

Pick Up & Deliver 858: Top of the Stack, Sept '26

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, listeners. It's a blisteringly hot day here in suburban Chicago. It's September first. I'm on a break from course planning and administrative work to take a walk in a day that that's going to prove to be much hotter than it is right now. Uh, according to my home device that said eighty four degrees when I left. I bet it'll be ninety when I get back. I brought some water with me, though, so don't worry about my health. I'm going to be fine, but it is really warm today.

This reminds me of when I was a kid. I used to go play tennis with my friend Nate. Hey Nate, I don't think he listens, but just in case. And it would often be just crushingly hot out. But we would go play tennis anyway because we were children. No tennis for me today, but I do have an opportunity to talk to you about board games, so that's what I'm doing. Let's jump into it.

We're talking about August 2026 Top of the Stack. That's right. It's the beginning of the month. So it's time to talk about what games I played in the last month and what games I'm going to play in the next month.

For those of you new to the podcast, Top of the Stack is a monthly segment I do in which I talk about the games I played in the last month. There's a lot of statistics, some general impressions, and yeah, it's a nice chance to catch up. Often the members of the Pickup and Deliver community will participate by posting in our guild over on BoardGameGeek Guild number 3269 and they will share what they've been playing this month.

We have a lot... we have several listeners who are very good at getting their games played. John is blistering through his top fifty. He's trying to get all top fifty played this year. Really impressive. He's doing a great job. I was trying to get my top fifty played in two years, and I'm looking at how many I have left and how many months I have left before that two years is up and it's going to be tough, folks. It's going to be tough, but let's jump into it.

So to start with, oh, and as always, I like to acknowledge I swiped the phrase Top of the Stack from the Podcast of Nonsensical Gamers. So thanks to them for that. So let's start with some stats.

My monthly stats for August. I had fifty two plays of forty different games. That includes asynchronous plays. I had about thirty plays. Non asynchronous. I'm at a year total of five hundred and sixty seven plays of two hundred and twenty six different games. My shelf of opportunity that is the games I own but haven't played yet, went from one hundred and two to one hundred and three games. This is excessive and outrageous. At the beginning of the year it was eighty six. My goal was to get it to below fifty. Seems unlikely that I'm going to play twenty five brand new games in the next four months, but you never know. Actually, I will be playing twenty five brand new games in the next four months. Whether they all come from my shelf of opportunity, that's unlikely, but we'll see.

My collection size. I am trying to reduce it as well. I started the year with six hundred and fourteen games. We're up to six hundred fifty one so not reducing. Actually went up five games last month through a combination of the end of the gen Con haul and the trip in which I bought myself a souvenir game. It's, uh. It's creeping up, but I have there's a couple there's a game sale coming up, uh, at the end of September, and I'm gonna unload a bunch of games. I'm gonna try to resist buying very many, so hopefully I can get rid of twenty or thirty games that way. We'll see. Then maybe I need to go on the Chicago virtual flea market and just sell off some games. We'll see.

The namesake. The idea behind the podcast name, the segment Top of the Stack is the idea that you have a sort of virtual stack of games that you're waiting to play, and you move some games to the top of that stack so that when you go to play, they are there. They are right there. The way that I enact that is each month I pick four games that I want to try to play. If I get three of them played, I consider that a successful month. My four games last month were night at the zoo, Messina 1347. Wandering Towers and Tekenhu obelisk of the sun.

I'm pleased to say I got two of the three played, which does not count as a successful month, but is also not a total failure. I've had months where I only get one or sometimes zero played. So getting two played isn't terrible. The two that I got played this month were night at the Zoo and Wandering Towers. I was not able to get Messina 1347 or obelisk of the sun.

I did have a lot of success in trying out some new games this month. I tried ten new games, starting with Cyberpunk Legends, which I played at GenCon. I played the game makers on board game arena with Alan. Hey, Alan. I also played Wanted wombats, Aw ducks, night at the zoo, wandering towers, Limit, the Emerald Flame and dnu. I just realized I counted the game makers twice, so it looks like I played nine new games, not ten. These were delightful and I'm going to be talking about them in the future. There's only one that was I really disliked, two that I thought were fine, and then the rest I thought were pretty good.

