* he's produced in aid of charity.

*Ghost for Sale* is the new title from Italian publisher What's Your Game?, designed by Acchitocca. This is a family card game of buying Scottish castles. Of course, they're worth more if they have a ghost. Or are they? A game of deduction and bluff.

Phew! Lots of good stuff here and a lot more that I haven't mentioned yet. I look forward to playing all these games over the next months. And I anticipate Spiel '08, which is scheduled for 23rd-26th October 2008. Keep an eye on the organisers' website for more information: [www.merz-verlag.com/spiel](http://www.merz-verlag.com/spiel).



The Rotterdam board

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*Cuba* and *Darjeeling* box art courtesy of Eggertspiele and Abacusspiele, respectively

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