

(soft music)

Welcome to Pick Up and Deliver, the podcast  
where I pick up my audio recorder  
as I step out of the store  
and deliver an episode to you while I walk home.  
I'm Brendan Riley.

(upbeat music)

Well, good afternoon listeners.  
It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago.  
The clouds are out, but just a little,  
it's kind of that wispy temperature  
or wispy cloud cover.  
Temperature is pretty nice.  
I'm feeling very comfy  
and I have a nice walk home.  
Well, it's been, I looked, it's been almost  
a hundred episodes or so since I did this last.  
I'm trying to do it less often  
'cause when I started doing it, that was really fun.  
And this is, it's time for another episode of The Geek Asks.  
This is a particularly narcissistic approach  
to board game podcasting, which really feels like,  
"Ah, just chatting with my friends."  
'Cause what I do is I open up board game geek  
and I go to the recent posts forum  
and I scroll through and I look at the subject lines  
of posts and without reading them,

I respond to them as though they were questions submitted to me, to be answered by me here on the podcast.

It is outrageous nonsense

and I think really fun to do.

I don't know why I enjoy it so much,

but hopefully you enjoyed as well.

If you wanna see the threads that I'm talking about,

you can head over to board game geek guild 3269

where you can find links to the threads on our show notes.

I will add that I've also begun once again

making transcripts for the show notes and posting those.

It is an annoying amount of time to do that,

but and I suppose if I was willing

to have the transcripts be not good,

it would be almost no time at all.

But the process is I upload the episode

to the transcription site that I found

where it will take your episode and transcribe it.

And then I have to read through the transcript

and fix things that don't make sense

because it got words wrong.

The main thing is it gets names wrong

and names of games wrong.

And both of those don't work if you are not paying attention.

The episode on Svensson and Østby for example,

had all sorts of crazy nonsense

whenever I would say their names.

In fact, now that I've said their names,  
I have to go fix it in this transcript.  
So anyway, I read through the transcript  
and once it looks okay,  
I don't have time to read it perfectly,  
but I get it looking fine.  
Then I upload that as well.  
So if you're ever looking for a transcript of the show,  
they are available sometimes,  
but I'm trying to do that more often now  
because I've encounter people who are like,  
"oh, I'd like to hear your podcasts, but I can't hear.  
So is there anywhere I can read it?"  
And it stinks to say no.  
So I'm trying to fix that.  
All right, so let's jump into the geek asks.  
Once again, I am looking at the recent posts on board game geek  
and I am responding to the subject lines of the post  
as though it was a question asked of me.  
Gamifying Candyland, a thought exercise.  
I think there's something worthy  
in thinking about gamifying Candyland, of course.  
The challenge is it feels like you've forgotten  
the purpose of Candyland,  
which is to entertain very, very young children.  
The Candyland is meant to teach like taking turns, basically.  
And the basics of like, I draw a card, I move my piece.

So the problem with gamifying Candyland is that you are then making it not be Candyland.

And if you're making it not be Candyland, then why gamify Candyland?

Why not just make a new game that has the mechanisms you're thinking you would use instead of Candyland?

So my main instinct and response to the idea of gamifying Candyland is, I don't think you should gamify Candyland.

All right, paced on themes and rating games in genres you hate.

Ooh, man, I think this is definitely going to go into a bucket of posts I want to pay attention to.

I think what an interesting forum theme.

So paced it on themes.

I think, okay, I don't generally like a game where the theme is paced it on.

For me, paced it on means they had a game and they came up with some sort of setting for it and they applied the setting to the game.

The reason I generally don't like that,

I mean, I don't have a big problem with it if it's a loose theme.

Azul is an example.

The theme of Azul is you are making a mosaic.

Fine, it doesn't matter.

Nobody plays Azul and feels like they're in Portugal, right?

But it is nice for it to have some sort of thing that it's about, even if it's only the very loose.

I don't have a problem with that.

Where I don't like it is when they take a theme that is meant to generate a story or a narrative and they apply it to a game that isn't meant to generate a story or a narrative and then the game doesn't make any sense.

The things you're doing in this game don't make any sense for the setting or the story that they've applied.

It feels like I've heard something about how Stefan Feld games tend to be like this that Stefan Feld doesn't actually come up with themes at all. He just comes up with mechanisms and then the publishers come up with themes.

I don't know if that's true.

And I feel like it's probably less true lately than it used to be.

Might maybe it used to do or maybe he does come up with a game first and then think about a theme that would fit.

