

Pick Up & Deliver 870: HeroQuest; Apothebakery; Mysterium Park; The Big Book of Madness (revisited)

Transcript

Welcome to Pick Up 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.

[Intro music]

Greetings, listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. I'm getting ready to head home or I'm heading home from the library. Looking forward to talking board games with you. It's been a little while since I talked new board games, so maybe it's time for another Board Game Espresso Triple Shot. You should order up the Board Game Espresso Triple Shot is an episode in which I talk about three games I've tried recently for the first time and one game I revisited or expansion, I tried. As a reminder, these are not reviews. These are first impression plays. I've played it once, maybe twice, and I'm giving you my feedback, my thoughts on it at that point.

So to start with, we have **Heroquest**. Heroquest is a game originally published in 1989. It was republished in like twenty twenty maybe, and it was republished pretty much as it was originally published. I think they maybe they tweaked it a little bit, but it is not refined to reflect thirty or forty years of game design insight. It is meant to be a nostalgia piece, calling back to the older style of game.

So in Heroquest, you play one of, I think there's five or six different heroes that are basically D and D archetypes. You could be a barbarian, you could be a rogue, you could be a dwarf, you could be a halfling, you could be a mage. Right? It's a very simple archetype. Archetypes in the, in the categories of D and D. And what you're doing is exploring a dungeon. And there's a dungeon keeper who is deploying all manner of monsters to try to attack you and stop you from successfully navigating the dungeon and doing whatever the subject says to do.

The design is originally from Stephen Baker with art from Gary Chalk, Nicky Daws, Max Dunbar, and Les Edwards. It was originally published by Games Workshop and Milton Bradley. I'm not sure who the current publishers are. Maybe Renegade Games, I think is the current publisher of the current edition, but I could be wrong about that. Uh, we got a chance to play at Toggle Gaming. We played at a full player count of four heroes and The Dungeon Keeper, and we had a good time in this game.

Like I said, it is a classic dungeon crawl, so you're running around, you're rolling dice trying to do stuff. You have very limited things you can do. So ostensibly it should play quickly, but it ended up actually playing kind of slow anyway just because Lots of different moving pieces to keep track of. But nonetheless, it was a fun time in your classic nostalgic old school way. So you have a character you're running through, basically, you fight stuff or search for stuff.

The game makes difficult choices for you by limiting very strongly how much you can do, so you can't search and fight. For example, you have to search or fight, which sometimes feels maddening because you have a guy there, so you want to fight them. But searching is how you find what you need and the items and other things that make it so you can survive the fights you need to search. And that way, it reminds me a lot of last night on earth or **A Touch of Evil** or **last night on earth**, where you are wrestling with how the game lets you tackle these different elements. Uh, we lost dramatically. We had one hero after another fall. And when the last hero fell, the dungeon keeper and its minions won. So that was that.

It was fun. I would certainly play again if other people were setting up. I don't know if I would ask for it. Like, if I'm in the mood for this kind of game, I might suggest a touch of evil or Last Night on Earth as a game that scratches a similar itch. But I have slightly more fun with the theme. But it's a good time. And if people were sitting down to play it, I certainly would give it a try again. I had a nice time with it and I thought it was amusing. So that was Heroquest.

Next up, we've got **Apothebakery: The Culinary Alchemists**. Apothebakery is a game I bought on vacation. Actually, my wife bought it. It was her souvenir on our vacation out on the West Coast when we went to. I mean, it's not her only souvenir, but it's the souvenir of from the game store. I always like to buy one game while I'm on a trip, and that was the one she picked. I think I can't remember if I bought another game also or if I just bought that. I might have just bought a bakery that might have been our souvenir.

