

Untitled - July 16, 2025

Speaker 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. Well, good morning, listener. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. I'm taking a walk to get some exercise before I buckle down and do some grading. That's right. It's nearing the end of my online teaching class that I'm doing, so I need to get some feedback into the students hands before they dive into the final week of work. Well, looking at my schedule, I see that it's been a little while since I talked about some games I played recently. That tells me it's time for another episode of board game Espresso Triple Shot. As a reminder, a board game Espresso Triple Shot is an episode where I give you three little sips of games I've played recently for the first time. These are not in-depth reviews, but rather first impressions. They give you a sense of what I thought about the game, and whether it'll be returning to the table for me or not. Uh. This is a good one. I like all these games, actually. Sorry to spoil it ahead of time, but there it is. All right, so starting off, uh, we are beginning with ARX from 2024. This is designer Cole Worley, artist Kyle Ferrin, publisher, Leader games. I have a storied and challenging relationship to Cole Worley's games because I admire them, but I have yet to really enjoy them very much. I think my favorite of the games of his I've played before, ARX is probably Pax Pamir second edition, which I really admire, but I can't get my brain around it to make it work right, and so I often don't end up enjoying the individual plays of it. And it's often it's not. I, you know, it's just I like it, but kind of I don't like root. I always do very poorly at root. And um, Molly House was an interesting idea, but again, didn't really click for me. Well, I found the one I like. Arcs is great. I really liked it. I like the interplay of the different mechanisms. I like the way that the struggle for control works. So if you haven't played Arcs, it is a area control game with a idea around. It's sort of in the neighborhood of trick taking, barely, barely in the game. You have a bunch of different cards that you're going to get, and these cards have different suits which allow you to take different kinds of actions. The cards also have a value which allows you to sort of take control of the quote unquote trick. The game itself is an area control game where you are trying to control and use different aspects of space. The different pieces around the board have different levels of or have different kinds of planets on them, and the different planets have different things that they can produce, which you use to make or shape your world in different ways. There are all these cards that come out that really make the game kind of swingy. So I like it, but it's sort of, it feels in the neighborhood of Nanty Narking to me, in terms of the cards can have a big effect. I mean, you have more control than Nancy Narking Nanty Narking is a bit of nonsense in terms of there's a lot of wild stuff that happens that you have no control over or, you know, if you just don't get the cards, well, too bad for you. Um, but there's a lot of really interesting stuff going on in Arcs that gives you more control. You have more strategy that you can aim for. But there are also there are also still wildly swingy cards. And I think if I were to take one lesson out of the game that I hadn't known going in, it's you really need to pay attention to the cards that come out, because some of them can have huge effect on gameplay, but it is a game of managing your space empire, trying to gain control. Like Pax Pamir, here. There are moments of scoring and what you're scoring for changes. Unlike Pax Premier, you can kind of see ahead of time what's going to score. So there's a much smoother sense of like, oh, here's what I need to watch for now. This is the thing that is going

to be important. And you can kind of see that a little ahead. But a big part of it is deciding when to declare that. I also like the element that players declare what's going to score. And to do that you have to basically give up a turn. You have to use a turn to declare what's going to score, and then you don't get to do anything else. So there's a nice balance there in terms of a creating different aspects of it. I will say parts of the gameplay are a bit confusing or a bit hard to wrap my head around. I had more than one occasion where there was something I was trying to do, and I used the card. I used the wrong card to do it and people were like, oh, you can't do that with that card. And that can be kind of frustrating if you can't get it to click. but overall I thought it was a really interesting game. Compelling, uh, interactions between players. Really dramatic in terms of, um, a lot of very intense, uh, going after each other. It's a really strong player versus player game, but I liked it a lot. The art is Kyle Ferrin art. It's sort of cartoony and silly. It's fine. Uh, I mean, it's got character, which I like, so I'll put even better than fine. I like it, but it doesn't really feel like space art. But I don't know why cartoony can't also be space stuff, so I like that. But, uh, it reminds me the ship design and stuff reminds me a little bit of, like, Ian O'Toole's art in the big space, one where with the orange stuff coming in from other planet from mine clash. That one. I think if the art from ARX were that, it would be incredible to me. But the art is fine. This is published in 2024. Designer Cole Worley from Leader Games. That's ARX play it if you get a chance. I really enjoyed it. I'll probably want to play it a couple more times before I decide if I want to get it or not, but I wouldn't be surprised if this, as I think about it more, drifts up into the space of something I would want to play or want to have a copy of. I'll have to check with Paul. If Paul bought a copy, then I don't need to. But, uh, my buddy Eric has a copy, so that's where I played it. And I know I've seen copies arrive at toggle, so I probably don't need it. I don't really need any game, but anyway. Okay, so that's arcs. Uh, next up is evidence. Hush money. Evidence is a series or purports to be a series of one play, puzzle solving games in the in the neighborhood of unlock or exit, uh, or, um deck scape in the nature of unlock and deck scape, you can reset it and play it again, which I like a lot. Versus exit, which you can't. So it's closer to those. This one is much more app focused, so closer to unlock in that you have to use an app to play it. And when we played actually they encourage you to. Everybody who's playing should use their phone to go look at the the app. I think it's a web based app. I don't think it was a app you have to install, but I could be wrong about that. But I like the I like the approach, but it is right on the border of being just a phone game rather than a tabletop game. The premise is you are working on your a police detective working on a case, that you learn a bit about this murder, and you have a piece of evidence, which is the wallet. Uh, this is a nice little bit of business. You get a well-made, thick cardboard what looks like a man's wallet, and you open it up and there's a bunch of stuff inside. There's, you know, driver's license and some business cards and slips of paper. And so all of these things are useful clues. And then you go to the website indicated on the in the instruction book, and then you'll find a variety of different bits of information that you can use to try to solve the mystery. It's relatively linear. Once you've done one thing, you can't do another. And I think it's better for a smaller group of people. We played with three and that was almost too many. Like two would be fine. This would be a fine solo game. If you wanted to just play this by yourself, it would work just fine. I think it's entertaining and well-made enough that you could just play it by yourself and enjoy it. Now the designers are Elliot Humphreys and James Smith, the second it was released in 2023. The publishers, professor puzzle games? Yeah, not a lot more to say

