

Welcome to Pick Up and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I step out for a walk and deliver an episode to you while I stroll around.

I'm Brendan Riley.

While greetings listeners, it's been a lovely day.

It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago.

The sun is out, the birds are chirping, the jet is flying overhead.

All of the great background noise that you've come to expect from this walkin' and talkin' podcast.

Today I am heading up to the library to drop some stuff off and maybe pick something up.

And I am enjoying talking to you when I get the chance.

I'm trying to figure out the rhythm of my summer podcasting.

Last week I was so drowning in grading that I didn't have time to get out and do my walks.

And this week has been just very busy.

I got a couple wisdom teeth removed.

So if I seem dumber, now you know why.

And now I'm getting into the summer rhythm.

It's the today is May 30th.

I'm gonna record a couple episodes today, one of which I'll publish today.

The other one I'll publish after the top of the stack, which will be the next episode after this one, I think.

So that's my plan, but that's not why you're here to talk, listen to my plans about what I'm planning to publish.

You wanna hear what I have to say about games?

That's right, it's time for another Board Game Espresso: Triple Shot.

Board Game Espresso: Triple Shot is a segment in which I talk about three games I've tried recently for the first time and maybe one more that I revisited or I tried an expansion for.

Again, this is not a in-depth review segment.

I've only played the game once, maybe twice.

And so I'm giving you quick impressions of it rather than deep thoughts about it.

So let's jump right in.

This first game is a game I've heard about a lot.

And frankly, I always kind of thought I wouldn't like that much, but when a game keeps being talked about as being really good, then I think I should try it.

And I got the opportunity at the Borde game meetup where I traded 29 games away and got 20 some games back, the Chicago No Ship Math Trade, which I talked about already on the podcast.

But anyway, people played both before the meetup and after, people played games and I got the opportunity to play Ethnos.

It was published in 2017 by C'mon Games.

It's designed by Paolo Mori and has art by John Howe.

Now, this game has a poor reputation from the art and design standpoint because it's very bland.

The board is kind of blah.

The cards have reasonably fine sort of standard generic art on them, but they're not particularly

colorblind friendly.

And I'm told that makes it very hard to play for colorblind players.

And also the theme, the name is kind of meaningless.

I'm sure somewhere there's a definition of what Ethnos means and it sounds sort of like races, which there is an element of competing factions kind of like small world.

But I don't really have a signifier for or signified for the word ethnos.

It's just a kind of empty term that means to me, Board game, that could talk a lot about.

So I wasn't that pumped to play the game going in.

But I can see why it has the reputation it does.

I thought ethnos was great.

This is a game where it's an area control game where you are trying to accumulate sets of cards and the cards let you place things on the board and having things on the board lets you control areas.

And there's a lot more to it than that, but in terms of gameplay, it's relatively simple.

You can get cards.

You spend cards to put out control.

Use the control to take control of areas.

The game scores three times and you win based on how many points you got from controlling areas.

The different factions of cards that you're collecting allow you to put control on the board in different ways.

So there's like a Merfolk track and when you play Merfolk cards you get to put out a token on the board, but you also get to advance on the Merfolk track, which is a different

layer of control.

When you play these other cards you get to do something else like each different faction or race has a different thing that you get to do when you play those cards on top of putting something onto the board to help control areas.

In addition, there are not something like 10 or 12 factions in the game, but you only use five or six of them during any individual play, so there's a ton of replayability.

I don't think I'm doing a great explanation of it, but hopefully you can hear from the enthusiasm in my voice.

I thought this game was great.

If it was a commercially available right now I would have it on the top of my to buy list.

As it is, they're publishing a second edition, which apparently is a pretty good return to what the original game was, except apparently they made the graphic design even worse.

So if I do buy it, I will have to look a little bit at maybe altering cards to make them playable for colorblind players, but it's a really interesting game and I liked it a lot.

Paulo Mori seems to be a pretty reliable designer as far as these things go.

So that was Ethnos.

The version I played is from 2017, published by C'Mon.

They also did a re-implementation of the core idea in the game called Archaeos Society, but apparently they changed some stuff that makes it much less fun, according to whatever I've read.

So that's Ethnos.

Actually I guess three of the four games I'm talking about today are re-implementations.

The second game I'm going to talk about is Red Rising.

Red Rising is a Stonemaier production produced, themed around the Red Rising young adult dystopian novels, which feel to me.

I started reading one, I read a chapter two and I'm like, "No, this isn't for me.

I might try them again at some point because I keep hearing that they're pretty good, but it felt to me just like a sort of new take on either the divergent idea or the Hunger Games or Brave New World where there's a bunch of different levels of society and you're stuck in the level you're in and the people who are higher up abuse the people who are lower down, that's sort of the theme or it seemed to be the theme that I got from about, I don't know, 50 pages or less.

And then I was just like, "No, this isn't for me."

That said, the Red Rising board game is not really about that at all.

Instead it is a slightly more elaborated version of Fantasy Realms.

Fantasy Realms is a gin style game that I've talked about a number of times in which you have a hand of cards and you draw a card and discard a card and you do that until you have met the, until somebody meets the end game condition, until somebody, until a tenth card in Fantasy Realms is the tenth card is on the board.

And then everybody compares their hand and you see who has the best hand.

The gimmick, the very clever gimmick with Fantasy Realms is that all the cards have scoring conditions on them that play off all the other cards.

So there's definitely a game that benefits repeated play because when you're first starting out you have no idea how difficult it is to get a particular card or get a particular combo to score points with.

Red Rising takes the same approach but is slightly more elaborate.

There are, there's this board and when you discard a card you're actually playing it to one of these locations on the board and you get something for putting the card in that location.

