

Internationale Spieltage

SPIEL '22



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Press Conference SPIEL '22

Major New Releases Festival at the Internationale Spieltage SPIEL in Essen

SPIEL '22, sees the world's leading fair for board and card games returning to its former glory. Around 980 game publishers from 56 nations will gather from October 6 - 9 at the Exhibition Center in Essen. After the successful re-boot last year, the number of exhibitors has increased noticeably. In addition to this, more new releases than ever before will be presented at the event. Over 1,800 titles await the board game community over the four days of the convention. This volume underscores the current boom being experienced in the industry.

Event organizer Friedhelm Merz Verlag warmly welcomes all the representatives from the board game industry. This also applies to the numerous game fans who travel to the Essen Exhibition Center from all corners of the globe. The year before, despite extensive regulations and restrictions, the response in the gaming scene was incredibly positive. Dominique Metzler, CEO of Friedhelm Merz Verlag - a subsidiary of Spielwarenmesse eG - is therefore optimistic about SPIEL '22: "We are currently experiencing incredible growth in the world of board games. This is true with regard to industry sales, the number of new releases, as well as the size of the board game community." There will be plenty of tables with game explainers on the exhibition floors. This will give every visitor the opportunity to try out the new products on offer.

Educational supporting program

SPIEL, the highlight of the games industry annual calendar, is becoming the most important platform for professional exchange thanks to the many new topics added to the supporting program. "Visitors should consciously see and understand the importance of games as a cultural asset. To this end, we provide the proverbial view behind the scenes and beyond," says Florian Hess, who has been acting as joint CEO alongside Dominique Metzler since this year. One highlight is EDUCATORS' DAY on Friday of the convention. It is aimed at educators and all teaching professionals and deals with the use of board games in the classroom, in community or senior citizen work. In addition, Saturday October 8, will see the premier of Research Day. In the form of several panel discussions, the project Boardgame Historian will specifically offer a look at board game research in Germany.

innoSPIEL: the nominees

For exhibiting publishers, another program item is of special importance: the innoSPIEL award. The prize, which is awarded in cooperation with the city of Essen, is characterized by its focus on quality and innovation. A qualified jury has nominated three games that have stood out from this year's crop of games for their innovative concepts:

The "Echoes" series from Ravensburger Verlag offers beautifully designed cards as well as an excellently produced App. The innovative feature is how the game becomes a buildable audio play that creates its very own cinema experience in the player's head. In this Audio Mystery series, the player is given the ability to hear sound fragments from the past out of objects. From these snippets, a story comes together piece by piece. The handy boxes contain large-format cards that are scanned using a specially developed App to elicit sounds from the images. To decode the case, the audio fragments must be put in the correct order. The nominated Echoes series currently comprises four games: Die Tänzerin, Der Cocktail, Der Mikrochip and Der Ring. A fifth part will be added in the fall.

In "Hey Yo" by Oink Games, players are members of a rap band that wants one thing more than anything else: Fame! They achieve this when they crack the high score with their rhymes and beats. Once the included beat-box is playing, players must take turns laying out their cards to the rhythm of the beat. It is important to build up the punchline with the cards, because only this gives points. Cards are drawn and played until the beat stops. Whoever then puts together the highest score becomes the biggest rap star. The games by Oink Games are as compact and puristic as the content of the boxes. Sometimes it takes no more than two lines, four different symbols on the cards, and a little rhythm machine to provide the beat. In addition to the speaker, the game's harmonic equipment also includes a cleverly made scoring pad, which guides the player well when distributing points and takes much of the work out of this task.

The third nominated game title takes players to Oniria, the land of dragons. The former paradise is threatened. To stop an ancient force from destroying Oniria, players must travel back in time and save the dragons. In the cooperative "Wonder Book" by Abacusspiele, players play both on and in the book of the same name, out of which a distinctive pop-up tree rises. More pop-up elements gradually come into play, allowing interaction in a variety of ways. The six-part story is driven via sets of cards. Thanks to simple rules, entry into the game is very low-threshold. An absolute eye-catcher in Wonder Book is the tree, whose mighty pop-up crown towers over the game table and yet is not just a visual end, as it has many active functions. The six chapters to be played also offer a varied gameplay that thrives on a vast variety of decisions made by the players, who have a clear influence on the course of the game and the story.

