

# Look Back at 2001-2004

## Transcript

Welcome to Pickup and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I leave the library and deliver an episode to you while I walk home. I'm Brendan Riley.

[opening music]

Greetings, listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago where it was when I started my walk. I'm on my second walk of the day. I took the first one. As you're listening, I took the first one on Wednesday, April twenty ninth, and I believe this one is coming out something like May third, May fourth, uh, something like that. So a little separated. When I left, it was cloudy with a few spots of or it was sunny with a few spots of clouds. And now I've got this big bank of dark clouds rolling in from the west, heading east, and I'm am walking east and you're going to play a game with me today called will I get home before it rains? We'll see how long. We'll see if I can make it home before it rains and how long after it rains. After how long after I get home? It does start to rain. It's like literally getting darker by the minute as I'm walking. So we'll see.

While you're counting suspense about that, let me throw some other suspense at you. That's right, it's time for you to wonder what are my favorite games from 2001 to 2004? That's right. It's time for a look back. A Look Back is an episode in which I look back at a previous year, and I examined the games that came out in that year, and I ask which game is best now? I could just look at one year at a time, of course, and that's what I did for most of this series. I started actually rating games year by year here on the podcast in, I think, 2018. So if you look at twenty eighteen and forward, I am doing like a top five. But if you go back before that, I didn't do it because either I wasn't doing the podcast or whatever. So what I've done is every thirty or forty episodes or so, I go back and look at a slightly farther back year.

Now, somewhere around 2009, I think maybe 2011, the number of games that I had played in that year and the number of games that were documented on boardGameGeek was getting smaller and smaller that were games that I thought it was worth talking about. And it got to the point where it felt weird to do a top, top ten or top five out of ten games. So I started doing two years at a time, and I did that up until 2005-2006. I did a top five for those two years. Well, when I went to do the next batch 2003 to 2004, I found that I'd only played twenty games from that two year span, and that did not feel like enough. It feels like it's weird if you say a quarter of the games that came out are the best games. So that felt silly. So I went back and I added two more years. So this group is 2001 to 2004. I think from now on I'm going to do five year tranches. So the next one will be 1996 to 2000. What are the best games from 2001 to 2004 inclusive?

I'm going to start with a quick summary of the **games that I have not played from that era** that I think could make this list. Had I played them. Those are war of the Ring, Zendo, hive, Age of Steam, Goa, San Juan, Saint Petersburg, struggle of empires, Princes of Renaissance, Dungeon twister, fearsome floors, fire and axe: a Viking saga, and Blue Moon. Now, any of these games, had I played them, could have made this list, I think, but I've not played them. So I don't know. I'm not going to probably do a revisit later, but that's just to give you some perspective now, war of the rings is a special one because I know they did a second edition. I think a lot of people who love war of the ring, love war of the ring second edition. So I don't know how those compare, but there it is. All right. So what I thought I'd do is I'll do my top five games from those years, then my superlatives, and then wrap it up with other games I have played that did not make the top five. So start with my top five.

Number five **Alhambra**. Alhambra is a great game from 2003 in which you are trying to build a house and or a sort of like compound, and you are. There's two things that make it interesting. One, as you're taking the pieces, you're trying to line up the walls so that you can make a border around the edge of your compound. You're trying to have the most of a given color of buildings. So there's a bunch of different buildings. You're trying to have the most of a given color. It's a sort of, um, majority influence game. And then the tricky part is paying for the buildings. So the way it works is there's a market of buildings. Each one is associated with a different currency. There's four different colors of currency. And you have a bunch of currency cards. When you go to buy a building, you have to pay in the currency that that building is being sold for. And you can overpay if you want. There's no change. The currency cards are set, you can overpay if you want, and there's

no change. Or if you pay exact. And then you can buy a second building on your turn and that you have to do that to do well, I think. So that's Alhambra, it's great. And there's a whole bunch of expansions for it. I have not really played many of those. I had Alhambra at one point. Jenny didn't really like it, so I moved it along. My wife didn't really like it, so I moved it along. I traded it away. I'm happy, happy to play that if people bring it out, but I don't need to copy myself. If I could, if I came across a copy of across a copy at of the base game or I came across a copy at the thrift store, I probably would pick it up now because it is a game that I do enjoy playing occasionally, but I was able to get good stuff in trade, so that's Alhambra.

Next up we have **Coloretto**. Coloretto is a set collection game where you are trying to get cards based on colors. I do like the animal themed one Zooloretto a little bit better, but as far as I know those are the same game. So I'm saying I've played Coloretto even though I think I've only played ZooLoretto. Uh, it is a majority game again, where you're trying to get the most of a particular animal. There's an interesting element of screw your neighbor, though, where if you stick somebody with cards they don't have very much of, then they lose points. That's about all I remember of it. I do remember it being pretty good, and it's definitely on my list of games to pick up. If I get a chance to get it cheap. I might even buy it for regular price at some point. Note it's not fully raining yet, but I am starting to get little drips.

Number three the **Downfall of Pompeii**. This was a hard fight for me between number three and number two. In spots I put it number three. It just doesn't get as much play. It's a little less friendly, but I think this is an excellent game. It's a two phase game where in the first phase you're trying to populate Pompeii with your people. You get points for where you put them in the city, and you're trying to get them ideally spread out and ready to run. Then in the second half of the game, the volcano starts erupting, lava starts flowing through the city, and you try to get your people out of the city. When you draw the lava, you put it in the spots where your opponents are most vulnerable, and you try to get your people out through the spots where you are least vulnerable. It's great. What a fun game. Very silly. And when you are able, when someone else's person gets eaten by lava, you get to throw it in the volcano. There's a little 3D volcano that goes on the edge of the table. Downfall of Pompeii. What a delight.

