

Pick Up & Deliver 852:

GenCon 2026 Games (BG Espresso Flight)

Transcript

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]

Greetings, listener. It's a gloomy day here in suburban Chicago. It's not cold. It's not dark. It's relatively bright, but it is overcast and it looks like it could rain at some point today. I'm hoping that it won't rain on me. I didn't bring anything to protect myself like an umbrella, which was kind of dumb, but hopefully we'll be okay. Well, last episode I talked a little bit about the experience of Gen Con. What I did not talk with you about were the games I played at Gen Con.

So today I'm going to do a special board game espresso game flight. The board game espresso is usually an episode where I will talk about a couple games that I played recently and give you a first impression of them. I'm doing that today, except I'm going to do that with seven games. These are seven games I tried out at GenCon. I'm going to tell you about them. I tell you what I think. As always in this kind of episode, these are first impressions. So I haven't played these games extensively and I can't really comment on them in depth. But I can give you a little bit of a feeling of them. In fact, one of them, I have played extensively. Now I've played it five times already. If that gives you a preview of what I think of it, perhaps it's right. All right. So let's just jump right in. Once again, these are all games that I tried out at GenCon in various forms.

[Transcription note – the first mention of each game is spell-checked and **boldfaced**.]

So the first one is **Trickarus**. This is a 2024 game designed by Bashir Cannon with art from Dandi, Tomoaki Mizuno and Wakana Mizuno from Learn Bridge Online Bucaneros distributed in the US by Smirk and Dagger games. So this is a trick taking game with an interesting premise. It's called Trickarus because you are playing as Icarus and Icarus is friends. Having built yourself some magical wings, you are trying to fly. And of course, you don't want to fly too close to the sun. Or as you might expect with that idea, you are.

The way it works is when you take a trick, your character moves up on this little track, and if you get too close to the sun, then you fall all the way back down and the game. When the game ends, the player who is currently highest on the track wins. If you fall down though, you aren't out. You get to start climbing up again. So there is an element of pushing your luck, winning a bunch of tricks. If you do it early, you could fall back down and then climb up again and maybe end up highest because other people will fall down. That that wasn't really explained to us at the beginning, but it was a demo. So what do you know?

The other thing that's interesting about this game as a trick taker is it uses a mechanism that we see. I think Scout is the place where I'm most familiar with it, but there have been other games where the cards have two different numbers on them. The cards are they have a daytime half on the top half. It's sort of light blue and it has a number, and then there's a nighttime half on the bottom half that is a different number, and everybody's hands are pointing in one direction. And the the suit of that day, the suit of that time of day is, is Trump. So during the day, the sun suit is Trump. And at night the moon suit is Trump. Uh, and there I don't remember exactly what you do, but there is some kind of thing where if you play a card, a specific card, it rotates. Everybody flips their hand over and they. You go from daytime to nighttime.

That part in itself is actually really interesting and might be an interesting trick taking game, just that without the Icarus part, the two together was pretty interesting. I had a good time. I didn't like it enough to buy it, but I certainly would play it if someone else got it out. And I think it's probably one of those trick taking games where if everybody's learning it together, you find some nuance and depth that maybe wasn't obvious from the first play. So worth checking out if you if you like trick takers, that is Trickarus.

Next up we have **Hey Hey Relay**. This is a game I demoed just for a couple minutes because the person who I was walking around checking out games kind of in the mood to check out whatever, and the person who was

demoing it was just standing there waiting for people. So I thought I would try it out. This is designed by Kim Vandenbroeck and published by Ultra Pro Pro, which is a company that makes card sleeves.

I looked up Kim Kim Vandenbroucke. She has designed a whole bunch of games, mass market games, mostly for kids, but she has a lot of designs under her belt, aiming at being very accessible, simple games and this heihei relay is one of those. This is a race game where you are trying to move your piece down and back a track faster than anyone else. And each round you roll a die, and the die has one of six faces on it, and the faces are the images on the track. So you roll and you move forward to the next one that matches. So you could move as few as one or as many as six spaces. And that depends on on what you roll.

Once you've done that, each player draws a card and there's a silly action on on the card. These are kind of like, I don't know, they're not difficult. It really just is. Are you willing to pantomime something? And then if you do it, you get to stay where you get to go again, or you get to roll in the next round if you refuse. I think you either move back on the track or on the next round. When everyone rolls, you don't get to roll. And so I don't know why you would refuse. I guess if it's too silly for you, these are clearly meant for children. Uh, and it was sort of weird that the way the game worked, you're doing them at the same time. That part didn't feel very coherent.

