

Let's Spiel Again! Pevans is in Essen for this year's games fair

One of the things that epitomises Autumn for me is scuffing through the piles of brown leaves from the plane trees along the street beside the low grey blocks that make up the Essen exhibition halls (the Messe). Yes, if it's late October it must be Spiel. The greatest games fair on the globe takes place here for four days each year. The 2010 event took place over 21st-24th October and attracted 154,000 visitors. They saw 650 new products provided by 786 exhibitors from 32 countries. These days Spiel really is an international showcase for games, even if the majority of the visitors are local.

I had my distributor hat on again this year, looking for new games that we can bring in to the UK—whether from Europe, America or further afield. This is good for my reporting hat too, of course. I was based with the Prime Boardgames team and helped set up their stand. It's always fun to see the show take shape around you as the empty halls gradually fill with tables, chairs and games. A surprising amount of business takes place on the Wednesday before the public gets in—mainly between the exhibitors as they'll have precious little spare time for the next four days.



Wide open spaces as things get started



Stacks of pallets just waiting...

There are still some stands being dressed on Wednesday evening and the final touches made on Thursday morning. Then at 10 am the doors open and a wave of people surges into the complex, breaks around the first stands and flows through all the halls. Within ten minutes, visitors have made it to the back of the last hall and the whole place is buzzing. The first day brings in the enthusiasts, eager to get their hands on the new games as soon as possible. You quickly get an idea of the pre-show buzz by the stands that are immediately swamped.

My first version of this report will necessarily only have only brief details of the games. I don't have time to play many (or even any) of them at the show. As I learn more, I will provide additional material—both more details of the games and more games. This is the second version, which has been expanded with more details.

Let me start with the part I'm most familiar with: Prime's new games. Chief of these is *The Great Fire of London 1666*. I feel I've already written a lot about this game. In particular, after the UK Games Expo at the start of June. The final production version has a larger board to give more room for the pieces and has foregone the complicated fire and pump pieces for simple red and black cones that can be stacked to show the fire-fighters (the trained bands) containing fires.

To recap, the game has the players as property owners, trying to preserve the



Prime is ready to go

houses they have scattered across 17th century London. However, the first thing each does in their turn is to play a wind card and spread the fire—ideally taking out their opponents' houses! Then they move the trained bands and their own pawn to put out fires and, if they're lucky, to demolish houses and make a fire break. Players also have secret objectives they'll score points for if these survive the fire. The end of the deck triggers the end of the game. Players score points for their remaining houses, fires put out and surviving objectives. Okay, it's not the deepest game, but it's good fun and provides a decent challenge.



Second up on Prime's stand was the second edition of *1860: Railways on the Isle of Wight*. This is an intense 18xx game as it's set in a small area. Unusually, it ends with the nationalisation of the railways. The new edition has a double-sided board: one side is the same as the original game, the other has a slightly expanded map. Designer Mike Hutton has streamlined the game, based on feedback from players of the first edition. The new version can be played as the first edition or with the expanded map, two extra tiles and one rule change.

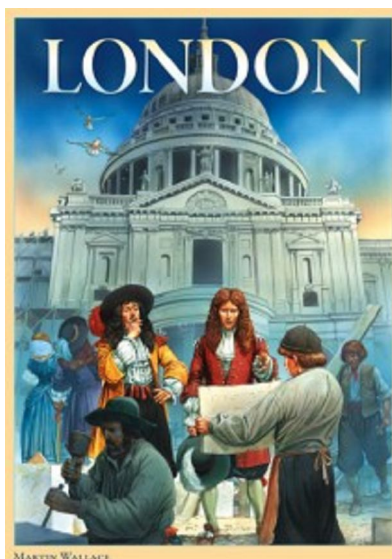
Prime were also demonstrating the new edition of *Mijnlieff*, designed by Andy Hopwood. This is a neat two-player abstract game, consisting of wooden pieces in a drawstring cloth bag. The players take turns to place their square wooden pieces on a 4x4 grid (which can be moved around to make different configurations). Each has eight pieces, two each of four different types. Each type restricts where your opponent may place their next piece. Blocking your opponent so that they can't play is a key strategic goal, but players score points for getting 3 or 4 of their tiles in a row and the most points wins. Like all the best games of this type, the rules are simple, but gameplay provokes some head-scratching. It's a neat, attractive game.



