

Pick Up & Deliver 842: Hellton Palace; Groundhog Day; Mystery Rummy: Jack the Ripper; Village Green (revisited)

Transcript

Welcome to Pickup and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I step out for a stroll and deliver an episode to you while I walk around. I'm Brendan Riley.

[Intro music]

Greetings, listeners. It is a warm day here in suburban Chicago. I'm out for a stroll. This is the second episode I've recorded this morning, trying to get caught back up as we trundle along. It is approximately twenty four degrees outside Celsius anyway, seventy eight Fahrenheit. And yeah, I thought I would talk to you about some games. I was looking at. Had been a little bit of time since I did a... I was looking it's been a little bit of time since I just talked about some games I played, so I thought today would be that day. That's right.

It's time for a Board Game Espresso Triple Shot. The board game Espresso Triple Shot is an episode in which I talk about three games that I've played recently for the first time, and one game I dusted off. Remember, a dusty game is one I haven't played for a year or more. Sometimes I'll also talk about an expansion instead of a dusty a dusted off game. But not today. Today I'm talking about three games that I played in May. These are all sort of mid-tier games, all pretty easy to play, so I should be able to describe them relatively well. And hopefully this will give you a sense of whether it's worth your time to check them out or not. All right.

The first one is called **Hellton Palace**. This was published in 2022. The designers, Jean-Baptiste Pigneur and the artist is Lorenzo Colangelo. It was published by yellow. Well, first off, components wise, Helton Palace is a beautiful game. It comes in a smallish box indicating a sort of two player experience, very similar to the cosmos two player game line, something like you'd find a copy of **Targi** in. But this is from IELLO, and I think the box was maybe a little thicker. Inside you find a couple player boards. You find a whole bunch of different components that are either sort of a dark teal or sort of a dark pink. Those are the two colors. The art is drawn in a very sharp line style, with a kind of flamboyant feel. It feels in the neighborhood of like art. You'd see for day of the Mexican day of the dead. It's not quite as ornamented, but the style like it reminds me of the art in *Coco* a little bit, but like very thick lines, very clear drawings, not sketchy in any way. And clear backgrounds, back backgrounds.

What you're seeing are is an elaborate sort of art deco hotel, the bunch of hotel rooms, uh, and then a basement that has these like pillars. Uh, and what the players get is a bunch of different bellhops as well as a few different components for tracking different kinds of materials or whatever. So the idea of the game is the two players, it's a two player game are running competing hotels in hell. Uh, you are doing your best to entertain your, uh, demonic clients, but demonic clients, demons really like to party. And so if you are not careful enough in how you entertain your demonic clients, they will celebrate too hard and cause trouble and you will end up with a wrecked hotel. So the goal is to avoid get be good enough to the clients that you don't get fired while avoiding having your hotel get destroyed by exuberant demonic guests.

This is a sort of a worker placement puzzle with a worker placement game with a puzzly approach and a careful. Connection between different pieces. What you're trying to do is you are trying to mollify the guests. You're trying to give them what they want. Each guest wants a different thing. And the things that you have to give them tax your resources in various ways. So you can't always resolve all the things that they want done. And the goal is to resolve them enough that they don't cause trouble. The way that works is each round you have to visit each guest or else they get disgruntled. If they get disgruntled, they have a dissatisfied token that you put on them. But if they already have a dissatisfied token, then they file a complaint and the complaints are bad for you. They hurt your standing in the game. On the other hand, every time that you help a guest that you give them what they want, you visit them. They celebrate. Or they are happy. When they're happy, they cause trouble. And the trouble they cause is often destructive to the hotel. So sometimes you're repairing the hotel instead of helping the guests because the guests are causing all kinds of damage. Other times, you are avoiding helping guests because they're going to cause too much damage.

