

Pick Up & Deliver 836: King of the Dice; Level 7 Escape; Gold Ahoy!; Dog Park (revisited) - Transcript

[*Transcript note – the first mention of each game is **boldfaced** and corrected for punctuation. Thereafter, game titles are not copy-edited.]

Welcome to Pickup 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.

[intro music]

Well, greetings listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. I'm out walking around talking to you about board games, and there's lots of traffic where I am. Apologies. Well, it's been a little while since I've talked to you about what I've been playing. So it seems like it's time for a Board Game Espresso Triple Shot.

[foaming machine noises]

Order up! The Board Game Espresso Triple Shot is a regular segment in which I talk about three games that I've played for the first time recently and what I think of them. I also will talk about one game that I dusted off, or a game where I played an expansion or something like that. These are meant to be sort of first impression, quick reviews. I haven't played the game multiple times, obviously by the fact that I'm saying games I tried, but I think it's a good way to get a feel for a game and let me jump in there.

First, we have **King of the Dice**. This is a 2017 game from Haba Publishing, designed by Nils Nilsson and with art from Gus Batz. The art is very cutesy on the cover. It's a small box game. On the cover is a sort of cutesy looking King character, and the characters inside have a sort of fairy tale flavor to them. There's dragons and princesses and whatnot. In this game, you are trying to build a kingdom by collecting subjects, and each subject has a different quality or different thing that they do, and they give you points. But also, once you have the most of a particular category, then you get points for that. Also, the game is played in Yahtzee style, so it comes with a bunch of colorful dice. The dice have numbers on them as well as colors, and you get to do three rolls and then try to get as many points as you can. or you try to get a combination that lets you recruit one of the cards. The cards come in several different colors, and the color of card that you recruit. You can get a bonus when you do that and take one of the bonus tiles as well. The cards are recruited by having common different combinations of dice that you use to recruit them.

Think of it a little bit like a very simplified version of **Elder Sign**, where you're rolling dice and completing challenges on the cards, or then you collect the cards. It's a pretty simple game. Takes about fifteen minutes to play, maybe. Maybe longer with more players, but not a lot longer because the game goes until something runs out, which is relatively quick. It's a fun little game. Nice little Yahtzee press your luck game. Not a whole lot to it in terms of depth of play. It's not a game I'm going to want to play over and over and over again, but certainly one where people are like, "hey, we've got a few minutes, want to play King of Dice?" I don't think I'd say no. So that's King of the dice from 2017, published by Haba.

Next up, we have a 2012 game **Level 7 Escape**. This is from Privateer Press. The designer is Will Schoonover, and there is no artist credited, which is wild because there's a bunch of art in this game. So I'm not sure why there's no artist credited. Maybe in 2012, Privateer Press wasn't crediting the artists on board games yet. Not ideal as far as I'm concerned. In Level 7 Escape, you play prisoners who've been captured and put inside this military bunker. It has a feel, a little bit of that old movie Cube.

So you're in this bunker and there's dangerous things going on and you're moving around, but you feel more it's more like you're in a base, like you would see in a sci fi video game from the nineties, like doom or something. There's a bunch of different rooms and you're running from room to room, and the building has two malevolent groups in it. There are guards who are trying to take you out because you've escaped, and there are aliens who are trying to take you out because they're evil aliens. One's unclear why we were there to begin with. You don't really know.

The game comes with seven scenarios. We played the introductory scenario, which maybe wasn't the best one to judge the game on because you don't use any items in the introductory scenario. So part of the fun of the game, I think, is equipping your character with a variety of items that let you do different kinds of things.

And so playing with the introductory level where you don't use items, which they encourage you to do, because the game is fairly complicated, means that you just don't get the full breadth of what's going on in the game. Loosely speaking, in the introduction, you, you, and the other three players, if you're playing four player, are in separate cells in the middle of a detention block, and your goal is to find your way to the elevator so that you can escape. The game uses a sort of a chance based approach to having you find the elevator.

The way it works is you shuffle up the deck of tiles so the game is played with tiles representing rooms. You start with just a couple on the board, and then every time you go through a door, you're going to draw a tile off the stack and add it. Very similar to escape curse of the temple or betrayal at House on the Hill. When you add one of those tiles, if it's in the first stack of tiles, you just add it. If it's in the second stack of tiles, instead of just adding it, you roll a die. And if you roll a very specific combination of dice, that's unlikely. You find the elevator. If you don't roll that combination, then you get one of the tiles from the second stack. Once the group has exhausted the second stack, then the thing you have to roll to find the elevator becomes much more likely. Instead of being like a one in twenty four chance or one in thirty six chance, it goes down to being like a one in six chance.

Once you find the elevator, then a a clock starts ticking and everybody needs to get to the elevator to escape. Meanwhile, there's aliens running around trying to kill you. There's guards running around trying to kill you. There's a fairly elaborate set of obligations and steps when you are working on the different pieces of the game. Understanding how all the different pieces fit together is relatively complicated.

This game reminds me a lot of **Last Night on Earth**, the Flying Frog Productions game that I'm very fond of. It's about the same level of complexity, which is to say, it doesn't seem like it should be that complicated, but there's a bunch of fiddly little rules that you have to remember about how different things interact. I think if I had played this and I'd never played any of the Flying Frog production games, I would be. I'd be like, "this game is really neat. It's complicated, but rewarding in how you interact with the guards and the aliens, and there's lots of thematic stuff to do." It's very rewarding as a storytelling engine for trying to escape from this creepy base. That said, I have played last night on Earth and I have played **A Touch of Evil**, so I already have the sort of space in my in my brain filled for this kind of game.