On top of this, Prime were representing the Ragnar Brothers and demonstrating their new game, *Workshop of the World*, another that debuted at the UK Games Expo. This is an interesting

game of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Players place industries in towns around the country, linking them with canals (initially) and railways (later). They score points for all of these, but must bid for their choice of town. It's a clever game, but I find it more like an abstract positional/territorial game than a business game.

Great Fire of London sold out by the end of the show, but Martin Wallace's latest, *London*, was sold out on Friday at the Treefrog stand. This game starts where the other leaves off: with London in smouldering ruins. It's about re-building and developing the city from the aftermath of the great fire through to the end of the Victorian era. Players are developers, investing in land and the city's buildings. However, the cost of



Just room to sneak in the box art for Treefrog's *London*

this is increasing the level of poverty, against which players must balance the gains from their developments. This looks like a cracking game and one I am looking forward to playing.

German publisher Argentum also had a Martin Wallace game: a new edition of *Last Train to Wensleydale*. The artwork has been revised to be less garish than the original with a couple of tweaks to the game. However, more importantly, the other side of the board has a different map and is the *First Train to Nürnberg*. This is a development of the original game with the local railways transporting beer and the post (rather than stone and cheese) and the addition of different classes of passenger transport. The revised artwork is a great improvement and certainly makes the game easier on the eye. The changes for the new game sound good, too.

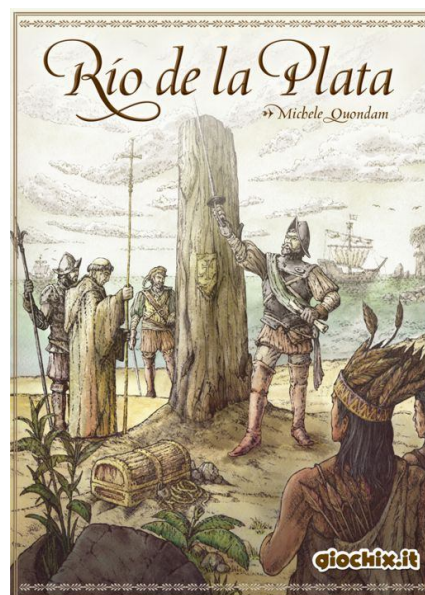


First Train... with bits of both boards—note the lack of garish red, green and yellow on the new Wensleydale board (bottom part)!

Argentum also had their Eastern board expansion for their hit of last year, *Hansa Teutonica* (see my review in *TWJO* 102). This is less an expansion than a different version of the game. It is played on a different board, Eastern Germany, which

shows sea routes across the Baltic. These, along with the additional cards included, provide players with some new and different challenges. I'm not particularly a fan of *Hansa Teutonica*, but I'm sure the expansion will go down well with those who are.

In between Prime and Treefrog was Italian publisher Giochix with their new game, *Rio de la Plata*. Designed by Michele Quondam, this is a strategy game about the Spanish settlement and development of Buenos Aires, now the capital of Argentina. The city was designed on a square grid, making it easy to reflect in the game. It was constantly threatened by English pirates (or should that be privateers?), so players have to work together to defend the city while competing to gain the position of Governor. Definitely worth a try.



Across the gangway from Prime was Bernd Eisenstein, alias Iron Games, with his new game, *Porto Carthago*. I was quite taken with *Peloponnes*, his 2009 game, so this is one I definitely want to take a look at. The players are senators in ancient Carthage, competing to improve their position in the city. As Carthage depends on



trade, the port is the most important part of the city. Over five turns, the players use the limited actions available to move ships into the port and ship goods out. Players win by getting the most pawns into the palace, though this means they're not available to take actions on the board. I look forward to trying it out.

Further along this row was Ted Alspach and Bézier Games. Ted had a pack of *Age of Steam* expansion boards and a new card game. The settings for the *Age of Steam* expansions seem to be set in increasingly bizarre locations: after the Amazon Rainforest and Sahara Desert we have Atlantis and Trisland (a symmetrical map for three players). What next?



Perpetual Motion Machine

More interesting is the card game, *Perpetual Motion Machine*. The idea is that the players are competing to put the finishing touches to crazy inventor Ted Alspach's impossible machine. They have to collect sets of cards to build up their skills tree, competing with the other players to make the most efficient machine. It sounds fascinating and I look forward to trying it out.