You draft the guests and you place them into your hotel, and often the amount of damage they cause is related to the other guests that are around them. So there's an element of tile placement as well. This is a catastrophe avoidance game, similar to. If you've heard anything about **Moon Colony Bloodbath**, that's the game where you're building up an engine. But the goal of the engine is to last as long as you can outlast the other players, not necessarily survive. And that's the way this game works, too. It's over when one player loses, not when somebody wins.

Hellton Palace is a really interesting two player back and forth. I think it's a game. I'm gonna hang on to it for a while, because I'd like to play it a couple more times, but it's not a keeper. It's fine. It doesn't have the kind of long term depth that you get out of something like Lost Cities. I don't feel like there's enough there for it. And it even the Lost Cities is very, very random. Hellton Palace feels a little bit too random as to when you get guests and when you place them down, or it's just not, I don't know, it's good. I am looking forward to playing it some more, but it's probably not a long term keeper. That's Hellton Palace.

Next up we have **Groundhog Day, The Game**. This is published in 2021, designed by Prospero Hall and Peter Lee, with art from Damon S Brown, published by Funko Games. Now, this is sort of one of a number of games that Funko produced with either for Funko games themselves or for Ravensburger, where they are doing thematic takes on films. And sometimes these are films that do not immediately make themselves clear as objects of game design. And I would say Groundhog Day certainly fits that category. By which I mean to say the plot of Groundhog Day is not really one that lends itself to the idea that, oh, how am I going to play a game? But if you'll remember the movie Groundhog Day with Bill Murray, it's about a man, a self-centered, narcissistic man who gets trapped in a day. And essentially he has to do the day over and over again until he lives it perfectly. Uh, it's sort of about karma and about self-growth.

And so the way the game works is that it is a game where you're, you get you play it over a series of rounds, and each round you're getting cards and playing the cards, and your goal is to make it through the day without causing too much trouble, but also improving regularly. So the way the game works is you have cards with all these different numbers, and each player, you're going to take it in turns to play cards in different columns in ascending order. So you want to play cards from low to high, but you also have to play the numbers from low to high in the columns you're playing. So once you've played a two in a column, you can't play a one in that column. The numbers have to keep getting higher, but sometimes you're stuck and you just have to play a number that's much higher than you would have liked. That makes that column much, much harder to complete. There are these super duper cards that are red, and when you play them, you then get more cards into your deck that will be easier to play later. Which is important because like I said, as the game goes on, you need to get more and more numbers, and the goal is that you're going to play a certain number of rounds, I think get seven. And if you haven't completed a successful day by the end of that seventh round, then you lose the game.

We played two rounds of Groundhog Day. The first one, we were really just trying to figure out the mechanics of the game. It was relatively clear, but it's one of those games where you can kind of understand in the abstract, but then once you play it, once, you kind of really get why some of the rules are what they are and how it works. So it was the second play that really worked from a gameplay perspective, and we had fun, but it was definitely one of those games. We're like, okay, now that we get how it works and we're probably going to play this occasionally, but I would say this is probably a game for if you're a really big fan of that movie and you have casual gamers that you might like to play with occasionally, who you think really like that movie. This is the game. This is a game that you might want to get to share with them. It's an interesting game. It's a fun game, but it's pretty shallow in terms of the continued development of experience of the game.

There's not a whole lot there, but from a couple times play, uh, delightful, uh, strong components, really good art. There's a couple components that are very funny, like the, the component that you use to keep track of how many rounds you've done has the look of the, uh, analog flip number clock that is such a central part of the time keeping in the game. So that's really a hoot. There are very few or no actual depictions of actors in the game, because I'm sure they didn't want to license them. And so the images in the game are homages to the movie, but they aren't actually images from the movie, which actually makes the art pretty charming and not too distracting. So Groundhog Day is a cute little co-op. I encourage you to play it if you get a chance. It did leave my collection already, but we had a good time with it while we played it. Groundhog day the game from Prospero Hall designer Prospero Hall, published by Funko Games.

