

Pick Up & Deliver 792: Saltfjord; Up or Down?; Collapsible D; Mountains of Madness (revisited)

NOTE: Due to time constraints this transcript has not been edited. My apologies for any errors you find.

Speaker Welcome to pick Up and Delivery, 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 and I'm on my way home from the train. Uh, it's a Thursday afternoon and the sun is beautiful outside and the weather is nice and crisp. It's exactly what you'd want, like, late September to be. Of course, it's late October, tomorrow's Halloween, so that's not ideal, but there it is. Well, I thought I would talk to you a little bit about some games I've played recently. That's right. It's time for a board game. Espresso. Triple shot. Order up the board game. Espresso triple shot is an episode in which I talk about three games I've played recently, and one game, or for the first time and one game I revisited. It's meant to be a short review segment, really a first impressions because I've only played the games once, or sometimes twice. I haven't played them enough to have a to do a full review, and it wouldn't be responsible for me to try. Nonetheless, I think it's worth your time. I also a significant portion of the games I try out I never go back to, so sometimes the first impression is the only one you're going to get from me about that game. All right, so let's see how today's games went. Our first game is one from a design team that I really enjoy. Actually did an episode about these two. This is Christian Ostby and Ellis Svensson, the designers behind a number of games that I enjoy and along with a couple other people revive most recently, but several games that I like. Salt fjord is the game I'm talking about here. This is a twenty twenty four release, which is a reimagining or reimplementing of some of the mechanisms that they used in a game called Santa Maria, which I believe was maybe twenty fourteen, twenty fifteen, something like that. Now that game I never played, because what a gross theme. My understanding of it was that the game had a little bit of politics in it, at least if you go into it with the generous kind of reading eye that somebody like Rado has. If you listen to Rado talking about Santa Maria, he talks about it as a clandestine critique of the colonialist movement. For me, it was just it had like a smiling conquistador on the front. And I don't want to play that. But I am always happy to see a designer revisit a solid mechanism or a solid design and move it to a different context. So I'm really happy to try out Salt Fjord. Also, Ostby and Svensson are a duo that I really like their designs and so I was very excited to try this one out in Salt Fjord. You are a person running a fishing boat in a small Norwegian town on a fjord. What you're trying to do is get better at fishing and go fishing. The game mechanisms are where it's at with this game. The theme is sort of it's there and the game is built around the theme, but I think it's one of those ones where the theme isn't really that important. You could see them doing something else, maybe colonialism. I'm kidding, uh, as an alternate theme, but I guess what I mean is, like, compared to other games where sometimes the mechanisms feel like they're they're tied very tightly to the theme. This one, it feels like the theme is there to give a little, uh, narrative nudge to the mechanisms, but it's really about the puzzle of the game. So this is a dice drafting game where you have there's a series of dice that get rolled, and you're going to take turns drafting them. And when you draft the dice, you then place them in the column or the row of your little player board. And then you get to do actions based on the column or row that you're activating. You also have a couple. You also have access to a couple workers, which lets you activate spaces without using a die. And the spaces you're activating allow you to do a variety of things related to building up in-game scoring, or building up an engine. This is very much a game about building combos and planning ahead for future combos. The mechanism of placing the dice and then activating the things in that column is pretty interesting. There's a kind of the way it works is you put the die in the column or the row, and then you move the die down the column, activating each of the icons that you hit until you get to the end. The last icon that you hit, in which case the die stays there. And now you can't activate that spot again because the dye is on it. Meaning if you activate the row that that that spots in, you won't activate it. And if you activate that column again, you won't activate it. So there's an interesting puzzle about when to take which dice. And of course, you're competing with other players for those dice. I thought it was pretty interesting. The circumstances we were playing it in weren't the best. It was kind of a crowded table, and it is a game that takes up a little bit of room, so it would really benefit from having two tables probably, or having a bigger space to play with. But it was a neat puzzle.