I also track the first expansion plays each month, and my expansion plays this month were zero. No new expansion plays. I've only tried six this year. This seems like a thing I could do better at, but I haven't. Out of the dust plays this month, you'll remember a game is dusty if I haven't played it for a year or more. My out of the dust plays I played for games that I hadn't played in a year or more. These were

- Root: two years, one month and twenty eight days dusty
- Splendor: three years, seven months and twenty days dusty.
- The downfall of Pompeii. Four years, three months, twenty six days dusty and
- high society. One year. Six months. Twenty nine days dusty.

Overall, a really productive and productive month in terms of dusting off games, I'd love it to be a couple more than that, but you can only play so many games in a month.

My top fifty games on the table. I did not succeed in playing any more of those, so if I sounded like I was like, oh no, I got to get get on that last month. It's even worse now. My ten for ten progress. You'll remember my ten for ten is a sort of wacky accumulation of different categories of gameplay that I've set up. The progress that I made this month, I made progress on one category and this was alphabet K through T, I played a game that started with N. That was night at the zoo. So making progress. I'm not there yet. It looks like it's going to be very difficult unless I really amp it up on the Vladimir Suchy and what Martin Wallace games. These are the ones that have proven the most tricky to get played, which is weird because I enjoy them a lot, but just getting them to the table is tricky.

Um, what did I acquire this month? My collection size change. My collection changed. I acquired the Exit advent calendar. The missing Hollywood star. I originally bought the exact advent calendars, about three of them in one go, because they were very hard to find when they first came out. Ravensburger was not doing a good job of getting them distributed in the US, and so you could only find them if you were very quick. And I never was. So one year at GenCon they had all three that had been published thus far, so I bought all three. And then for the next three years we've had advent calendars to play. And I've noticed that some of those early ones I bought are no longer in print. So the clever move that I'm trying to do now is I buy the oldest one that's still available, and we play that, and then hopefully the next oldest one will be available next year. I'm trying not to buy. I'm not going to buy three more again in one go. That seems silly.

My collection size has gone up five games. They are Aldebaran dual. The exit, exit, advent calendar. Now, some of you may have just said, wait a minute, Brendan. You said that was an expansion. I count all the exit games as an expansion on the exit category the same way I do unlock. There's a variety of other games that I think of that way, the Arkham horror expansions, which those are actually expansions as far as Board Game Geek is concerned, but I logged them that way for my own edification. But the Board Game Geek collection system marks them as separate games. So if I own one, it's counted as another game. And rather than try to keep track of some sort of shadow ledger of games that are in my collection but don't count and have to do extra math, I just say if it's a game in board game geek, it's a game as far as my collection size register goes. So that's kind of it's kind of where I put that. So Aldebaran dual exit. The advent exit, advent calendar, missing Hollywood star, Apothebakery, which is a souvenir my wife and I picked out while we were on our trip to Glacier National Park and the Emerald Flame, which is a game I gave my daughter for Christmas last year, and she finished it and handed it back because it's really cool. So I'm going to finish it and hand it off to another friend. So it'll be in my collection for a little while. We've played two of the three chapters already, so I don't imagine that it will go. I think it'll be gone at the end of by the end of September is my guess.

And finally, rajas of the Ganges, the dice charmers. This is a game I've played many times on yukata dot de thanks to regular listener Gabriel Edge. Hey, Gabriel. Uh, I really like this game. It's an excellent little role and write, uh, combo builder combo tastic game where you do a thing and that lets you have another thing and you get to do another thing. It's really fun on yukata. And so I think it'll be really fun on paper. So and there was, it was on a good price on an online website. So I picked it up. Rajas of the Ganges, the dice charmers.

Well, that covers most of the stats. I am interested in talking about the experience of playing games. There were a lot of different game venues here in August, so there are a variety of different ways and places that I got to play games in August. It was quite a varied month. The first one, of course, was GenCon. I did have Saturday, Saturday and Sunday of GenCon is in August, so I had a number of game plays that I got to do there in particular. It was really fun. I got to play the Call of Cthulhu role playing game, and I got to try a number of different games through demos and through sitting down with folks. So that was really fun. It was nice to get to play some games. I really like the way we've been doing our schedule at GenCon these last few, these last two years.