My number two game from 2004 is **Ticket to Ride**. This is the Alan Moon classic. For me, I've. I've heard a number of people sort of bag on ticket to ride as sort of solvable. And it is a game that can collapse into incredible meanness that I think is not great. I like Ticket to Ride Europe better for that reason. But overall Ticket to Ride is a fun time. I'll happily play it pretty much anytime anyone asks, and I've enjoyed a variety of different maps and versions of it. We have, I think, three copies at our house. We have ticket to ride, ticket to ride, Marklin, ticket to ride Europe. Uh. Just a heads up, it is fully raining now. It's not pouring yet, but it's a strong sprinkle. Not wet enough that I'm going to have to change clothes when I get home, but I'm glad I'm wearing a jacket.

And finally, the best game of 2004. Hands down. **Betrayal at House on the Hill**. Now I mostly have played the second edition, which wasn't different enough to get a different entry in Board Game Geek. The third edition is substantially changed and does have a different entry. I've also played Betrayal Legacy. I love the concept of this game. I like how it plays. It's really janky. It sometimes is broken, but it's often a lot of fun, especially if you're playing with people who try to play quickly and can enjoy the game for what it is, which is a storytelling engine with a lot of hilariousness that is betrayal at House on the Hill. All right, so some superlatives.

Best game Whose revised version is amazing. This is a **Game of Thrones**. I haven't played a Game of Thrones. I have played a Game of Thrones second edition many times or a few times anyway. And it's really good. It's very savvy, but really good. So that's my award there.

Best game I don't like that much: **Power Grid**. I can absolutely see why people like Power Grid. I can respect it as a strong game, but it's not my bag. I don't really like it very much and my wife hates it, so I haven't played it all that much. Uh.

Best game I haven't played very much. **Puerto Rico**. I have Puerto Rico 1897. I played it one time. I thought I had played it none, but I did log. I'll play, so I played it at least once. I can recognize it's really interesting, but it's one of those games I just haven't had much chance to play, so I am looking forward to playing it more. At some point I will play it when people get it out, but I really don't want to play the regular Puerto Rico. I'd be happy to play Puerto Rico 1897 because of the shift in theming.

Next up, best game with a boring theme. **Ingenious**, I think ingenious is a really interesting game. I hate the theme. There is no theme. It's an abstract game. Uh, it has it is the best demonstration of the idea of kinesia scoring or one of them, which is you score your lowest category. So in ingenious, you're scoring different colors, whatever color you end up lowest, that's your score. It's great.

And best stabby game. The best stabby game is Jeff Saadiq's **lifeboat**. I know they just released like a new edition of it. If you've never played it before, it's worth playing. Boy, it is mean. It is the meanest game I've played, but it has some really fun stuff in it. In it you are on a lifeboat. You are a person who's on the lifeboat. You're trying to have your person survive, but you get more points for the person you love surviving and the person you hate dying, and the person you love and the person you hate are secret. You don't know. No one else knows who they are except they know who they are. Like, you know, I know I have one person, so I know you don't have them for that category. It's great. Really fun game, really vicious. You're trying to survive on this lifeboat. You're moving each other around, shoving each other out of the way, trying to get food and water and survive. As the lifeboat drifts and everyone slowly dies. It's very dark, very funny. If you're able to play with the cannibalism expansion. Even funnier. I only played it a couple times and then got rid of it because it's so, so mean. I have trouble even enjoying it when we're all in the spirit of oh, this game is super mean.

Well, it is full on raining now. My glasses are getting wet. I don't think it's quite wet enough that I have to change clothes. But yeah, full on raining. I did not make it home before it started raining. So there it is.

Finally, the games I have played but did not include in the list. There are two games, a couple games that have only played digitally memoir forty four, Balloon Cup, and Perla Dora. I don't even remember Perla Dora, but I played it four times, apparently in 2021. Um, on board game arena.

And then there are a bunch of games that I have played that I did not put on my list. This is no thanks. And these are in no particular order. Actually, they are in the order of their rank on board game geek. The higher on this list, the higher ranked they are on board Game Geek so: No thanks, Heroscape, Amon-Re, Carcassonne The Castle, Tumbling Dice, Cockroach Poker, Saboteur, Wyatt Earp, Rumis, Ten days in the USA, Too many cooks, The game of things, Gobblers, Munchkin, Canal Grande, Lord of the rings: The duel, Zombies!!!, and Minotaur Lords.

Those are the best games from 2001-2004 inclusive. Which games did I miss? Which games do you think from that era I should definitely seek out and play? What is your favorite of those games? I'd love to hear. Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild 3269 and share your thoughts there. I'm Brendan Riley.

If you want to send me a message directly, the best way is through BoardGameGeek. My username is wombat929. I see that the most. You could also email me Brendan at rattlebox games dot com. I don't see that very often, but I might. Or you could post a message in our forums. Guild 3269 as I just said. Those are the those are the options. I'd love to play a game with you. My username is wombat929 on Board Game Arena and yukata dot de. I'd love to play games on both of those. And I am playing games with a number of pick up and deliver listeners. Hey folks, nice to hear from you. Glad to play games with you.

Well, that's about it for me today. It is raining on me, so I'm going to get inside as quick as I can. But before that, I'm going to say thanks for joining me in my walk. I hope your next walk is pleasant and less rainy than mine was. Bye bye.

[closing music]

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