This clearly is a game for children. So it didn't really hit my realm. It's not going to be in my top fifty. But, uh, if you have very little kids, this might be a good game to practice with reading and getting to do silly things. I don't know if there's more in the rules that would make it more of a game as it is, as really an activity, but amusing nonetheless. That was hey hey relay.

Next up we have **In A Nutshell**, this is from 2025, designed by Natalie Pod and Sari Price with art from Oksana Micic and published by Confident Games. This is a trivia game, again, sort of in the mass market region, but it has a little bit of edge to it, which I really liked. The cards are these long, tall cards that are probably two inches wide by maybe six or seven inches tall, and they're in a deck, of course. And the game's main mechanism is a box that the cards sit in. And on the front of the box are maybe ten sliders, these sort of plastic doors that slide there, maybe half inch taller, a quarter inch tall, spread out over the card.

And the way that it works is the card is a sentence, which then leads to a question. You open a door and it reveals one part of this sentence. If you open a door and there's nothing there, then you get to open another door. And the sentence is a trivia question that's probably not too difficult to to answer. I think the idea would be if you could read the whole question. Most people would probably get it right.

So the gimmick of the game is you're just revealing part of the question at a time, and you have to try to figure out what is the question that's being asked and what is the answer to it. And if you can figure that out before your opponent, you win. I think there was one question we had, for example, where the lines that got revealed, said adventure actor Harrison. And so I said, Indiana Jones or maybe adventurer actor Harrison. So I said Indiana Jones, and that was the right answer. But. Right. So like, I didn't even read what the whole sentence was, but it was probably something like which, which actor is known for playing the adventurous? You know which character is played by which character? Who takes adventures in the across the world looking for artifacts as played by Harrison Ford or something, I don't know. Like I said, we didn't read it, but the idea is you get a little taste of it and you have to try to guess. And I think if you if I recall, if you guess and you're wrong, you're out for the round.

And other people can compete to finish the question, having heard what you guessed, it was a cute little trivia game. I definitely would pick it up if I found it cheap somewhere. I didn't want to pay full retail. I was trying to be pretty circumspect in my purchases, as I already mentioned that, uh, Gen Con I still spent. I don't, I don't think I broke two hundred dollars, but I got close just buying the stuff that I said I was going to buy in that one extra game. Yeah, I did break two hundred dollars. Now that I think about it, because I did get the advent calendar to, oh, well, it was fun and I definitely would play it if I had the chance. So that is in a nutshell.

Next up we have trial. **The Trial of the Forest**. This is a 2026 game from Giancarlo's Spinelli with art from Anna Mikado. From Rebel Studio. The trial of the forest is clearly a game made in the post Everdell landscape, where the idea of of anthropomorphic animals is seen as an exciting option. This is a efficiency puzzle, a little bit of pick up and deliver a little bit of contract fulfillment with a dash of cute animals in the forest. Premise. The idea is you are one of several adventurers, and you're going around the forest gathering

objects that will help you with your adventures, gathering resources, and then going and completing, uh, events that allow you to score points.

This is a game that's really about Efficiency because on your turn, you can move a certain distance, and then you take actions at these locations so that the game is presented on a large board with a whole bunch of sort of woodland anthropomorphized places like little libraries and ruins and so on, all connected by these trails. So on your turn, you're going to move along a trail. And then when you get to a location, you get to interact with that location. And then there are some, you get like one location action and one regular action, and there's a bunch of different things you can do. And like I said, the idea is to try to be as efficient as you can while you're moving through those spaces and accomplishing those goals.

The game is over a series of rounds. We played one round, and then I had to go to an event that I had tickets to, so I only played one round of this. So this is a very light observation of the game. But I'll say from what I played, I mean, if somebody brought this and set it out and said, hey, I'd like to play this. I'd happily try it again. But ultimately it felt like a bunch of mechanisms bolted together. It didn't have the kind of coherency that I would hope for from a game like that.

It really looked like it wanted to be everdell, but couldn't figure out how to do it, or lost ruins of Karnak, or think of any of these games that have a kind of melange of different ideas cobbled together. This one didn't quite accomplish that for me.