Deutscher SpielePreis: the winners

The Deutscher SpielePreis is considered the most important public prize for parlor games worldwide. It is therefore a special highlight at SPIEL when the two award winners are chosen. In the category "Best Family and Adult Game", this year's 1st place goes to "Arche Nova" by Mathias Wigge. In the game from publisher Feuerland, each of the 1 to 4 players aged 14 and up plans and builds a modern, scientifically managed zoo. They create enclosures, house animals and support species conservation projects around the world to build the most successful zoo. "Arche Nova" inspires with its great depth of play. Nevertheless, the moves are quickly explained. If you are in the mood for an epic gaming experience, you will get your money's worth with "Arche Nova". For newcomers, the publisher Feuerland recommends starting decks with card selection and tips for the first actions on its homepage.

"Mit Quacks & Co. nach Quedlinburg" wins the award for "Best Children's Game". With this title, designer Wolfgang Warsch has succeeded in creating a wonderful child-friendly variant of the connoisseur's game "Die Quacksalber von Quedlinburg". 2 to 4 players from the age of 6 organize an animal race. The children try to move their animal (cow, donkey, pig, or sheep) with the help of food chips. However, among the chips that are randomly drawn from a bag, there are also dream herbs that send the animal to sleep. With rewards, the player improves the starting position. Thus, the race picks up speed as the game progresses. "Mit Quacks & Co. nach Quedlinburg" offers elements of play that are great fun for children. It is also a children's game that "grows with you" because it has a slightly easier beginner variant and can be increased in difficulty later.

The trend lies in diversity

In addition to the award-winning highlights at SPIEL '22, there are many other exciting new products among the 1,800 titles on display. There is something for every age group and every type of player. A real eye-catcher among the **children's games** is, for example, "Hildes wilde Wäschspinne" - a fun yet turbulent challenge for 2 to 4 players aged 4 and up. In the game from Megableu, laundry items are hung on a three-dimensional rotary clothes dryer until someone sets off the tornado. This gives the rotary dryer including Hilde a really good spin and in the worst case all the items of washing are thrown from the line. The first player to hang out all the pieces of laundry in his color wins the game.

Among the new releases in **family games** this time there are a number of classics and bestsellers with a fresh look. "Das verrückte Labyrinth", an evergreen from Ravensburger Verlag has been made into a cooperative version in the form of "Labyrinth Team Edition". The 2 to 4 players aged 8 and up are held captive by Daedalus, the spirit of the labyrinth, and must now work together to find and uncover the way to the magical portal. The popular family game "Splendor" by Space Cowboys/Asmodee gets a sophisticated adaptation this fall with "Splendor Duel" for 2 players aged 10 and up. The spin-off offers new moves and strategic possibilities.

Kosmos publishes "Terra Nova", a **connoisseur's game** for 2 to 4 players aged 12 and up, the game principle of which is based on the globally successful "Terra Mystica". In the game, up to four tribes face each other and peacefully compete to explore new regions, construct buildings, and find the best strategy to own the largest part of the game board. Each of the ten available tribes has special abilities that need to be used cleverly. Who can best optimize player turns, play the smartest moves, and make the best use of resources? Special mechanisms such as power bowls and the transformation of landscapes make the connoisseur game a unique adventure.

In the **expert game** section, Pegasus Spiele is releasing the title "Skymines" by Alexander Pfister and Viktor Kobilke. This Eurogame for 1 to 4 players aged 14 and up is set in a not-too-distant future where humankind is successfully mining resources on the moon. However, unrest brought this project to a halt and players are now trying to revive the old mining network. Exciting features here include the card mechanism, because with the help of the action cards the moves of a round are planned by all players at the same time. Proper timing, good advance planning and the smart use of resources are the keys to success. In addition to the basic version, the game offers a campaign mode, consisting of four modules, and a second game board side, which makes the games even more challenging.

Games market still dependable

The titles presented are representative of a mass of board games presented at SPIEL. The record number of new releases reflects the general development in the games market in the times of the pandemic. According to npdgroup market researchers, global toy sales in 2021 grew by 22% compared to the pre-Covid period. The "Parlor Games and Puzzles" segment accounted for a significant share of the increase. Within the same period, annual sales here climbed by 32% - to slightly over 15 billion Euros worldwide. For 2022, market researchers expect sales to remain at the same level. "The great flight of fancy may well be over, but the numbers having remained stable are an indication that interest in board games within society is holding. People still want to play," is Florian Hess' analysis. A visit to SPIEL '22 is the right occasion to reinforce this enthusiasm or to expand the hobby. "The number of exhibitors, their international diversity and the abundance of new releases is more than remarkable in view of the tense global situation," is how Dominique Metzler sums it up. In her eyes, SPIEL has recovered from the pandemic break and is in a solid position. This year's event will live up to its reputation in the board game world as the leading games convention.

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