I thought I would take a moment to talk about an out of the dust game. As a reminder, and out of the dust game is one that you played sometime in the past and then haven't played for a year, and then you dusted it off, meaning you played it again after having not played it for a year. So the game that I'm wanting to talk about today is **Village Green**. Village green was designed by Peer Sylvester with art from Johanna Rosa, published by Osprey Games. Now, Osprey games is a really interesting publisher. They have for me a history of making really nice looking games. I think I have four of their games, three or four. I have **London Second Edition**, which is great. I have **Wildlands** and I actually have all the Wildlands stuff. Um, that's the game. I really need to play more because I bought a lot of it and I haven't really cracked it open much. I like, I like the system a lot. I just haven't made the time. Uh, and I have **Lost Expedition**, I guess I have three Osprey games that I can think of right now. Their design aesthetic is really nice. They lean towards sort of classy, minimalist art, but not too minimalist. It's usually very well done, and Village Green is no exception.

The art design has a sort of white clean look to it, with thin art deco sort of lines and lovely illustrations of villages. The premise is that you are helping to plan a village green in a small town in. Like Britain, the village green has nine spaces on it as a card drafting game, with nine spaces on the green and six spaces on the edges, three on the top, three on the side. What you're doing is you're drafting cards to go into the green, as well as scoring cards to go along the sides and the top. The scoring cards each apply to the column and or row that they are next to, and the column or row not, and or they have to be one or the other. And then the cards get scored for both the column and the row that they're in. The cards have a number of different features on them. They have some different sorts of plant life. They have some different sorts of buildings like gazebos. There are lawns which are sort of big green areas.

You know, the lawn is and then there are different kinds of flowers and the flowers. Basically, there's nine different kinds of flowers because each there are three different flowers and three different colors, and there are combinations of both. And so what you're doing and there's also trees, like I said, trees and greens. So what you're doing is you're trying to acquire scoring cards that have different scoring conditions on them and line them up on the edges of your grain, such that the cards you're putting into your green score as many points as possible. It's an interesting little puzzle game that's made more interesting through the drafting mechanism. I don't even know how you would how it would be fun if it weren't a drafting game, because the whole point is drafting the cards that you want. I don't recall if there's a rule about adjacency placing things in your green, but I don't think there is. There's a little bit of an escape valve, so the game doesn't feel quite so calico terrible in that every card has a picture of the village green on the back. So if you draft a card you can't use, you can play it with the green side up. And generally that's not going to help very many of your formulas. But there are some scoring cards that benefit from how many greens you have, so it's not entirely without benefit.

This is an interesting game. I think it plays up to four. I've usually played it in groups of two. It's

...oh, we got a couple Northern Cardinals here. One of them is trying to hang out this house and the other one's like, no, this is where I live. And he keeps chasing the one away. It's two males sort of fighting for ownership of this house, I guess. Pretty fun.

So this game reminds me a little bit of **Calico** in the idea of your putting scoring conditions into place, and then you're hoping to draw cards that fit the scoring conditions, or perhaps you're putting cards into place and then hoping to draw scoring conditions that fit the cards. Either way. Intensity grows as your space runs out and the game moves toward the end game. It's an interesting design. I certainly would. It's I think it moves into the category of happy to play it. Don't need to own it. I think that this feels a little bit like most J. Alex Kevern games I've played, which is. I like the way the mechanisms work, but there's nothing about the game that thrills me. I don't find myself like, really aching to get back to it. The thinking experience is amusing, but not driving for me. That said, it is a very well-designed game. And you know Peer Sylvester, it's always worth taking a look at his designs. He is consistently pretty good. All right.