I liked the length. It seems like a kind of game that would take like an hour to an hour and a half with four players. Once you all know how to play, it seems like there's like a good solid middleweight euro. There's a there's a fair amount of variety in the play, but it's going to be tactical. You are adapting to the different scoring conditions that are available. You're adapting to different tiles and different options that you have. And while you may develop a strategy, it has to be flexible enough to respond to the dice that you get. So it was a neat first play and definitely a game I would enjoy playing again. It's going to stay in the collection for a while. Hopefully I'll be able to get it back to the table a few times and really dig into Salt Fjord now as I compare it to other Svensson OSP games. I think I like The Magnificent a little better. I definitely like the theme of the magnificent more. Um, and that that game feels the closest in terms of weight and play to Salt Fjord. But I still enjoyed this quite a bit. I'm looking forward to playing it again. That is Salt Fjord, uh, published by A Port Games in twenty twenty four. Next up, we have Up or Down? Up or down was published by, uh, Capstone Games. The designers are Michael Kiesling and Wolfgang Kramer. If they sound familiar, if they sound familiar, it's because they've designed a lot of games. Kiesling and Kramer together. I have done an episode about, but also, like Kiesling designed Azul and Kramer has done a number of games as well. These are prolific and well respected designers. Up and down is a pretty simple premise. Uh, or up or down is a pretty simple premise. There are a series of cards that are displayed on the table in this sort of really interesting circle, going from lowest to highest, and you have a bunch of cards in your hand, and what you're doing is using the cards in your hand to draft the cards on the table, the cards on the table, then go onto one of the stacks that you're building. You can have up to three stacks on each stack. You're either placing down cards in order from lowest to highest or highest to lowest. The theme is like an elevator. That's the art on the cards. It doesn't really matter. It could just be numbers. It would work fine. But the idea is that you are at the trying to get it so that at the end of the game, when, uh, everyone's hand has run out and there's no more cards to place down, that for each of your stacks, you will score points based on you get. You pick a color and the number of cards of that color is your base score. And then you multiply it by how many cards are in the stack in. So your ideal stack is one that's got a lot of cards in it, and several cards of the same color. Now, since you always have to put down a card that's either bigger or smaller than the last card in the stack, you sometimes get to a point where you can't do that. If you can't do that, then you have and you've already got three stacks going. Then you have to pick one stack to discard. When you discard, it goes into your personal discard pile. And each of those cards is one point. But that hurts. I mean, if you can time it right, so that you do it, and then you have three good stacks at the end of the game, that's the best. But a lot of times the last few cards in the game are very restrictive, and it's very easy to lose one of your stacks. In the last few minutes. I've played this twice. I think it's a really good entry. Late entry wait filler game of about a half hour. It plays up to five, although it gets a little slow at that length. And it's really hard to plan because so many cards are getting drafted between your turns. But overall, I think it's a fine game. Really interesting to play, easy to teach, or easy ish to teach. The rhythm of the cards is a little complicated, but generally I enjoy it. So that is up or down. From. Published in twenty twenty four by Capstone Games in the US. From Michael Kiesling and Wolfgang Kramer. Well, I have gotten a chance to revisit some games. Uh, there was a game that was more than six years. Dusty. This is Mountains of Madness, designed by Rob Davio, published by yellow. This is a game I played several times when I owned it, but it got to the point where, like, my wife didn't want to play it anymore and I wasn't getting a lot of play play with other kids. And I figured it was still new enough. I could probably turn it around for some money or a trade, and that's what I did. Uh, it worked out just fine, but one of my students has a copy, and they brought it to the board game club, And so I got to play it. Um, this is a delightful game in which you are on a journey to find out what's going on in Antarctica a la H.P. Lovecraft's At the Mountains of Madness. It's an Arctic expedition or an Antarctic expedition. You are dealing with cold weather, but also going mad. The gameplay mechanism is pretty interesting in it. You are, as a group, trying to solve problems, and each problem you solve through conversation and playing cards face down. So you have these. You have a problem you're trying to solve. Usually it's a number. It's usually two or three numbers of a particular value. So like there's these there's like four different suits. You're trying to play cards adding up to particular number within each suit or within a couple suits. The game allows you to talk about how much you have and what you can play, but it's a real time game and it's timed. And so there's a tricky element of managing to do all that within a very short time window. And then the grit of the game comes from the fact that you, each player, because we're at the mountains of Madness, is going a little bit mad. The way that they simulate that is that they have these cards, levels one, two and three, and each card sets you up for a different kind of madness, which is a sort of behavioral trait that appears in your play. And the whole gimmick is you're not supposed to acknowledge that you're doing it. So you're doing a thing without knowing what