I also, I will say the demo was a little bit spoiled by the person doing the demo. So one, one of the three, there were four of us playing at the table. One of the people about two turns in to the five turns that we had got something in her eye and she had to go wash out her contacts and rather than skip her, which would throw off the rhythm of the game or remove her stuff entirely, presuming she was going to come back, the demo person hopped into her seat to take her turns. I'm fine with that. But here's the problem. The demo person put a ton of thought into trying to get her the best move he could based on the cards and stuff she had, and it did turn out he correctly anticipated what she was trying to do, but it took him like.

And I am not. I don't think I'm exaggerating here more than five minutes. So he moved over to her seat and sat down in a demo. With a limited time of about forty five minutes, I sat down at ten. After eleven, I said, how long is this demo? He said, about forty five minutes. I said, great, because I had somewhere to be at noon. And in that limited time, he sat down and took five minutes to take a turn. He's the demo. He should have glanced at her. Stuff made a move. It's not optimal. Well, too bad it's a demo.

So that was frustrating because I didn't get to see. I thought I was going to get to play a whole round of maybe part of a second round before I had to go. Instead, I. I didn't even get to see the end of the round stuff. I had to leave right at the end of my fourth turn, which once everyone was done with their fourth turn, we would have done a sort of end of the round cycle. I didn't get to see that. So. So I have a very narrow view of what could be happening in the trial of the forest. But given what I did see, I'm not that inclined to play it. I'm certainly not going to pick it up. If someone set it in front of me, I would happily play it again.

I'm reminded a little bit of the demo of Oltree that I had a couple years ago at Gen Con. Same sort of situation. Maybe what I need to do is not sit down for demos for longer games. I really need either play the longer game or just listen to like a pitch explanation thing. So anyway, that is the trial of the forest.

Oh, I'm about to. I'm about to make some enemies here on, uh, pick up and deliver. So I got to play **Magical Athlete**. Um. This is stupid. I'm sorry. I did not enjoy this at all. I, I understand the concept of what's fun about it. The interplay of the characters, the sort of zany randomness as you're moving. But boy, it just felt like a waste of time to me. Ooh. I rolled, I rolled the dice, and my character moved a certain distance. And then a thing happened. Repeat, I, I don't understand why people think this game is so fun. It just is.

I couldn't have bounced off harder of the game, except if. Maybe if the characters had, like, racist caricatures on them, like I just. I did not enjoy it. Like three turns in, I was like, this is the whole game. And I get it's a simple game. I can enjoy a simple game and maybe in a different time I would enjoy magical athlete. I don't think I'm going to put it on my not I'm good list yet. I'll probably give it one more play if it ever pops into my path.

But mostly I just. I don't understand why it's so popular and I'm sorry. It's rated number three hundred and fifty on board Game Geek. It's the three hundred and fiftieth best game of all time. A game where you roll a die and move your figure and then something happens. That ridiculous, ridiculous, I guess I could I could respect if it's in the top three thousand, but I awful. I did not enjoy it at all.

Magical athlete apparently Richard Garfield worked on the new version. Okay, whatever. Nice graphic design, lovely pieces. A lovely looking board. Terrible game.

Okay. Next up, on the other hand, we got **Got Five!** And interestingly, I have now played this five times. We played it three times at the con. We got a copy. I played it twice more last night at toggle. Got five is a uh, it is from Johan Levitt with art from Mateo, Klaus Simon Dutch and published by Blue Orange Games. Got five is a pure deduction game with a little bit of luck and the more I play, the more I think. You can't play this as a super serious deduction game because the shape of the tiles or the the numbers of the tiles you get in front of you make a huge difference. There's a lot of luck.

I mean, but it's a deduction game where there are something like sixty tiles on the board in four to five different colors, and you are going to have five of them in front of you that you can't see. And your goal is to figure out which five you have in front of you. On your turn, you're going to reveal one of the face down tiles in the middle, and then everyone knows that tile is not in anyone's board. Then you're going to ask a question of the group based on one of the six tiles that are currently available to use for questions.

These can be things like, where does this go in between numbers on my lineup? Or all the numbers have these little pips on them. So you can ask like, does this have the same number of pips as my number or different number of pips? Those are kind of the two sets of questions you can ask. And then there is this little chart that you have that you use to keep track of which numbers you've eliminated. And on first play, it was fun. But each play that I've done since then, I see additional layers of thinking that can go into deciding which pieces are still available and which pieces are not. I think this is an excellent game. Really fun.