Moving on a bit further, the green cover of *Bangkok Klongs* at dlp Games makes it look like it could be a Friedemann Friese game. In fact it's by Martin Schlegel and the klongs are the canals of the city, where Thai merchants gather in the city's floating markets. Players manoeuvre their boats into the best positions and aim to specialise in specific goods. Another one I look forward to playing.



Bangkok Klongs

Valley Games from Canada had a sizeable stand in the middle of the hall and several new games to show off. *Bugs* is a card game where players try to fend off a swarm of insects. It's a quick-playing game where the object is to get rid of all your cards. You play cards in sets of the same value/insect, either adding to the preceding set or playing a set of a higher value. Other cards reverse the direction of play, miss out a player or set the current value to zero. It all sounds rather familiar, but the bright, eye-catching artwork makes this an attractive little game.

Crows is an entertaining tile-laying game. Each turn, players add tiles to those already on the table, adding any crows shown on the tiles. Then they place their 'shiny object'. Once all of these are down, each crow moves to the nearest shiny thing in a straight line—within certain restrictions—and the owner scores points for the crows that gather. With each turn, there are more crows and the board gets more complex. Add in bonus tiles that change the rules for one play or give players extra points and there's a lot to think about.

Valley's third game was *Two by Two*, in which players manoeuvre their 'ark' to rescue animals from the rising floodwaters. All they need to do is move next to an animal and they add a pair to their ark. However, they get most points by being the only person to rescue a pair of that animal, so the other part of their turn, covering land with water, can be very important. The ability to stitch up your opponents always adds to the fun element of the game and this one sounds like there's some thinking required, too.

At the other end of the hall, Wattsalpoag were handicapped by much of their material being caught in Customs. However, they did have copies of their new game and were able to demonstrate this and other titles. The new game is *Last Call—The Bartender Game*. This is a departure for Wattsalpoag: it's in a deep, rectangular box rather than their usual square box! I'm told it holds the same volume. The contents include some rather fetching 'drinks bottles' and realistic 'ice cubes'. Players start with a hand of drinks cards and try to get rid of them by moving drinks bottles to get the set required for the drink. They get ice cubes as penalties for unused bottles and cards and the fewest ice cubes wins the game. Not a deep game, maybe, but it looks like fun.

Now you may not have noticed this, but so far I have just covered what was happening in Hall 5. That this is only a fraction of the show becomes clear when you know that the show takes up eight halls at the Essen Messe—plus the Galleria, which houses the bouncy castles, bouncy table football, climbing walls and other attractions for children. The Galleria is great fun for a visit, but the shrieking of excited children drives me out pretty quickly. Let me go back to the beginning and cover what's in the other halls.

The main entrance brings the visitor into Hall 12, so this is a premium location and most of the companies in here are long-term exhibitors. The big stand immediately facing arrivals always used to be Hasbro's. However, this year visitors were confronted by the Repos team extolling the virtues of their new game, *7 Wonders*. Loudly. The stand was actually occupied by French publisher and distributor Asmodée (who are gradually spreading across Europe as they acquire other businesses—such as Esdevium in the UK) and Repos is just one of the publishers represented.

A lot of good things have been said about *7 Wonders* (and it's high up on the BGG list), but I haven't played it yet. It's a development game with the players running city-states in the Ancient World. The game is essentially a card game with players

selecting one card each turn. They construct buildings, produce goods, trade with their neighbours and build a Wonder—in stages. After three 'Ages', the player who's amassed the most points wins. It certainly sounds like my kind of game and I look forward to trying it.

I wasn't too surprised that French publisher Ystari was also on the Asmodée stand. As usual, their game has a Y in the title: *Mousquetaires du Roy*. It has a theme close to my heart: d'Artagnan and the Three Musketeers pitted against the machinations of the wicked Milady de Winter—all represented by nice plastic models. The large board shows various areas important to the story. At the top is a space for the cards that show the four stages of the main plot (room for an expansion here!). Taken from *The Three Musketeers*, this is the foursome's mission to retrieve the Queen's missing jewellery so that she is not disgraced at the grand ball.



