

Pick Up & Deliver 781: Fountains; Ready Set Bet; Raas: A Dance of Love; Dice Miner (revisited)

*Editor's note: the first time a game is mentioned, it will be in ALL CAPS, thereafter it will not be noted.

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

Well, greetings listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. It is wildly warmer than you would expect for mid-September. It's eighty one degrees according to the sign outside the bank, and I'm on my way home from another fun day at school. As I'm walking home, I'm looking forward to the opportunity to chat with you a little bit about games I've played recently. That's right, it's time for Board Game Espresso Triple Shot. Board Game Espresso Triple Shot is an episode in which I talk about three games that I played for the first time recently and give you my impressions of them, just a sort of general what have I been playing and is it fun? I also usually talk about one game that I've dusted off or played a new expansion for, or something like that. So join me, won't you? All right, let's jump right in.

The first game I want to talk about is FOUNTAINS. This is a 2025 release, which I played at Gencon in early August. It's designed by Cédric Winks, with art from Sean Ellis and published by the OP games, a nod to Mondo Davis, who is a developer at the OP and I know worked on this game. So well done Mondo. I got to play Fountains in the Boardgamegeek Hot Games Room, and Rob and I played a two player game of it.

Fountains is a pattern matching game in which you are building a tableau in front of you, where the tableau is made up of these foam fountain pieces, and you are building them by placing them next to each other such that it looks like you're making a sort of big decorative fountain. One of the main mechanisms is that the fountain has these little some of the fountain pieces have these little water jets depicted on them. And those water jets create water which goes to the exits on the cards or on the fountain, on the fountain pieces. And then those exits then flow into other fountain pieces. So one of the things you have to do is make sure that your each of your pieces is getting water from one of these jets. If you don't have water going into one of the pieces, then that piece cannot score.

When you score things, the action selection mechanism is pretty clever. There's this circle with these three little tokens on it, and on your turn you move one of the tokens a certain number of spots. I can't remember exactly how many you use, but it's relatively straightforward, and whatever spot you land on, you're going to take that piece and then put it in your fountain. If the piece that you take comes from the spot where that fountain, where that pond scores, then you get to score that kind of piece. And the pond that you moved scores in a certain way. So one of the ponds scores based on the fish in your pond, in your fountain. Another one scores on how many lily pads there are. And there's a couple different scoring functions. You also have these cards that you're working on that will score at the end of the game, if I remember correctly.

Overall, the action selection mechanism for the game is pretty nice. The pieces are really interesting and it makes for great table presence because they look like little fountains. So as you take them and you put them on your board, it's got a very nice look and feel to it. The game itself had a interesting set of choices to be made. It is definitely in the category of lightweight set collection game.

Sort of reminds me of, uh, THE GARDENS, which is a game by Dunstan and Gilbert about building a decorative garden in a park in Australia. The tactical choices in the game are pretty interesting. It's a lot about sort of balancing which scoring mechanism you're working for, and trying to set up a good score without letting your opponent set up a good score. Weight wise, it feels similar to something like Carcassonne, where there is an opportunity to plan, but it depends a lot on which tiles are available to you.

When you have a chance in a two player game, it's a little bit wider range of tiles available. You can see what's there and make some interesting choices about which token you're going to move. All in all, I thought the game was fine. I wasn't particularly wowed by it. I think Rob liked it better than I did, but I lost two. So there's always the element of like, if you win, you like a game better, maybe. So maybe that's working against it for me here. But ultimately, I felt like it was kind of just the same as a variety of other games. It didn't feel like the choices were interesting enough to make this better than any number of other sort of lightweight set collection or recipe fulfillment games. So that's fountain fountains. Uh, interesting to play. I definitely would

play again if somebody said, hey, do you want to play it again? I would probably acquire it if I found it at Goodwill; I probably wouldn't pay full retail. So that is Fountains.

Next up we have READY SET BET. This is a 2022 game designed by John de Clare, with art from Kirk Beckendorf and Athena Cagle, published by AEG. Ready Set Bet is a real time horse racing game where you have a grid of betting spaces, and on your turn you have a five or six different betting tiles, and you're going to put out the betting tile onto the spaces with the idea of trying to get the most money while the betting thing is running. Your goal is to figure out which horses are going to win during the race itself. So there's an element where you can bet on win, place, or show for the different horses, and the horses are moving through a series of dice rolls.

The way that the person running the betting works is that they are going to roll two dice. And there are, I think ten, eight, eight to ten horses on the track. I think eight. And they move depending on which combination of numbers you rolled or which numbers you rolled. So like there's a seven horse and it will move anytime you roll a seven. There's also a six, an eight, a five, a nine, a three, four and a two or a two, a four and a three, two and same thing on the other side, there's a ten and eleven, twelve. And each of those horses is going to move when you roll it. And then there's a whole bunch of different betting spots while the horses are running. You can bet on the results. Once three of the horses cross this one line, then the bets are closed and you finish out the race. There's also a number of prop bets like this horse will finish in front of that one, or this horse will finish two behind that one, or so on. And then there's some VIP bets that you can do as well that are real weird.