Gives you something to do. You're not just rolling a die and moving your piece. Sorry, uh, a little blow over from the previous magical athlete complaint. My biggest complaint would be having played five games now, I've seen a couple games where, including one where I won, where just the random mix of tiles that you get and the random luck of asking a question could give you a huge leg up.

Like, for example, in the two games that we played last night, one of the games which I won, I got really lucky. I asked a question. Basically, I asked, where does tile eighteen or seventeen go into my tray? And the person who put it in put it at the very bottom, at the lowest end, meaning that every number below eighteen was not in my tray or not in my display. That gave me a huge advantage and I capitalized on it.

The other thing I like about it is at any time you can shout got five and then say so. Even if someone else reveals a thing that gives you information, you don't have to wait for your turn. You can. You can just interrupt them and say, got five. So I like this game a lot. I think it's gonna see a lot of play as a kind of end of the night filler. It's nice and crunchy, which I like, but not so outrageously crunchy that people don't enjoy giving it a go. So that is got five from Johan Levitt and Blue Orange games. Check it out if you can. Excellent game.

Uh. Finally, I got a chance to play **Cyberpunk Legends** 2026 Card Game from Night Crew. Night night crew games and hit games designed by James Portnow with art from a bunch of different people. This was a. We played a full game of cyberpunk legends, but it is a scenario based game and we had the demo scenario, so I don't know how it compares in difficulty or complexity in the game. So this is a game based on the cyberpunk video game and cyberpunk role playing game series. In this game, you play one of four different. Ne'er do wells in the cyberpunk universe, you can be a solo, which is kind of. Some sort of fighter. I don't play cyberpunk, so I don't know the terms. You can be a hacker. You can be a wasteland, a person from the wasteland, a nomad. That's what it's called. And then I can't remember what the fourth one is sort of a bard type a rocker.

Uh, in each of these, you get your own deck that's pre-built for you. So there's no, you don't have to build a deck or anything. On the other hand, you can't build a deck or anything. Uh, and then this is a campaign game with a series of scenarios. We played the introductory scenario, which involved running through a story. I don't want to share it. It was relatively simple. It teaches you the mechanisms of the game like a demo level, a tutorial level in a video game. The broad remit of the thing is that each round there are some story cards that

you reveal that will have different things happen, and then some sort of conflict emerges, and you have to tackle the conflict by playing cards as a group. It's a cooperative game.

You're playing cards and you're trying to assemble as a group a array of cards that meet rummy or poker conditions. You're not limited to five cards. You can add more cards. In fact, sometimes you have to, and you're trying to get cards that make like three of a pair or a straight or whatever. And sometimes some of those cards also have to have one of several symbols in them and for them to count. And then when they count, that triggers an effect of some sort that usually affects the enemy in some way.

There's a lot of room for interesting design in cyberpunk legends. The demo only gives you a small taste of that, and it was fun, but not amazing. I think this firmly falls into the category of would happily play it if someone else got it out. I'm not going to buy it myself. I also really don't have any emotional attachment to the theme. Maybe if I did, I would be more inclined to pick up a copy. The other concern was I didn't see how much the game was because I wasn't even interested enough to ask or look. But it comes with five scenarios, apparently. These are apparently replayable, although the choices you make in them don't change.

So if you were to play it a second time, you either know what to do exactly, or you're exploring another storyline, or you're having one of the other people playing with you who hasn't played yet made make all the decisions. It's not super replayable. There is apparently a roguelike eternal version where you play and you just go through as many conflicts as you can, trying to get to the end. The big boss. So that is cyberpunk legends a fine game. Probably not one I'll seek out.

Well, that brings me to the end of my board game espresso flight of games I tried at GenCon. What about you, dear listener? Did you go to GenCon? If so, head over to Board Game Geek Guild three two six nine and share what you experienced there. If you did not go to GenCon, also head over to BoardGameGeek Guild three, two, six nine and say what things you would have checked out had you been there. Either one of those or let me know what you think of these games. AM I wrong? I think I am right about everything I said today, and no one will have any pushback at all. Uh. All right, so that brings me to the end of my walk. I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk today. And I hope your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye.

[Exit music]

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