Some other areas on the board hold minor missions for the Musketeers, which bring rewards or penalties. Some of them can even precipitate a victory for Milady before the usual end of the game. If you're familiar with *Shadows over Camelot* or Reiner Knizia's *Lord of the Rings*, you will see some similarities. The team playing the Musketeers must cooperate to complete the various missions and thwart Milady. If they fail to do this within the set number of turns, Milady wins. As with *Shadows*

over *Camelot*, the time pressure is almost palpable as new threats keep springing up. However, in this game the team has active opposition as one player gets to be Milady and set the opponents and traps for the Musketeers.

The game is great fun and a stiff challenge for the team of Musketeers. They must concentrate on the main plot as completing this is the only way they can win. The other missions are, essentially, distractions, diverting the Musketeers from their goal. However, Milady can win if these sub-plots go too far, so the Musketeers can't afford to completely ignore them. Initially, the Musketeers have a different priority: tooling up. Equipment and improved abilities will make completing the missions much easier. Gaining these costs precious time, though—and one thing Milady can do is skip turns and hurry on the end of the game and her victory!

As you'd expect, I'm very taken with this game. It's very enjoyable and a tough trial for the Musketeer players. Milady has an easier time of it, but still has to select the right challenges to pressurise the Musketeers and keep them away from the main mission. She can also interfere directly by deploying her minion, Rochefort, to duel the Musketeers. (Sadly, Rochefort is a wimp and runs away as soon he's wounded—you just can't get the henchmen these days.) Great stuff and Rio Grande Games publish the English language version. It gets an initial 8/10 on my highly subjective scale.

The other big company next to Asmodee at the front of hall 12 is Kosmos. They had the usual new expansions for *Settlers of Catan* along with a crop of new games. My favourite is Friedemann Friese's *Schwarzer Freitag* (*Black Friday* in the English language edition from Rio Grande). I played the prototype (then known as "Friedemann's Friday Game") a while back and thought it was excellent. Kosmos has done a first-rate job on the production.



Black Friday is a stock market game. Players buy and sell shares in various companies, making money as share prices climb—and fall! The central mechanism is drawing pieces out of a bag to change the prices of the shares. Initially, each company has the same number of pieces in the bag. However, the mix changes as players buy and sell shares. What players do influences the share prices ... just not immediately. Black pieces also go into the mix and these will cause prices to crash when enough of them are drawn.

The one thing that does hold its value is, of course, gold. Players can put their cash into gold at any time. However, the price of gold climbs steadily as the game goes on and players buy more, so there is a balance between buying cheap gold and earning more money to buy more expensive gold. At the end it's players' gold that decides the winner. *Black Friday* is a clever, deceptively simple game and one I really enjoy. Another neat touch: players borrow money to pay for their investments and never pay it back! Another 8/10 on my highly subjective scale.

Around the edges of hall 12 are some of the smaller games publishers, many of whom have been going for many years. One of these is *franjos*, a German publisher with a number of excellent games to their name (such as *Can't Stop*, one of my favourites). Their new release is *Cinco*, a multi-player abstract game. Like the best abstract games, the rules are simple while the play is fiendish. The board is a grid of numbered spaces. Players place pieces to cover the spaces according to the card they play. The piece must go on a space with a number at least as big as the card shows. The aim is to get five pieces in a row. Simple. Or not. The game is a development of *Five Straight* and just as clever.

On the opposite side of Hall 12 are Dutch games designer Corné van Moorsel and his company, Cwali. I am a big fan of *Powerboats*, van Moorsel's fun game of powerboat racing from 2008, but this is very different from his usual clever, intricate games (I am still baffled by *Titicaca*). His new game, *Sun, Sea & Sand*, is more representative.



The setting is a tropical island that has just opened up to the tourist trade. Each player has their own board—divided into sea, beach, boulevard and grassland—which they will develop to attract tourists and gain income. First off, players must build chalets. Then, when the tourist boat arrives (one each turn), they can entice some of the new arrivals to stay in their resort. Next, they add attractions, building them on the appropriately coloured part of their resort. These will keep tourists (of that colour) in their resort for another turn. And tourists mean money, enabling the players to build more chalets or attractions.

The tourist boats are visible from the start, so players know exactly what tourists will be available when and can even 'book' them in advance. This means players can (and must!) plan well in advance. The trick is to make sure that you have enough money to do what you want each turn while making sure nobody else grabs the tourists you want.