you're doing or without without acknowledging what you're doing. And the other players just have to work around it. Sometimes it's you'll repeat what other players say. Sometimes you'll only talk to one player, sometimes you'll. There's all sorts of things. And as we fail, as things go bad, then you start getting higher and higher. Level madness cards, which are harder and harder to succeed with. And the goal is to accomplish enough things that we make it to the top of the mountain, uh, find what we need and then get away. And we did. We won the game, which was fun, but, uh, I think, like, it was fine. I had a good time. It's not a game I would turn down if everybody else was playing. They were like, hey, Brendan, you want to play this with us? I'd usually say sure. I think it's amusing, but this reinforced for me. I'm glad I didn't keep it. It's not a game I need to have in my collection, and if I never play it again, I won't be heartbroken. So. But it's an interesting time, and I do like a game with a good gimmick and the gimmick. And it is really interesting. So that is at the Mountains or Mountains of Madness by Rob Davis. That's a twenty seventeen game. Finally, we have a game that's been that was on my grail list for a long time. This is collapsible D, the final minutes of the Titanic. This is published in twenty twelve by Cobber A Cobblepot Games, which is an Italian game studio that just published a couple of games, and most of their games are out of print and are very hard to find. This one is a very detailed game built around the sinking of the Titanic. In it, you play one of a number of people trying, and you usually have a control of a couple of them. You're trying to get them onto a lifeboat so that they can escape the mechanisms of the game. You are doing a relatively small number of things on your turn, and then we're drawing cards that make the ship flood. The ship flooding mechanism is pretty snazzy. The game feels. It really evokes the idea of the way that the Titanic sank and what was happening on board. Um, the gameplay itself is pretty mediocre. You're just trying to get your person to, uh, get enough items that you can then hopefully get onto one of the lifeboats. The lifeboats themselves are restricted. So if you're playing, if you have a male character, you might need might not be able to get onto some of the female lifeboats or things like that. You also have oh, you have three workers, three or four depending on the player count. And those other workers have uh, it has to do with your, uh, the class that they are. So there's first class, second class, steerage and crew And if you're playing in a larger player game we played in a five player game, you don't use the second class characters to keep the game moving. It was interesting. If you're somebody like me who's really interested in the Titanic and you want to have a bunch of games about Titanic, it's probably worth looking at. It was a little on the expensive side for me to get second hand from Canada, but it was more for the collector side of me than the game playing side of me. It was designed by Gianluca Santopietro with art from Alan Damico. And like I said, it was published by Sir Chester Cobblepot in publishing in twenty twelve. So that is the three games and one I revisited, three games new and one revisited from last month. I'd love to hear what some of the games you've been playing are. Have you played any of the games I just talked about? What do you think of them? Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild three two six nine and let me know there. We're also rocketing toward the end of the year, so if there's anything I haven't done on the pod that you'd like to hear me do a feature that I haven't done enough of, or something like that. The opportunity to tell me, hey, Brendan, do that before I go on my winter hiatus is fast approaching, or the limit to tell me that is fast approaching, so I'd love to hear from you about that as well. You can reach me on BoardGameGeek. My username is wombat nine Twenty-nine there. You can also email me Brendan at Gamescom. Well, I want to say thank you for joining me on my walk today, and I hope that your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye. Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.