But like Trajan is an example of a game that I don't feel like the theme matters at all to Trajan.

You're just playing a bunch of many games getting a bunch of points and the theme itself is nonsense.

So I don't like that.

What I do like is when the game, theme and mechanisms play off each other in a really thoughtful way.

I would say Ark Nova is an example of this.

I would say a lot of Vladimir Suchy's games are examples of this where the ideas behind the theme of the game shape the mechanisms that you interact with even if at some level they are weird.

Like a Praga Caput Regni is an example of a game where the mechanisms don't entirely fit the theme.

Why should each turn you be limited in which of the actions you can take?

There's no narrative.

We're not provided any narrative reason that you couldn't just take the gray build action every turn.

But there are some things where you can't take it or you have to pay a bunch of money to take it.

Why? I don't know.

That part's not really explained.

But the reason for the points meaning what they mean,

I like that it has a historical basis even if it's pretty loose.

Now, rating games in genres you hate.

Oh, I'm a mixed opinion about this.

On the one hand, I feel like your ratings in Boardgamegeek are there for you.

The schema that Boardgamegeek has posted of what the ratings mean are entirely subjective.

They are about my opinions of games.

And so when I play a game, it makes sense that I would rate it.

That's part of what's going on in Boardgamegeek.

That's the idea.

I'm rating the games, therefore me.

And the conversation, the utility of that rating  
for other people is only good and so far  
as they have similar tastes to me.

But the fact that that rating then aggregates  
and counts as a vote about the game  
is the place probably where this person is chafing.

The idea that if I rate a game low,  
because I don't like that kind of game,  
Boardgamegeek gives that game a low rating,  
even though for people who do like that kind of game,  
maybe it's the best game.

So I can see why the idea of rating games in genres you hate  
would not be appropriate.

Now, I would counter, or I would say,  
reviewing games in genres you hate should be a no-no.  
And let me explain.

This is a deep held opinion I've had for a long time  
because I used to read newspaper reviews of movies.  
And for two summers, I was working at this office  
where they had a copy of this one newspaper  
called the "Saint Paul Pioneer Press" in the break room.  
And so when I would be on my break,  
I would look through the paper  
and often I would read the movie reviews in that paper.

And the lead reviewer would always review the movie  
that was gonna sort of break the most,  
have the most biggest box office that week.  
Like his review was always the top movie.  
And the thing is, often those were horror movies.  
This guy clearly didn't like horror movies.  
Like every review of a horror movie,  
he talked about how bad it was,  
and how dumb it was, or whatever, blah, blah, blah.  
But I feel like if you're reviewing something,  
you should be in the audience of the people  
who might like the thing.  
If you're reviewing a thing,  
and you're not the target audience,  
your review is not useful to the target audience.  
So I think that reviewing really ought to have a narrower subset  
or should really involve a careful consideration  
of how you review it.  
You might say, like I generally don't like horror movies.  
I saw this movie because of this and this,  
and turns out, yeah, I didn't like it.  
If you don't like horror movies, you probably wouldn't like this.  
You'll notice that often when I talk about a game,  
I will say if that kind of game is usually your taste,  
you might like it, or this game wasn't for me,  
but it might be for you if something I said described it well.  
Like, right?



That is part of my review philosophy,  
even though I'm not generally doing reviews,  
I'm doing first impressions.

So, yeah, I feel like you shouldn't rate games  
in genre's event.

One person posted, "Hello,"  
and they introduced yourself for him.

I will say back, "Hello."

How would you approach designing a game  
that relies on a huge amount of cards?

Well, there's two thoughts about this.

One thought is, I think, as you are designing things,  
you should keep component counts in mind  
that a game's viability as a thing to shop around  
is shaped significantly by the components it uses.

A game that uses more cards will cost more  
than a game that doesn't.

That said, cards are pretty cheap.

I mean, as far as game components go,  
cards are not very expensive.

So, having a game that's a couple hundred cards,  
if that's the whole thing,  
it could still be a relatively cheap game.

I mean, we got Skyjo, that's probably a hundred cards,  
and I think it was 15 bucks or something.

So, if your game is just cards, great.

Now, if your game is a ton of cards and minis

and boards and tokens and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah,  
well, then you're in a different place.

So, I mean, my first thing would be,  
make the game you wanna make.

You can have an eye toward components,  
but make the game you wanna make.

Second thing is, think about whether you can increase  
the interest in the game, the replayability in the game,  
by making the cards multi-use.