Sun, Sea & Sand lasts a set number of turns, after which players score up. Attractions are worth points, as are any tourists still in players' resorts, hotel signs and even spaces between attractions (for integrating the natural environment into your resort). It is a clever, clever game that requires a lot more thought than the cheerful theme and colourful components suggest at first. I'll give it 7/10 on my highly subjective scale for the time being.

It's hard to see the join between halls 11 and 10 (look up and you can see that the roof changes) and together they provide the focus of the fair. The high roof allows in lots of light, making this a bright, airy area. It is home to the major German games companies, starting with the venerable Ravensburger. However, Ravensburger is not one of my priorities as most of their games are intended for children. They did have a Kiesling and Kramer game, *Asara*, this year and this is probably worth a look. For now, I shall breeze straight through these halls.

Continuing straight through takes us to Hall 9, a haven for smaller publishers—many of them well established. One such is PD Games, publisher of Mac Gerdts' games. This year's offering is *Navegador*, a game that follows the routes of medieval Portuguese explorers around the world. Though circumnavigating is one thing you can't do in the game. The game is all about trade and colonisation. The nicely illustrated board



shows the Atlantic and Indian oceans with the surrounding land.

Players start with a couple of ships and send them out to explore new areas (and score points). Here they can set up colonies (which score points) and establish buildings (which... you get the idea). They sell goods from colonies or factories, pushing the prices in different directions and providing the funds for other actions. They build more ships and explore further—the game ends when someone gets all the way to Japan.

Players' actions are controlled by the roundel that is a feature of Mac Gerdts' games. This shows the actions available to players and they mark their current action with a pawn. Next turn they move round to their next action. This constrains what players can do, as they have to pay for moving more than three spaces. In *Navegador*, moving extra spaces on the roundel is really expensive, so players usually have to take a few more turns than they'd like to get things done.

I've enjoyed all of Gerdts' games and this is no exception. With the roundel slowing you down, it really pays to keep an eye on what the other players are doing. You want to avoid competing with someone who's ahead of you on the roundel while taking advantage of the opportunities they open up—buying a colony in the area they've just explored, for example. I'm looking forward to playing this some more. Pro tem, it gets 7/10 on my highly subjective scale.

Just across the aisle from PD was a visitor from the USA: Phil Eklund and Sierra Madre Games. Phil's latest is *High Frontier*, a game about the industrialisation of the solar system. Now Phil is a rocket scientist, so this game is very realistic. The complex board shows the inner solar system (the expansion extends out to Saturn) with planets, moons and asteroids connected by lines representing orbits and transitions. It turns out that Mars's moons are closer to us than our moon in terms of the energy needed to get there.



Players are major powers (not necessarily nation states) competing to build viable spaceships, visit other celestial bodies and establish factories in outer space. Central to the game are the three decks of cards. These represent patents and blueprints, enabling the owner to build a 'rocket' using that technology. Then you can try to get your rocket to somewhere useful. Getting

back again would be useful too!

Each rocket needs water as reaction mass for its motor. However, adding water increases the mass of the rocket, requiring more water to move it. The calculation can be tricky, balancing the water required against the power of the rocket. Of course, there are many different propulsive systems, including solar sails, which requires no water, but move very slowly. Hence getting the right technology is a big help.

Once you have built an off-world factory, things begin to hot up. The technology you can build in space (flipping over those cards) is so much better than the earth bound stuff—and worth a lot more! The game ends when a critical number of factories have been built. Players tot up the points for their space ventures and achievements. This is an intricate, complex game with a lot to think about. And even more if you add in the advanced rules: the effects of radiation, slingshots to boost your speed and the possibility of conflict. Brilliant stuff and an initial 9/10 on my highly subjective scale.

At the back of hall 9 is the way through to hall 8. Here is the other part of the fair: Comic Action '10 is all about comics and this takes up hall 8 and part of 9. I turn left into the big hall 6, which immediately has a different atmosphere. This is where the role-players hang out—along with the wargamers. You can tell this because everybody's dressed in black. Those that aren't in costume, anyway. Okay, that's a bit of an exaggeration, but the hall definitely feels darker. It is stuffed with stands selling costumes and equipment for LARP: racks of (latex) swords, suits of armour and medieval costumes. I enjoy just wandering through and soaking up the atmosphere. However, within this there are still some games.