And while this game is neat, it's not neat enough to say like, oh, I need another game that's this complicated when I hardly ever get to play those games. So from that perspective, level seven escape is an interesting twist. And maybe you, like, trapped in a government facility, hounded by aliens and malevolent guards. Better as a theme than a B zombie movie or a corny colonial era monster story. If you like the sci fi one better, level seven escape is probably going to work well for you. And again, maybe the later scenarios are really good. I gotta say, I'm probably not going to find out. I thought it was fine, but in the never ending goal to churn my collection so I can try other things and not keep games that I'm not going to play. This feels like one that can go back on the trade pile. So that is level seven. Escape from 2012. Designed by Will Schoonover. Or Schoonover and published by Privateer Press.

I did get to dust off a game in May that was. **Dog Park** (2022). Dog Park is interesting because I don't think I have actually played it on the table before. I've played it online once or twice on board game arena when it came on there. And I did read the rules, but I will confess it didn't click for me in the way that tabletop games often take longer to click if I'm playing them digitally, especially digital asynchronous. So playing dog park on the table was fun because I got to see how it worked. I got to understand the nuances of the different pieces of play.

In Dog Park you are a dog walker. You're competing dog walkers trying to make money or gain reputation by walking the dogs around the park. That seems pretty straightforward. There are a variety of dog cards that you can recruit that have different species of dog or different breeds of dog, as well as sort of different things that the dog likes. In order to walk the dog, you have to spend the things that it like. So if there's a dog that really likes fetching sticks, you have to spend two sticks to walk that dog. And each dog gives you a benefit of some sort. Some dogs will let you get more resources. Some dogs will get you end game scoring, some dogs will get you other kinds of things. There is an interesting mechanism where you get points for having walked a dog and you can lose points for every every dog that you have in your kennel that you haven't walked yet.

There's an interesting interplay there. There's a bidding mechanism where you're actually bidding points to decide which dogs you're going to get, which I, I think works really well. The components are very nice. I'm, I

think I'm playing the deluxe Kickstarter edition, so I don't know how that differs from the version you'd get at a store, but I'm sure the cards are the same and the cards are beautiful. So the cardstock in the game and the dog art is really fun.

If you have a more casual game play person in your life who really likes dogs, I feel like Dog Park is an excellent choice for getting them started in hobby gaming. Dog Park is published in 2022 by Birdwood Games, designed by Lottie Hazell and Jack Hazell, with art from Kate Avery, Holly Zaslav and Dana May. Check it out if you get a chance. I thought it was fun.

Finally, the last game is one I picked up at a board game swap meet. I think I paid four or five dollars for it. It is a game from Lookout Games with art from Clemens Franz on it, so you can already imagine the front with a pirate theme. Think about the cover of the Alexander Pfister game Port Royal. Think about that cover and just reimagine it a little bit. And you've got **Gold Ahoy!** Gold Ahoy was published in 2015. It's designed by Stefan Herrenhaus with art from Clemens Franz, published by Lookout Games in their two player game series. So the same size box and series as something like **Glasgow** is another one that I have that's in that series. I think that **Agricola, All Creatures Great and Small** was in that series as well, but I haven't played that one. I do have **Caverna Cave versus cave**, which is the two player version of that, but I have the big box of it, so I don't. The size doesn't fit anyway.

Gold Ahoy! is a pretty simple puzzle game with some interesting mechanisms. It's a push-pull dynamic. You are placing tiles. So the game comes with 36 tiles that you shuffle up and place face down, and then you take turns drawing a tile and placing it. When you place a tile, it has to connect with the other tiles that are already there. It has to be adjacent orthogonally adjacent to one of the other tiles, meaning it's sharing a side and all the tiles have on them. Some land, some water, and one treasure chest. What you're doing is you're building a network of land, sort of these connected sandbars and water, these connected water channels, with the goal of getting the treasure for yourself from your side of the board and preventing your opponent from getting it from their side of the board. The rule says that you, when you place a tile that you have to make a six by six grid, all in the end. So until the widest parts of that six by six grid are established, you have room to kind of add a row or a column to the board.

The one caveat is you're not allowed to add a row on the other person's side of the board. So you can add keep adding rows on your side, but you cannot add a row on their side. Only they can do that. And the reason for that is at the end, when you have this sort of network of sandbars and canals, inevitably there'll be some piece of that where both players have access to the sandbar and the canal, like a sort of chunk of the board that is connected sandbars. And then the person who wins that, the person who wins the treasure chests in that section is the person who has the most access points to that grouping. So if you have a group of a group of sandbars that have ten treasure chests on them, and I have two connections between those sandbars and the end of the and my side of the board. And you have three connections, you win. So that's, that's basically how it works.

It's a very simple game. Plays in about fifteen minutes. It's easy to teach, easy to understand. It's the kind of game where you could play it a few times, and I think you'll get the gist of it. I think more than a few times you probably will get bored of it. So it feels like either the kind of game you play every now and again with somebody who wants to play a light game, or you play it a couple times and pass it along, which is probably what I'll do. But for now, Gold Ahoy is in my collection, and I thought it was fine.

Well, that's about it for me today. I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk. I'd love to know what you think of these games. You can share those thoughts over on BoardGameGeek guild 3269. Or you can email me, Brendan at rattlebox games dot com. If you'd like to play a game with me, you can. We could play on board game arena or yucata dot de asynchronously. I would love to try it.

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

[exit music]

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