about that. If you like these kinds of escape games the way it's titled evidence colon hush money makes me think that it's meant to be part of a series. But when I looked at the Professor Puzzle Games website, it looks like evidence is the hush. Money is the only one of these games they've published. So either it didn't do that well and they didn't make any more, or they only made one because they only had the ideas for one or what? I don't know, but it looks like they only made one. So that is evidence. Hush money. Next up, I got a chance to revisit Nucleum. This is a game from 2023 designer Simone Luciani and David Kirksey, art from Andreas Resch. Pyotr Sokolovsky and Zbigniew Umgiel. The publisher is Board and Dice. Nucleum is a really good game. This is top notch economic systems management in the neighborhood of brass, Birmingham. In fact, when you play it as you're learning it, you're like, oh, so this is Simone Luciani and David Turchi decide to make their version of Brass Birmingham kind of. It's don't get me wrong, it is very different. There's some stuff in it that's really interesting. That's way different than what's going on in brass, but it's definitely in the neighborhood of that game in terms of gameplay, but also strategy and style and feel. The game feels very much like brass, which obviously that's one of my favorite games. I think it's number two on my list right now, and so it's not surprising that I would feel like, oh yeah, brass is the way to go. We're gonna play brass. That's nucleum. The difference is I'm going to assume, well, okay. So it's a network game where you're building buildings and powering them. So instead of making trades you're introducing power to the buildings. So you have to spend coal to do that. And uh, you have to be connected through your own network. There's all these networking rules that you have to follow in order to get the coal to the power plant or the radium, because the the whole thing about nuclear is the idea, like, what if we had invented nuclear power in like 1910? How would that have changed things? Kind of the, the interesting mechanisms that are different. The thing that really makes this game fascinating compared to something like Brass in Brass, the actions you get to take are based on the cards you have in Nucleome. The actions you get to take are based on these tiles, and everybody knows what tiles you have. At the beginning of the game, everybody gets a set of tiles that are similar but not identical, and on your turn, you can play a tile and do the two things that are on the tile as actions, or you can place a tile onto the board. This is the part that's really fascinating. So the tiles you have have actions on them. When you use them, you do the action. And then eventually you can take an action where you get all your tiles back. If you put a tile out on the board, you've lost it forever. But if you put it in the right spot and match up the colors, then you do get to do an action again. So you do get to do an action on the board when you put out your tiles, but your tiles also become your railroads or your canals if you're thinking of brass. And those are the connectors that allow you to build your network. So you have this interesting thing where whenever you put a tile onto the board, you actually giving up some of the actions you can do. Of course, there's a market of actions that you can take as well that allow you to do other things. And the tiles are all different. And the tiles from the market, some of them are better. And so there's an element of like, well, you can play one of your tiles to get 1 or 2 more tiles and those extra tiles then give you more actions. So there's a really great rhythm to the game that is not part of brass, but is interesting in its own way. And then you also have this tech tree that you're activating that gives you different bonuses when you're doing things or different augments. And then the scoring in the game is more complicated than brass, but really interesting as well. Boy, I like Nucleum a lot. There's a lot going on in it, but it's really