Top of my list is Pilot Games and Friedemann de Pedro, who came up with the excellent *Duel in the Dark*, a game about bombing German cities! In a similar vein, the new game is *Duel of the Giants*, a head-to-head tank battle on the Eastern Front. The German player has two Tiger tanks plus some concealed anti-tank guns and a tank-busting Stuka with which to defend against the Russian horde. The Russian player has eight T34 tanks. Plus some markers to conceal just what is where until the tanks attack.

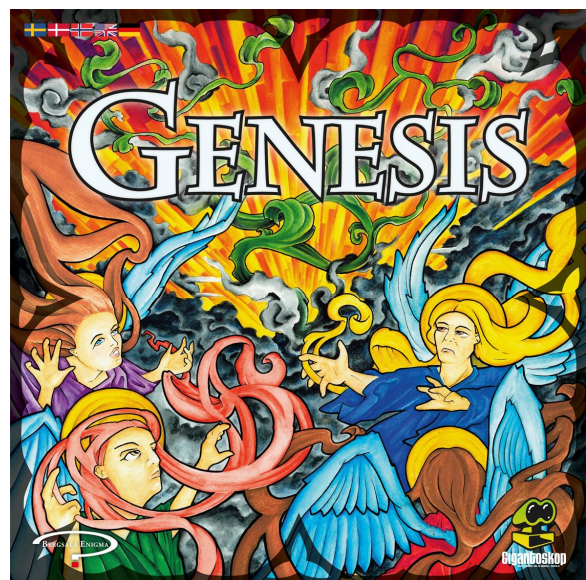
As with *Duel in the Dark*, there is an element of out-guessing your opponent. The German player must program the actions of their Tigers at the start of each turn. The Russian player moves openly, possibly running into fire from the anti-tank guns, and then the Tigers do their stuff. The German player can throw in the Stuka at any time, but it can only fly one sortie in the game, so this needs to be reserved for a crucial (or desperate!) moment.

The best way for the Russian to score points is to get tanks through the German lines and off the board—heading for Berlin. Hence, they don't have to defeat the Tigers, just get past them. This gives the German player a real headache: they must defend across the board, but know that the Russian attack will probably concentrate in one section. Then, when the attack comes, is it the full assault or just a diversion?

The obvious comparison is with *Memoir '44*, another simple WW2 wargame with nice models. In some ways, *Duel of the Giants* is simpler than *Memoir '44*. The rules are less complex and the mission is straightforward. However, the hidden movement and programming of the Tigers make *Duel of the Giants* a very different challenge in play. And it has model Tigers! 7/10 on my subjective scale.

Carrying on through Hall 6 brings us to Hall 4 and back into board games territory again. There was a lot to see here. Almost bang in the middle of the hall was Swedish publisher Gigantoskop. They have produced some wacky games in the past and are always worth a look. This year their new game is *Genesis*—not to be confused with the Reiner Knizia game of the same name published by Face2Face a few years back. Gigantoskop's *Genesis* is brightly coloured and has its tongue firmly in its cheek.

The players are all angels helping God create the world in seven days! Yes, it really is the biblical *Genesis*. However, the game is actually pretty abstract. Players need to collect cubes in three different colours, representing the elements needed for creation. On each 'day' a different combination of cubes is required. Turning in these cubes lets you place a marker to show that you've contributed that day. These are worth points at the end of the game and more points the earlier they are placed in the day. However, grabbing the first spot in a particular day delays you, so you're not likely to get an early spot in the next day. There is thus a definite hare and tortoise element to the game.



Which cubes players can pick up is also governed by where they stand in the sequence for that day, though they can spend cubes to swap places with others as

part of their turn. In fact, most turns are pretty quick as you will only be collecting cubes, turning cubes in or moving. What slows things down is thinking about which cubes to collect and what position you will be in next turn. Each day is divided into three so there are just 21 turns in the game. After that, everybody counts their points and the angel with the mostest is the winner.

To complicate things a bit further, there is also a dark angel, a black playing piece. Just like the players' angels, this can contribute to each day, blocking points that players then can't get. What's more, the dark angel gets in the way of collecting cubes, blocking one of the spaces. The dark angel's moves follow a simple logic, but can still be very annoying. I was quite taken with this game when I first saw it, but was a little disappointed when I played it. It's a relatively simple game of cube and action management, but plays quickly enough not to out-stay its welcome. 6/10 on my highly subjective scale for the time being.