Are you sure you need a couple hundred cards?

Is there a way you could get by with 100 of them?

Or 104?

I'm trying to remember the, it's good to know  
that the number of cards that are printed on a sheet,  
'cause that can make a difference in terms of pricing.

So, I mean, the first thing I would do would be,

I would really think about what I can do

to making a game that fits the genre I'm going for.

That's what I would do first.

'Cause, you know, there's lots of good games  
with tons of cards.

In fact, that's kind of a thing lately.

Underwater Cities has a ton of cards.

Ark Nova has a ton of cards.

Terraforming Mars has a ton of cards.

But, if you're making a really small game,  
you know, it's worth asking,

like, why do you need all these cards?

What is it that they're doing?

How does having fewer cards make the game better or worse?

Or whatever?

So, that's, you know, it's very specific.

Any D&D groups in hope?

I mean, I think hope is the, is a central core value of D&D.

I heard an interview with Brennan Lee Mulligan lately where he was talking about, he's a D&D role-playing person.

He runs a number of live play, things most prominently on Dimension 20, on Dropout TV.

And he talks about his philosophy of Dungeon Mastering, is that a good D&D game or a good role-playing story should present these moments of heroism in the moments of drama with real scary villains who do cause danger and there should be hope for the players. The players should have hope and a good story is often about hope.

As I look at the heading here,

I'm wondering if this person lives in a place called hope and is trying to find D&D groups to play with.

That's probably what that means.

Web app to visualize your collection.

Interesting.

This is exactly something that I am interested in.

My son was saying he was thinking about a programming project  
where he could use the BGG app API  
to then build an interactive site for me to look at my collection.

And wouldn't that be cool?

Yes it would.

Yes it would.

When you run out of chairs at the table,  
this is always an interesting challenge.

I run a couple board game clubs  
and there's always the problem of people  
who show up 10 minutes after everyone else.

So everybody gets into a game  
and then somebody shows up 10 minutes late.

All the games have started at my board game club last night.

We added people on.

We had two people who became parts of teams in Clue.

Other people were playing a party game  
that you could just kind of add people into as we went.

And then we divided up into bigger groups  
and played other games and stuff.

But I think if you start your game night  
with some games that have flexible player counts,  
that's a really good way to do it.

Some party games or whatnot  
so that as people come in they can join.

And then you can shift into a more complex game  
as time goes on.

That's what you should do.

I think that's really the way to go.

So that's what I would do if I,  
if we have more people than we have spaces to play.

But what do you literally do  
if you run out of chairs at the table?

I mean that's hard if you have a small group  
and more people show up than you can seat.

I don't know how you solve that problem.

You go get a bucket from the garage  
or a folding chair or some chair from another spot.

Feels like the way that you do that.

I don't know if that, how that fits in terms  
of what you're playing.

It can be a real bummer to show up late to game night  
and discover everybody's already in involved games  
and you've got half hour or an hour to wait  
before you get to play something.

But you know, I mean such is the danger  
of going to a public event, I guess.

What's your favorite game day food?

I think this will be the last question of the show.

I have a lot of different things.

I guess M&Ms.

M&Ms are my favorite game day food.

And they're immediately a snack, unhealthy,  
not a good choice if you're trying to watch what you're eating,

trying to be thoughtful about your food intake,

carrots are a better choice.

Tomatoes are a better choice.

But I really like M&Ms.

I really like chips.

When I'm eating chips and I'm playing games,

I will eat chips with one hand and play games with the other.

It's good to have some care

with how you're handling people's game components.

But generally, my favorite game day food is something tasty.

I don't have a lot of picky stuff.

I would be interested to the pickup and deliver community though,

what kind of things do you like best to eat

when you're playing games?

Head over to board game geek guild 3269

and share your thoughts there.

I'd love to know.

I'd also generally like to know what you think of the geek asks.

It's been a year since I've done this, give or take.

Is this a segment you'd tolerate two or three times a year?

Or should I really hold off till I can't take it anymore?

And then you'll tolerate it.

Or do you skip it all away?

If you skip it, you didn't hear this episode.

So, ah, jokes on me.

Well, that's about it for me today.

I'd love to hear from you over on board game geek guild 3269

We can send me a direct message,

Wombat929 is my username there.

Thanks for joining me on my walk today.

I hope you're next walk,

is as pleasant as mine was.

Bye-bye.

(upbeat music)

(upbeat music)

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(upbeat music)