

# Untitled - June 27, 2025

**Speaker** Welcome to Pickup and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I step out of the library and deliver an episode to you while I walk home. I'm Brendan Riley. Well, good afternoon, listener. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. The sun is out and the temperatures are high. But I'm walking out walking to talk to you about games anyway. I'm on my way home from the library. I've got a mystery book for my daughter in my backpack and a comic book for myself. Oh, yeah. But I've got a few minutes to talk with you. Which means it's time for another board game. Espresso. Triple shot. Order up. So a board game Espresso triple shot is an episode in which I do three quick short reviews or first impression discussions of games. I've tried for the first time recently, and usually one game that I've revisited, or a game that I've tried an expansion for. Once again, these are not full reviews. These a lot of these games have only played them one time, so they're first impressions. I may be wrong. In fact, I often am, but either way it's just my opinion and you have the full story, so let's get into it. I had the opportunity to play a couple of really interesting games recently. The first of which is Project Elite. Project elite is a real time cooperative game in which you are defending a base from attack by creepy aliens. The vibe is very much sort of the second half of the movie aliens, where they've found themselves in a secure bunker and they know the aliens are coming, so they have to set up a defense to take out the aliens. The game is played in a series of two minute rounds. During the two minute round, you are rolling dice as quickly as you can and using the dice to activate actions for yourself. The dice act very much like the dice in Escape Curse of the temple, meaning that you're rolling them, you're picking them up, you're rerolling them. You use them to do actions, and they allow you to gain a lot of stuff as you go along and accomplish things. The actual gameplay. You have these hordes of aliens which are sort of kept off of the board, and they come, they spawn onto the board, and then during the real time attack portion of the round, the aliens are not attacking, but they are moving depending on what you roll. Then when the real time portion is over, the aliens all activate and then the team has a chance to strategize and then you start the next round. So it's instead of like escape curse of the temple, where it's ten solid minutes of frantic rolling, this game is two minutes of frantic rolling, followed by like 5 to 10 minutes of upkeep and conversation and then two minutes of frantic rolling and so on. The way the actual rolling works, you have six dice, or you have five dice, 5 or 6. And on your dice, no, you have four, you have four dice. And on your dice there are six different symbols. And when you want to use them to do something, you have to roll one of the symbols. However, one of the sides of the dice has a little alien head on it, and whenever you roll the dice you have, If you roll an alien head before you can do anything else with the dice, including reroll them, you have to move an alien one space. And so that's the part where the game gets really tricky is the more often you roll, the more likely it is you're going to roll another alien head and move the alien again. Remember? Remember, they all move and attack in between rounds also. So you have to be really thoughtful about where you're moving and how you're moving them. You then also have these weapons that you activate by putting dice on them, and you have other actions that you can take? The clever, tricky part of the weapons portion is that you some some of the dice require two symbols to activate, so you might get one. And then you have to keep rolling to try to get the other. And so it's funny like you get one and then you also get movement and you're moving

yourself around with each die. But again each time you reroll, you have to check to see if you rolled any aliens and do those first. And even worse, when you reroll, you have to reroll all your dice that aren't locked into a space on a card. So it's not like escape Curse of the temple, where maybe you need a move and a move and a torch. You could hold the move and reroll the rest. Trying to get a torch. In this game you could not do that. You would have to. Although I guess you can, because if you have a gun that needs two symbols, you could lock one of the dice onto that card and then you can keep going until you get the other one. So maybe it is more like that than I thought. Anyway, I've spent longer than I need to. This is a fun, frantic game. The production value is really high. I played the The CMON version, which came out in 2020. There was an earlier version that was made, I think, by Artipia games that had a lot of problems. A lot of people complained about it. The CMON version is very nice. It honestly, if this game were easy to obtain right now, I might buy a copy. I really liked it. I don't know when I'd play it or with whom, but it was pretty neat. The version that we were playing was a Kickstarter copy, so it had a bunch of bonus characters and scenarios. I think if you bought the retail version when that was in print, it didn't have quite as much stuff. I think probably the retail version would be fine, unless this became like a top ten game for you, because I can't see groups playing it all that often. It's really intense and it takes a long time for a real time game, so I really liked it. I would enjoy playing it again and I encourage you to play it if you get a chance. That's Project Elite from Konstantinos Kokkinis, Marco Portugal, and Soterios Tsantilas, who I believe are the main designers over at Artipia games. I did not click their names, so I didn't check. Apologies. Other thing game I want to talk about is from Wherlegig Games. It's a co-design between Joe Kelly, that's Joe Kelly and Cole Wherle with art from Rachel Ford. This is Molly House. Molly House refers to a historical situation in the 1700s in London, in which members of the LGBTQ community were exploring different kinds of relationships between themselves and other people in ways that were forbidden by society but natural to humans. So in the game, you play a member of this community, and your goal is to generate as much joy as you can while also helping your community generate joy. The joy is generated through these events, called festivities, in which everyone submits these cards to a circuit around the table, sort of like a trick. And depending on how the cards come out, you work collaboratively to build a poker hand and you gain joy points based on how well you did on that or a poker like hand. So as the game goes along, there is a community joy marker that rises and rises and rises when it gets to a certain number, depending on how many players they are. That ends the game and the player with the most joy wins. However, that's not the only way to end the game. Of course, the authorities are also trying to crack down on this behavior being illegal as it was. And so part of the challenge is that there are all of these cards that get in the way that come out sometimes through your intentions, sometimes by accident. And when these cards come out, they increase the danger to the community, and if the danger in any particular place gets too intense, then the game ends through discovery, where the community has been infiltrated and discovered by the authorities, and the community is broken up. In which case, if that happens, then the winner is the player who has betrayed the community. And there are actually you can have multiple betrayers. And if there are multiple betrayers, then there's a way to determine which of those betrayers wins. But narratively and historically, the players who were not betrayers are then hanged. You actually flip your token over and you get a little noose on it. It's pretty dark. Like a lot of Cold War these games, this is