Further along towards the back of the hall was R&R Games with several new games and Frank DiLorenzo and Anthony Rubbo. Anthony was showing off his first published game (by R&R, natch), *Hey Waiter!* In this entertaining card game, players are harassed waiters in a busy restaurant. In front of each of them is a pile of chips in different colours, representing different types of dish to be served.

Players also have a hand of cards and play a pair to take an action. The cards are put side by side and the two halves next to each other govern what the player can do. The left card shows the action and the right the colour it affects. The most obvious action is to serve a dish of a particular colour, removing a chip from your stack. However, everybody with that colour on top of their stack serves a dish, so it's best played when you're the only one.

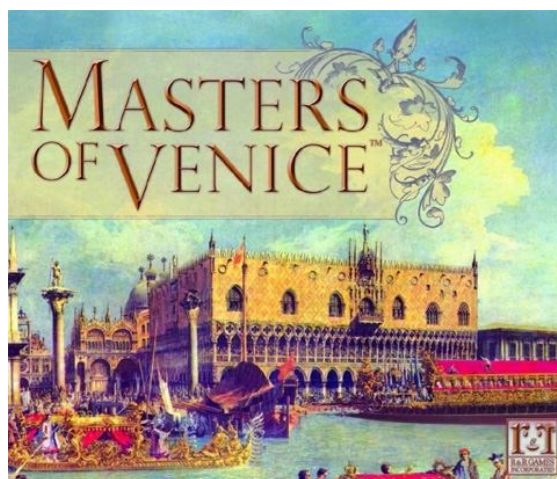
Other actions let you move a chip from one stack to another, which can be very useful. You can put a cover on top of a stack to stop another player serving. Or remove a cover someone else has placed. Or you can split your stack in two. The more stacks you have, the more likely you are to have the



right colour of card to serve a dish. However, you have to place a card under each new stack, so you are also limiting your options by reducing your hand size.

As you can see, there are some tactical subtleties to the game, but it is largely just great fun as players block each other and try to get the upper hand. It has certainly been a hoot at the Swiggers games group whenever it's been played, but hasn't gone down as well in a family setting. I'll give it 6/10 at the moment.

A more serious game from R&R is Frank DiLorenzo's *Masters of Venice*. This is a complex trading game set in the city of the title in the 1400s. The small board shows the docks and shipping offices in the middle, where players buy goods as they arrive in Venice. Around the outside (there's a canal in between) are the shops, which will buy a particular colour good. For each shop there is also a peg-board that shows the current value of the shop's shares, the price of the good it wants and how many orders (which will use up the goods) are waiting.



As well as buying and selling goods, players can buy and sell shares in the shops. Shares give players dividends as the shop does business and holding the majority lets you make an adjustment to the peg board for that shop. Shares are also worth their value at the end of the game, generating victory points for the owners.

Players bid for turn order and choose a character, which they will keep for several turns. Each character provides an advantage when doing a particular action, so players are trying to get the character that will help them most over the next turns. The game ends after 12 turns—marked by a gondola moving along the canal on the board—and players get points for their shares and cash.

That just gives a flavour of the game as there is an awful lot going on. The rules are well explained but take a little while to get your head round. Once you've done that, you've got a multi-faceted strategy game that gives players lots of options and some tough decisions. Nor can you ignore what the others are up to as this can effect what you're doing. *Masters of Venice* is definitely a game I'm going to be playing a few times. It gets an initial 7/10 on my highly subjective scale.

Through hall 4 is the Galleria, which I mentioned earlier, but turning left here takes me through the 4a area (a kind of vestibule with cloakrooms and coffee bars) and back into hall 5 where my exploration of Spiel started in last issue. As always, I've only touched on a small part of the new games in this report. I will expand on it, as time allows, and the full version will be available on my website in due course: www.pevans.co.uk/Reviews/index.html#Articles

My thanks to the organisers of Spiel, Freidhelm Merz Verlag, who do a great job of putting on the fair each year. Spiel '11 is scheduled for 20th-23rd October and I'll be there. For more information, see the website at

www.internationalespieltage.de/e000.php4 (the English language version).

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