This is a really fun, real time game, especially if you download the app. I have not played it without the app. The app automates the running of the race, it automates the dice rolling and the narration of the race, which is crucial because otherwise somebody has to use their play of the game to just run the race. Which doesn't sound fun to me. Honestly, I probably would have fun doing it, but it's more fun to have the app do it and get to bet this game plays up to six, I think, or maybe eight people. And I can totally see how that would be a lot of fun to play with more people. The betting is fast and furious and very silly. And you get and you find yourself cheering for a horse that has that is just moving because dice are rolling for it. It's really dumb, but very fun. I really like ready set bet. I am glad I picked it up. I was able to get a copy for fifteen bucks because a friend of mine who had it and really liked it went and bought the High Roller edition, so he didn't need the regular edition anymore. So then he had the regular edition for sale and I'm like, yeah, I'll take that. And I'm glad I did. It's really fun in a game that I'm probably going to play quite a bit over the coming years, so that's Ready Set Bet from John de Clare. A recommend from me.

Well, I did get a chance to do dust off some games recently. We had a game night with some friends and I brought along DICE MINER. Dice Miner is a dice rolling game that I really enjoy, and it was fun to get it out and play it. Dice Miner was one year, two months, and seventeen days dusty when I got it out, so not very dusty at all. But I don't know if I've talked about it beyond when I first played it, so this is a good chance to return to it and review it in a little more depth. It's a dice rolling game in which you are set collecting. There's a little mountain that you're collecting the dice from, and you're trying to get dice that fit into a variety of different formulas and win points because of those formulas.

Overall, it's relatively simple, but what makes it fun is when you're picking your dice, you have to pick from just a couple spots on the little mountain where the dice are. Except every die has one face that has a little picture of a beer mug on it. And if you have one of the dice that has a beer mug before you take the die off the mountain, you can roll that beer mug, die to another player, and then they get the die that you just rolled to them on whatever face it lands on, and you get to take two dice off the mountain and you get a way more, way bigger variety of dice that you can choose from based on the rules. So the game kind of encourages you to share. You also say "Cheers!" when you roll the dice to somebody because that's fun.

The other thing I really like about Dice Miner is the way that the points escalate in the first round, you're only going to get like five or six dice. In the second round, you're going to get you keep all the dice you have from the first round, you reroll them. So you start the game. You start the second round with as many dice as you got in the first round, and then you get that many dice again, and then you do it again in the third round. So in the third round, you literally are getting almost three times as many points as you got in the first round, which makes it a game where you could do really bad in the first round, and even in the first and second round, and still get enough points that you might win just from the third round. If other people have a bad third round, it's

really great escalation that doesn't feel like it's rubber banding you, but it does give you the opportunity to do well, even if you did poorly previously.

The game also has a bunch of little character cards, and you get one character card at the beginning that kind of drives your gameplay. This game is ripe for an expansion, like it could come with another color of dice and you swap them in. Could come with more player characters. I really like Dice Miner. I think it's really fun, very accessible, and it's a game I'm looking forward to having in my collection for a while and continuing to play. So that's Dice Miner, designed by Joshua de Boris Dubon, Joshua Dibben and Nicola Dietschy. Art from Lil Chan and Grzegorz from Atlas Games. That's a 2021 game.

All right, finally, the last new game that I want to talk about today is RAAS: A DANCE OF LOVE. I'm sure I'm pronouncing this wrong, but Raas: A Dance of Love. Raas is spelled R-a-a-s. It was designed by Marisha and Shalene Haalke with art from Tara Anand, and it's going to be published by Arcane Wonders. They're doing a Kickstarter for it this fall. I got a chance to play the game at GenCon and I really, really liked it.

This is a game of dice drafting with a series of gears that is just fascinating. So it's a dice drafting game, not too dissimilar from Dice Miner in terms of how you score there. There are several different scoring conditions, and dice you take let you score on them. There is a kind of interconnectedness that it's hard to explain, and frankly, the details of it are a little hard to remember, but there's a nice crunchiness to the variety of different ways the dice score when you take them. Related to both color and value and where you choose to put them, you have these patterns that you're trying to match. You have these categories you're trying to complete. So there's a variety of different factors that are working in whenever you take the dice.

But the really interesting part of the game is that there are a bunch of gears in the middle of the board, and on your turn, you can select any of the six dice that match the side of the board you're facing. So you have one particular set of selection. You have one particular spot where you can select. You can select any of the dice that are in that spot. And then after everybody takes a after you take a die, you turn the board. And that's at the end of each round. So everybody takes their dice and then the board turns, which means that you can tell what's coming next, but it's very difficult to do so.

I really liked it. It was very crunchy. I only got to play half the game just because I was meeting somebody and I had to leave, but I really, really liked it. And it's definitely going to be on my watch list. The art is very pretty. It's from a designer who I believe is from India. It is about an Indian cultural tradition. It's real pretty looking. It's a cool theme, very crunchy, really interesting game. I'm very excited to play it some more when I get the chance. That's Raas: A Dance of Love.

And that brings me to the end of the board game espresso episode here. And the end of my chat with you today does make me wonder what games have you been playing lately, dear friend? Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild 3269 and share your plays there. I'd love to hear from you in the forums. You can also email me brendan@rattleboxgames.com or send me messages there: wombat929 is my username.

I'll say thanks for joining me on my walk today. I hope your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye.

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