a complex game dealing with a complex time. It's a really interesting game, and I thought it was thoughtful, and I would certainly want to play it again if somebody got it out, but I didn't really enjoy it. There is something about the way Cole Wherle makes games that I have a lot of trouble clicking with. I have played Pax Pamir both online and on the table. I have played Root many times, several times on the table and neither of those worked for me. Molly House I thought was really interesting, but I didn't really enjoy it. And again, it didn't really work for me as a game, as a piece of as an idea, as a notion of a game. I thought it was really interesting and like I said, I would play it again. I'm keen to see if I can grasp the mechanics better. But something about his design sensibility, in terms of the way his mechanics work, my my brain does not appreciate. I have a lot of trouble getting those rules to work well in my head. Nonetheless, a really interesting game, a beautiful production, uh, thoughtful experiment in game design and storytelling. That's Molly House. Uh, Next up, I got a chance to revisit Above and Below. This is a game from Ryan Laukat Red Raven games above and below is it made a huge splash at the time. It's still a really fun game. It's a combination of Euro with a heavy dose of storytelling and Ameritrash luck elements. In the game. You are building up a village, but you're also going exploring, and when you go exploring, you get bonuses sometimes and your village, you get bonuses for different things that you get. You are acquiring goods. You are building buildings that give you bonuses and you're trying to get the most points. Ultimately, it is a euro, and I think generally the more exploring you do, the less productive you're going to be in winning the game. I've never seen anyone go super heavy exploring and win the game, unless they're really focusing on the other elements as well. So I kind of feel like exploring is a distraction in the game, even though it's the most interesting part. Um, the art is beautiful. It wasn't the beginning of, um, Ryan Laukat's ongoing, widespread world between his games, but it is one of the high points of it. You also have this interesting element where you're building a village on the top part of your board, and you're exploring these caves on the bottom part, which is where the above and below part comes from. Definitely worth a chance to be worth a play if you get a chance to play it. That's above and below a beautiful game. Check it out. Uh, and finally I got a chance to play Hollywood 1947. Uh, this is from designer Travis Hancock, uh, the lead designer at Facade Games, which is the game company that makes games that look like they come in books. I've played their game Bristol 1347, and then they have a number of other games. I haven't played their game Tortuga, but they have a bunch of games that are widely enjoyed. I would say, Hollywood 1947 is their take on social deduction. It is in the style of your secret Hitler or your Avalon. In this game you play movie producers, and you're trying to find communists who have infiltrated your movie studio, or you play communists who have infiltrated the movie studio, and you're trying to get movies made that have a Communist flavor. It's fine. I thought it was honestly not as good as either Secret Hitler or the resistance. I think because there are too many ways for the game to randomly mess with you. I felt like I didn't have very much control over what I was doing. Like, one of the things is you can only vote in the mission if you have a star on your die. Everybody's got an eight sided die with, I think, half stars and half non-stars, and you only get to vote if you have a star. And one of the things you can do is make other people reroll their dice. So like just through nothing you're doing, you could lose your opportunity to participate and then you might never get to participate again in that part of it. You can make other people roll or not. I don't know, I just didn't really enjoy it. So if you like those other kinds of games, it's well worth checking out the

the. As always, the art and design on the game is really nice, so it's well worth checking out if you get a chance. But it wasn't for me. That's Hollywood, 1947. Well, that's about it for me today. I want to say thank you for joining me on my walk, and I would love to hear what which of these games you've played? Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild 3269 and share your thoughts there. Otherwise, I'll look forward to talking to you next time. And I'll say thanks for joining me on my walk today. I hope that your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye. Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.