good. I think when I originally played it, I said, I don't need a copy. It doesn't I don't need to have it in addition to brass. And that's probably still true. My guess is I'll get to play it once or twice a year, and I'll be happy having it that much. But I really do like it. I think it's really interesting, and revisiting it reminded me how good it is. So from that perspective, I would say if you have, if you're if you like brass and you haven't played Nucleum yet, you really should. If you think that you're somebody who might like this based on my description. Yeah, give it a go. Because there's some really interesting stuff going on in this game, and it's well worth taking a stab at if you get a chance. That's Nucleum 2023 board and dice from Simone Luciani and David Turchi. Finally, I got a chance to play Sorcerer City. This is a game from 2020 published by Druid City Games. The designer is Scott Caputo, who is the designer for Voluspa, which is a game I really like, although I haven't played it that much. Uh, we have the artist, Justin Chan, Lina Cosette, David Forrest, David Kegg, and Damien Mammoliti. Thrissur city is a real time tile placement game in which you are building a neighborhood in a large city. The idea is this is a magical city, and every year the neighborhood is rearranged by these mages who are in charge of their part of the city. The way it works is you have this stack of tiles that you shuffle up, and then when we start the timer, you have two minutes to place these tiles out onto your map. Your goal is to make large areas of the same color that have these scoring badges in them. So the more scoring badges that are in the areas, the more points you'll earn for those areas. In addition, some of the other tiles score if they are part of an area where they meet a particular requirement like three in a straight line, three tiles in a straight line with a particular color on them, and you have to build the network such that the colors are touching each other, and then you get to make that straight line happen or curve or whatever. In addition, on some of the tiles there are monsters, and when that tile comes out, it affects your board in some way. Often it takes away a tile or destroys a tile even, or it prohibits you from placing other tiles there. And then there are bonus tiles. So it's in some ways it's sort of like a deck builder. There's this big market of tiles that you can buy and at the end of each round. So as you're playing, you're putting out these tiles and you're scoring three different currencies, three different currencies, money Points and magic trying to remember if there's a fourth one or not. I feel like it's money points and magic. There might be a fourth one that I'm forgetting. And when we score, you're going to score all of those and you put them into your, uh, scoring matrix, and then you convert the the wild magic into one of the other two. You can't split it up. You have to pick one or the other. Uh, and then you use the. Oh, I think it's money purchasing power points and magics. I think there are four. And the purchasing power is how many points you how many purchases you have to spend on the tiles in the game. And then the gold is another currency that you sometimes have to use on the tiles. I think it's been a little while since I looked at it. I apologize if I've got this wrong, but the main idea is you're getting purchasing power and points and then you have a wild currency as well that you convert to purchasing power or points, and then you use those to buy new tiles. And then the next round you gather up your whole city, you shuffle and you make a bigger city with those new tiles. And those new tiles often give you huge bonuses if you manage to score them. And essentially what you're doing is you're trying to accumulate as many points as you can over the course of, I think, four rounds, maybe five. Each round is two minutes. So it gets pretty frantic trying to get all your tiles out. There's an element of trying to complete the right combination of tiles so that you score them, score the most that you can. I really like that part. All in all, it's a really effective

and interesting game. That's a lot of fun. The theme is kind of weird. The idea, like the whole city has to be rebuilt each year. And so you're rebuilding the city. Maybe it's each season. So that theme is kind of weird. But overall it works really well. It's fun. The art is amusing, not dramatic. The tiles are easy to read. Our sand timer did not work well, which was annoying, but, uh, we just used a timer on my phone and then everything was fine. So that is Sorcerer City. Scott Caputo, as I said, the game was really fun. I enjoyed the speed element a lot. I like real time games, and this one had some really interesting and amusing dynamics to it. Lots of points to be had, but interesting thinking about the best way to make that happen. So Sorcerer City is a winner in my book. It's going to stay in my collection for a while. I'm really happy to have tried it. So that is that. Well, that brings me to the end of the episode for today. I've talked about three games that I tried and one I revisited. So we have reached the end. If you enjoyed this, I would love for you to go rate and review the podcast wherever it is that you download the podcast from, or tell somebody about it so that other people can join our merry little band of game enthusiasts. If you have something to say about the episode, the best place to do that is over on Board Game Geek and Guild 369, which you can find most easily by just Google searching, pick up and deliver guild. Or if you go to the show notes for this episode, there's a link to the guild. Or you could go to Boardgamegeek.com P169, which is the another way to find it. When you're there, you'll find a forum with people talking about the podcast occasionally, and you could share your thoughts there. You could also reach out to me directly on BoardGameGeek. My username is wombat 929 there. I also have an email address for the podcast Brendan at rattlebox games.com which I check sporadically so well. Thank you for joining me in my walk today. I hope that your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye! Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.