Then, like I said, I went on a trip with my wife and daughter and her boyfriend. We went to Glacier National Park actually. We drove out and we met them there. That was really fun. Saw lots of cool sites, did some great hiking, saw some cool animals. Got to spend time with my daughter and her boyfriend, which was the best part. Obviously we don't get to see her a ton because she lives in Seattle. It's really nice with FaceTime that we get to talk to her as much as we do, but that part's tricky. Uh, and then she was getting ready to go study abroad right now, so we were especially keen to see her before she went.

I did bring along some games because everybody involved liked playing games. We played sanctuary. We tried out night at the zoo and we tried out wandering towers. We played a couple other small games as well. We didn't have a ton of time for gaming, but it was nice to get an opportunity to play a game here or there, and a good time was had by all.

And then I've had some really good game nights at toggle lately, just letting people just sort of letting myself play whatever's available, not really driving the playing. It's been a lot of play. Played a lot of shorter games or smaller games rather than sort of bigger things that I hope to get happen. I'm really keen to use September, October and November and December to do some scheduled games. Get back to my thing of like every other week, scheduling a bigger game. Hopefully I'll get a chance to play something slightly bigger at the Toggle Top game day toward the end of September. If you're in the Chicago area, be sure to come to that.

There's also one of my friends has a home game event in October that I'm looking forward to going to. So if I can go to that, I will. And there may be some other game opportunities coming up toward the end of the year as well. So I'm really hoping to put some effort into getting some of those games that are less often played onto the table. Well, that brings me to the final thing, which is to talk about what games I'm playing in September.

Just like at the beginning of August, I set up four games I want to play here in September. The games on the top of my stack are the following. Recall. Messina 1347. Outdoor Survival and Tekenhu obelisk of the sun.

Recall is a big table hog of a game. It is sort of the spiritual successor to the game revive, which I really enjoy and haven't got given enough energy to playing more. The recall is made by three of the same four designers, with another person stepping in in the place of that fourth designer. But everything I've read suggests that it's very similar in play, feel and style. And it is just as good, if not better. The podcast Blue Pig. Pink Pig did a pretty in-depth review and they, like most of them, liked recall better than revive. One person liked Revive better, but generally it was very well received and people point to it as excellent. There were also some ideas that you might be able to have both in your collection. I hope that's true because I do own both, although if it turns out I don't need both, then I could always sell one. Of course, you don't need any games, but if they're too similar, it would be an opportunity to find, you know, do an either or thing. But I'm really excited to try it. I really like the design team. The only person missing from the recall or the revive design team is Elif Svensson. It is a Christian Amundson Ostby game along with the other two designers, I believe. But since Elif Svensson is the person behind Aporta games, that's why recall is from a different company than Messina.

The other new game on the list is Outdoor Survival. This is a, I think, a solo game from the nineteen seventies. It's like maps and chits. It looks really weird. I picked it up when we were cleaning some things. I

found it and it was going to go in the trash and I'm like, oh, I'll give it a try first. So it's been sitting around right now. It is definitely in the category of a game I own because it's an interesting artifact more than a game I own because I, you know, I'm excited to buy it, but I'm interested in trying it once and then I'll decide if I'm going to sell it or donate it or throw it away and, you know, see what it's all about. It also will fulfill the ten by ten requirement of or goal of getting a game that starts with an oh, so that's outdoor survival.

And finally, the other game I want to play is Tekenhu Obelisk of the sun. This game will fulfill two different things in my goals. It's one of my, uh. It would be a new game from the top two hundred and fifty or the top five hundred games on board Game Geek, which is one of the categories in my ten for ten list. And it's also a game that was on my shelf of opportunity before 2025.

So although dang, I generally try not to let games fulfill multiple requirements like that. Shoot. Well we'll see. It'll be one or the other, but I'm interested in trying it. It's a David Terzi design. It's very well regarded, sort of in the same boat as something like, uh, Teotihuacan, but uh, has a cool obelisk in the middle. So that is my fourth goal. And finally, well, that's my third goal. My fourth goal is Messina 1347. This is a game I've played many times digitally, only once on the table. This is a Vladimir Suchy joint About fighting the plague. I think it's really good, really combo tastic. Very interesting. I'm going to get that out to the table and give it a go.

That's about it for me today. I would love to hear what you did with your August as a game player. Head on over to BoardGameGeek Guild three, two, six, nine and post your gameplays there. Let us know what you've been playing, what you're planning on playing next month, and let us enjoy the hobby with you. Well, that's about it for me. Today I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk. I hope your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye.

[Exit music]

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