The cards also benefit from each other in different ways and the game uses these color factions which is, I mean, suits, it's the same as Fantasy Realms.

Like I would say like 80% of the gameplay is the same as Fantasy Realms but it has some extra stuff there that makes it interesting but also complicates it in ways that I, I don't know that I like it better than Fantasy Realms.

I would also say as much as Fantasy Realms graphic design and art is pretty basic, almost too basic.

Red Rising goes the other way, the graphic design is very sleek and the art is nicer but the text on the cards is really small, very hard to parse at a distance.

This is the game where you need to know whatever card says and so there's an awful lot of picking up cards and looking at them studying them to see what they say.

I think like Fantasy Realms this is a game that would benefit from a bunch of plays where you know what the cards are and how they work but in early plays there's an awful lot of picking up cards and reading them which makes it go pretty slow, makes it go too slow for what the game is.

I thought Red Rising was fine, I do have a copy of it and I'm not playing to get rid of it before I play it again but I don't know how excited I am to play it again.

Mostly it's just that my son really likes Fantasy Realms so he might like Red Rising also although again he hasn't read the books either.

So that is red rising designed by Alexander Schmidt and Jamie Staigmeier and I suppose

it would be reasonable to say and Bruce Glasgow since Bruce Glasgow is the designer of Fantasy Realms and this is very clearly an homage or a re-implementation of Fantasy Realms ideas.

Art from Miles Benzke, Jackie Davis and Justin Wong published in 2021 by Stonemire Games.

Next up I got a chance to revisit or replay Pulsar 2849.

Pulsar is a Vladimir Sushy game and as such it is one of my favorites.

This is from my top 50 list as you know I try to play one of those a month or ideally two but this is the one I tried really hard to get played this month.

The art is by Sorin Mending although most of the art I would say is in the realm of graphic design there's a little bit of art here and there some pictures of ships on the cover

but for the most part this is a very graphic design heavy game with symbols rather than art.

If you haven't played Pulsar 2849 broadly speaking it is a game of multiple paths to victory.

You are trying to get points by putting things out on the board.

You are what is that person doing?

Somebody just yielded right of way on a road where they didn't have a stop sign.

Why would you do that?

That's crazy.

Pulsar 2849 you're generating points in a variety of different ways.

The namesake of the game are these like interstellar power stations that you're building kind of a space power grid where you're building these power stations and you have to claim the planet you have to buy the machinery and then you have to activate it.

Doing all three of those things starts the power station generating points and every round it generates points so the earlier you get that power station running the more points you get out of it.

There are also a number of the sort of technologies that you can invent and when you invent them then you get to use them for the rest of the game and they give you bonuses of various types often the efficiency generators or other kinds of points and then there are also other kinds of bonuses you can get by different kinds of technologies you can generate by exploring and putting building research stations around the galaxy.

There's a whole bunch of different things you can do which is kind of a Vladimir Suchy staple.

I like Pulsar.

It's got a really interesting action selection system that I haven't seen in very many other games that's a dice drafting mechanism but the dice you draft raised or lower you on these two tracks and the tracks end up being pretty important at the end of the game.

So Pulsar 2849 gets a winner for me I really like it.

I like it more every time I play it or at least equally so and this time I really enjoyed it.

I do want to get back to the table again soon so that we can play maybe with a bit more elaborate setup.

Probably fitting a group of people who've all played the game before so that is Pulsar 2849.

And then finally I got a chance to try 51st state master set.

51st state is a classic or classic in the hobby space from Ignacy Trzewiczek of Portal Games.

This is a game about groups of colonies in a post-apocalyptic hellscape sort of a Mad Max type future.

A lot of like skulls on stuff and in the game you play one of these colonies and you're

trying to do your best to survive by building buildings and recruiting people and etc.  
etc.

The game I played it on board game arena so my grasp of it is a little narrower than it would be if I had played it on the table but I had also previously played Imperial Settlers which is a re-implementation of this scheme and it also played Alien Artifacts which I didn't see that listed as a re-implementation of this scheme but it feels very similar in a lot of ways.

Both of these games involve accumulating resources which you then use to buy and implement cards and the cards let you score points in different ways.

All in all it's an interesting setup and worth checking out.

I didn't particularly enjoy it the first play we're on our second play now and I feel like I get it a little bit more and as such I'm enjoying it a little bit more.

The art is reasonably post-apocalyptic and creepy which I enjoy and the theme is a fun one.

All in all reasonably enjoyable play but not something I'm probably gonna aspire to choose a bunch of times.

I think you can really explain what it is.

You're card drafting and you're building a tableau and a tableau features a variety of ways to use the different resources in the game to generate points.

So I think there is a little bit of interactivity but I didn't find it yet in terms of doing stuff that you're a point that will affect your opponents.

That hasn't been a key part of my play so far but it could end up that way.

So apparently 51st State Master Set is the collection of all the expansions.

Again I played this on board game and a refined version of the rules and graphic layout.

Again I played this on board game arena so I didn't get to see how it compares to the other things but it seems relatively well refined.

So that's 51st State Master Set.

Well that's about it for me today.

I want to say thank you for joining me on my walk.

It's been lovely talking to you about games I played recently and if you have played any of these I'd love to hear from you.

You can share your thoughts on them over on boardgamegeek in guild 3269.

I'd also love to hear what games you've been playing.

Share those things as well over there.

If you want to reach out to me directly, Wombat929 is my username there.

Also have an email address at [random@rattleboxgames.com](mailto:random@rattleboxgames.com) that you can send to and I would enjoy hearing from you there as well.

Well that's about it for me today.

Thanks for joining me on my walk.

I hope you're next walk because it's pleasant as mine wants to.

Bye bye.

[Music]

Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.

[Music]