Pick Up & Deliver 785: River Valley Glassworks, Endeavor: Deep Sea, A Place for All My Books, Victoriana (revisited)

Welcome to Pickup 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, good afternoon listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. It's October twelfth thirteenth, something like thirteenth, and I'm podcasting for you on the way home from my workday. It's been a little bit since I talked about new games I've played recently, so it seems like it's time for a Board Game Espresso Triple Shot. [coffee noises] Order up! The Board Game Espresso Triple Shot is a regular feature in which I talk about three games I played recently for the first time, and one game I've revisited, or a new expansion I've tried. These are first impression reviews rather than in-depth reviews. So take everything I say with a grain of salt. Let's jump right in.

First off is the **River Valley Glassworks**. This is a 2024 game designed by Adam Hill, Ben Pinchback, and Matt Riddle, the company that is now Motor City Game Works, I believe, is what they're calling their company. But this is published by Allplay with art from Andrew Bosley. Very cute art, by the way. I came by River Valley Glassworks as an additional purchase after I had some problems. Uh, after I found some help from all play with my copy of High Rise. So that was very exciting to get my copy of High Rise. And as a sort of thank you, I also purchased River Valley Glassworks from them.

River Valley Glassworks is a very light set collection game in which you play one of several, uh, forest entrepreneurs with very cute names and businesses in which you're trying to gather glass, river glass, and make stuff. I guess the mechanism is pretty simple. You have these stones that you've gotten out of the river, And on your turn, you're going to put a stone into the river. And then you take something from one of the zones next to where you put the stone. So there's this interesting cycle in which you are loading up parts of the river you don't get to take from when you take the stones. You then put them onto your board, and your board makes a scoring matrix where the higher you go with each type of stone you get, the more points you get and the further out you get in terms of different types of stones, the more points you get and you get sort of bonuses for how far out you're able to get each level of stones. So if you have four of each of the first four types of stones, that's going to be very good. You're going to get lots of points. But if, let's say the first, third and fourth one, you have four, but the second one you only got one, then the third and fourth one, you aren't going to score anything for those higher ones, because you have to have the row all the way out of each level of the stones. And of course, you have to put the same kind of stone in each column, and the shape of the stone is contrary to the color of the stone.

It's an interesting contrast where you're thinking about shape and color in different contexts. It's along the lines of Coimbra, where you're thinking about color and number in different ways, or, World's Fair 1893, which also involves thinking about color and number in different ways. River Valley Glassworks is a very light game, really simple to play. The scoring can vary wildly if you're really good at it. But, you know, it's one of those games where the skill ceiling is pretty low. So pretty soon you're all kind of competing at the same level. It's a really nice end of the night game or chatting with friends game. The pieces are very nice. I did end up getting the deluxe set, so the pieces I have are very nice. The the glass in the river Valley glassworks is not glass, it's plastic, but it's really nice plastic. It kind of looks similar to river glass and the shapes are excellent. So overall it's a really neat experience. Fun to play, but very, very light, like on the level of Canvas. Or I'm trying to think of another game I have that is as light. Maybe Sushi Go! Maybe just a very light game, really easy to play. Uh, plays in about half an hour. They do. It does come with six extra modules. And if you were to put two of them in play, which they suggest is the advanced mode, I think with two of them in play, it makes the decisions crunchy enough that it does become more satisfying for a more experienced gamer and a more interesting game, just because the scoring varies more widely. Overall, it's a fun game, and probably ideal for introducing new folks to the hobby and letting them see what kind of really interesting, beautiful games are potentially available to them. That's River Valley Glassworks from Adam Hill, Ben Pinchbeck and Matt Riddle.

Next up we have **Endeavor Deep Sea**. This is another 2024 game. It was my top pick for GenCon. It was the game I most wanted to pick up when I was there, and so I was glad to get a copy. It was designed by Carl de

Visser and Jarrett Gray, with art from Fahad Al-rajhi, Josh Capelle and Marusa Gorjup. It's published by Burnt Island Games and Grand Gamer's Guild, and I believe it won the Kennerspiel des Jahres, meaning the hobby game strategy game of the year last year. So pretty good. This is a retheme or a reimplementation of the mechanisms from the original Endeavor, which was a game about colonization. This one is about sea exploration. So a much more palatable theme. And in the game you are not taking anything, you're exploring. So you're discovering things you're sharing information with others. There is some salvaging of wrecks that you can do. And the core mechanism of the game is that as you're playing, you're acquiring these workers, and the workers give you sort of an engine to work with. that give you bonuses as the game goes along.

Each round you get another worker and that expands what kinds of things you have available to you. If you've done a certain kinds of work, then you can get more workers or higher value workers, which give you more opportunities. Now, we played the introductory mission, which gives you a sort of wide sampling of flight of the different mechanisms available to you, and it sort of reveals the heart of the game. But there are nine or ten different missions that you can do which change your goals, change your strategy. But ultimately it is a game of sort of worker placement combined with exploration and or sort of discovery of random elements and engine building. I thought it was pretty fun the one time we played it. I am looking forward to playing it more, but I haven't gotten it back to the table. Getting it played the one time was sort of the goal and then I just have so many other things to try. I haven't gotten it back. I do like it quite a bit, though, and I'm looking forward to trying it more. I can see in looking at it the depth that's available to me in it. That is Endeavor: Deep Sea.