The last game I'm going to talk about today is mystery rummy. **Mystery Rummy: Jack the Ripper**. This is in the nineteen ninety eight game from Mike Fitzgerald with art from Christine Conrad, Eugenia Nabati and Virginia. Virginia. Virginia. Virginius. Virginius. It's published by U.S. systems, Inc. and I think this is a game that was actually very popular. It is a game I certainly have heard about. And they have made a number of different mystery rummy games. This is a really interesting take on taking a classic game and updating it in some way. We've seen this a lot lately with stuff like the crew taking a classic trick, taking game and making it

cooperative, cooperative, or the gang taking poker and making it cooperative. In mystery rummy, the mechanics are essentially gin rummy or rummy, regular rummy, where you're playing cards onto the table, building sets and runs in mystery rummy.

The game is built around the Jack the Ripper case. This first one, and it is. It uses the historical facts of the case. There are the five canonical. the five canonical victims, and a number of different suspects and locations. So the way the game works is when you're building sets and runs on your side of the table, you do that using locations. Like the first thing that has to happen is there have to be a crime scene, and then you can start laying out suspects of who you think the murderer is, and you had evidence to those spaces. And what you're doing is you're building a case for one of the potential murderers to have been the criminal. Meanwhile, the criminal is also trying to escape. So there's this really interesting dynamic where it's a two player game. Neither player is Jack the Ripper, but either player could get the right combination of cards and win by helping by setting up the situation in which Jack gets away with it. So there's an element of explanation for the game where what you're trying to do is you're trying to either solve the Jack the Ripper murders by accumulating enough evidence against the suspect and then declaring that solution, or you're trying to delay anyone solving it until such time is enough, you get enough in your hand that you can let Jack escape.

So the game kind of encourages you in one way or another, but you're not required to do either of those. You can do whichever fits. I realize it's very hard to explain in the abstract, but it's a really interesting game. You're you're drawing cards and playing cards very much like rummy. You're building sets and runs, but those sets and runs are creating evidence chains for or against certain suspects. And the evidence chain ends up being what you can use to, quote unquote, prove one suspect, catch one suspect as the murderer, or so on.

This is an interesting game. I really enjoyed it. We played it two or three times. I definitely am going to keep it for a while. It's a little bit complicated to explain, and the rules are not great. Like it took me a couple passes through the rules to understand them. I think probably there has been a shift in ideas about how game rules are written. In the nearly thirty years since this game came out, twenty six years, twenty eight years since this game came out that probably make it harder to understand the rules as they're written. That said, I was able to get it. Not it didn't take too long to learn. And once we've played it a little bit and I kind of kind of see how the pieces work together, then the rules made a lot of sense.

I haven't played any of the other mystery rummy games, so I can't speak to whether it's just the same game with different pieces or he adds different mechanisms. I assume there's like one twist in each game, but overall, mystery rummy Jack the Ripper is pretty good. I definitely would recommend trying to play it if you find it, and if you find it at a thrift store, definitely worth picking up. I'm happy to have traded for it in the, uh, in the no ship math trade that I participated in a couple times a year, so that was a fun one.

So what games have you been playing, listener? Have you gotten any games out of the dust? Have you tried any themed games? I just realized two of the games that I played this time were sort of themed around known events, right? Groundhog day and the Jack the Ripper murders. These are known things. So you're sort of playing a game that deals with a story that has a beginning, middle, and end that's already told. And how do you explore that? Do you play any games that already work like that? How do they work like that? What do you think of them? Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild three, two, six nine and share your thinking on that. I would love to know. What do you think of the process of adapting games to fit those mechanisms? Have you played games that are built on classic systems like mystery rummy? Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild 3269 and share your thoughts about those or about any of the games I played here. Have you run a demonic hotel? No. That one's a little different, I guess.

Well, if you'd like to reach out to me. As I said, posting on the guild is my favorite way, but you're also welcome to send me a direct message. Wombat929 on board Game geek. You can email me brendan@rattleboxgames.com, or you can send me a message on board game arena or yukata dot de. We're in both places. My name is wombat929, and I'd be happy to play games with you.

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

[exit music]

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