The variety that makes it really compelling is the variety of ways that you can use the pieces you have to get points and the ways that those leverage new kinds of workers that you can get. The worker tree reminded me a little bit of the game Favor of the Pharaoh. The Favor of the Pharaoh is a lighter game, you know, sort of one level lighter, I would say, uh, if, if endeavor deep sea is medium weight game Favor of the Pharaoh is lightweight or at best at most light to medium. But I would really call it lightweight, although not entry level endeavor deep sea. In both games, there are these sort of arrays of tiles that you can get, and the earlier ones, the more accessible ones, there are enough for everybody to get them. But as the game goes on, the higher level ones, there are limited numbers. So the first person to grab one, or maybe first and second person are the only ones who get that particular flavor. So that part reminded me of Faver of the Pharaoh. Although I do like Endeavor better overall. Faver of the Pharaoh still one I really enjoy as a sort of dice chucker. So that's Endeavor: Deep Sea (2024) from Carl de Visser and Jaret Gray. Apologies for the pronunciation of those.

I did get a chance to revisit a game we've played a few times. This is **Victoriana**. It'd been three years, fourteen days since the last time we played it, and that was too long. The rules were very dusty and I tried to wing it without rereading them first, and that was a problem. Victoriana is very much an adventure game, kind of in the style of Arkham Horror. In it you play basically the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, uh, almost all of the same public domain characters as in that game. And in fact, they used Intltool art, which Ian O'Toole's art looks a lot like. Kevin O'Neill's art from the Comic book League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. So it's really hard not to see a lot of overlap in the play.

In the game, you play this group of elite, sort of storied characters from fiction who are working to defend London against villains from fiction. You are exploring, basically, you're running around these different areas in London, gathering resources to fight to complete challenges and mysteries that have been put on the board as you're going along. The idea is that there is a plot and you need to find out where it's going to happen, who's involved and what they're trying to do. And each time you find out one of these things, a minion shows up to cause all kinds of trouble until you defeat them. And once you find the third thing, then the mastermind shows up and you have to defeat them. If you're able to defeat the all three minions and the mastermind, you win the game, but you're on a clock. The game is divided into twelve rounds. Each round is divided into two halves, and the two halves represent, um, I think one day or one hour maybe it's maybe divided into fifteens. And you play from, oh, you play from six to twelve. It's divided by fifteens on every half an hour. The enemies move. So you really have like twelve rounds.

It's pretty good, really intense exchange of actions. And like Arkham Horror, it's got a kind of cascade effect where you try to resolve the things that are open, and if you don't resolve them, that's when trouble occurs. This is a very luck focused game, although there is a lot of strategy to it, and it is very hard, like one of the challenges of the game is it is just difficult to accomplish the objectives in time. In fact, we've played it three or

four times now and I don't think we've ever won. Or maybe we won one time, but it's very tricky to accomplish the goals of the game. So if you like a difficult co-op, Victoriana might be your speed. So that's Victoriana from 2019, published by Games Afoot designers Benjamin Gali and Brad Lawrence. I believe they are also the publishers. This was a Kickstarter game, and I don't think Games Afoot has published anything else.

All right. The last new game I want to talk about today is one of the darlings of Gen Con. And I made some friends jealous because they had backed the Kickstarter and they hadn't received it yet. And I received it at Gen Con, so. Ha! This was **A Place for All My Books**. Um, this is a game about collecting books. It is definitely right square in the middle of the cozy genre. In this game you are buying books, organizing books, and getting points for doing so in your apartment. You can organize books in different ways and you get points for matching patterns in the game. Uh, and you have this thing called the social battery, which you're slowly charging up over the course of hanging out in your house. When you've got it charged up sufficiently, you can go to town. When you go to town, you can acquire more books, as well as accomplishing a few other things, acquiring items. And each time you do something in town, your social battery reduces. Once it gets low enough, then you go back home and it starts recharging with the stuff you do at home. So there's an oscillation. You go to town and spend a few turns in town. Then you go back home, re-arrange your books that you got while you were in town.

Now this game is pretty fun. It's on the lighter side, but more complex than something like River Valley Glassworks. It does remind me it's probably on the same level as Flame Craft. That's about the level. So there's some complexity to it. It's not super easy to teach, but it's very accessible. The art is super cute, and it comes with little book tokens that are book tokens that are really cool. They look like tiny little books on the upside. Like I said, this game is very cozy. There's not a whole lot you can do to get in each other's way. Maybe I'll take the thing you want, but when I take something, something new comes out and it's a pretty good chance that it's going to be as good or better than the thing that I took. So the odds of me really spoiling your game are low.

The only thing that I don't like about it is the way that the end-game works. There's a sun marker, and every time someone goes to town, the sun moves forward. One space. Well, in a two player game and a three player game, the number of spaces the sun can move is one more. It's the number of players times two plus one. So in a two player game, the sun can move five spaces. In a three player game it can move seven. In a four player game it moves eight. This is the part I didn't like in the two and three player game. If you're if both players are moving at basically the same rhythm, each player gets two visits to the village and once someone goes to the village a third time, that triggers the end of the game. In the four player game, because it's only eight, when the fourth player takes their second trip to the village, that triggers the end of the game, and they only get one more turn so they don't get to have a full turn going around the village, or a full round, like full bunch of turns going around the village getting stuff and then going back home and, you know, harvesting the results of those points.

Now it's a minor issue if you're all really timed closely together, that if you all go to town for the second time at the same time, then the last player triggers the end of the game in a way that nobody will get the benefit of going of hanging around town a bunch, a bunch. But in my experience, that rhythm isn't the same. And the fourth, the fourth player gets screwed. We only played it the once that way, so I can't be sure. But I'm pretty sure that next time I play it with four players, we're going to make there be nine spots, so everybody gets two visits to town. Now maybe that makes the game too long, I don't know. We'll have to see. But that was my experience with our first couple plays of A Place for All My Books, from designer Alex Cutler and Michael Mihelcic Art from Naomi Lord, published by Smirk and Dagger in 2025.

Well, that's about it for me today. I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk. I hope that your next walk is as pleasant as mine was.

Bye bye.

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