This game has the aesthetic of cute white game box. So I think of this as the Frank West aesthetic. Although I haven't played City of Game or City of Kings, I think it's called the Frank West, the first Frank West game. But his second game and very successful one was the Isle of Cats. After that, he did an expansion and then he did the Isle of Cats drawn. Right. And lately he's been he did Isle of Penguins, which I did not pick up, which seems to be a revision of Isle

of Cats. I don't know what he tweaked, but we have Isle of Cats and it's full of goodness. I actually haven't played it in a while. I should bust it out. The design aesthetic there is, the boxes are white and then they have cute art on them and Apothebakery feels like they use that model. The game, um, Ember leaf does this as well. I think I haven't actually seen a copy of Ember Leaf on the shelf, but I've seen this expansion and it has that same vibe. So it's cute.

The art style is sort of in the neighborhood of something like, um, angry unicorns or what's it called, unstable unicorns. It's cutesy thick line art, uh, with solid coloring. Cel shading is what the, what the game designers or video game designers would call this style of art cartoony.

But the premise is that it is you are in a land of anthropomorphized medieval adventurers who run into all kinds of trouble, and they turn up at the doctors with different kinds of sickness. And you are apothecary owners who are trying to help heal those ill adventurers. You do this by baking treats for them to eat and those treats. Then heal them. In order to make the treats, you have to go foraging in the forest to get the right kinds of ingredients, which you can then use to make potions and potions. Then you can cure the people. So there's a bunch of different steps, but ultimately this game is more complicated than deep. There's a lot of different steps going on, but in the end, you are doing contract fulfillment and there's a little bit of luck in terms of what ingredients you get and which cards come out.

On our first play, we thought it was a little bit simplistic. It could be better than it was for the level of complexity it has. In the second play that we did, we included the objective cards. Each player gets a hidden objective that you actually get two hidden objectives that you're trying to achieve, I think, in the game. And those hidden objectives add a significant amount of depth to the kinds of things you're doing outside of successful healing the enemies. Now, I will say there isn't a mechanism or the heroes.

There is a mechanism by which you fail to heal them. You make your potions improperly and that part felt underdeveloped. We played the game a number of times and did not have any problems successfully healing. I think between the two games we only had one person who did not get healed. So that might just be luck of the draw. Might be incredible skill on the on the on the part of our players. Or it just points to the fact that that part of the game is not that robust.

Um, all in all, it was fine. It'll stay in the collection a while. I doubt that it'll stay a really long time. Uh, probably the biggest factor keeping it here is the fact that it is part of a souvenir and it's cute and we can introduce it to other people, but it's pretty light, lighter than I generally like. So what would keep it in the collection is if, like someone else said that I play games with like really liked it, that would probably keep it in the collection. But at this point, I don't think that that is the case. So we might be in a situation where we are going to get rid of apothecary eventually, but we'll keep it around for a while. Uh, that's designed by Paulo Jones with art from Jonas Fisher and Paulo Jones, published by Lux Lupo, which has a cool design, aesthetic, visual design aesthetic. That's Apothebakery.

Next up, we have **the Big Book of Madness**. This is a game I dusted off. It had been a year and three months since last time I played it. Big Book of Madness is one of my favorite co-op games. It's a deck building game where you are working together. It has a very robust, cooperative element that a lot of deck building games don't spend enough time on making sure that you cooperate with the other players, or giving you ways to actually cooperate, rather than just telling them what to do. Big book of madness.

One of the central mechanisms is that you can put your cards into this sort of sharing area on your player board, and then other players can use those cards as though they're in their hand. And since the whole challenge of the game is spending resources to defeat events, and it's a deck builder, so you don't always have access to the resources that you need. The sharing component is a huge piece of doing well in the game. The premise of the game I've talked about before, you are children who have made your way into a magical library at a magical school, like some sort of Hogwarts type situation, and you need to get back out. But you have opened a book that you shouldn't have, and there's all these monsters coming out, so you have to defeat the monsters.

Now, one of our friends at toggle, when we were playing this, he said, "oh, I used to have that game, but I got rid of it because I don't like how it ends." And I think he has a fair point here. At the end of the game, the way it works is you have this book and it's the book is a stack of cards where the front card looks like the cover of the book. And then when you turn that card over into the discard pile. Now it looks like a book that's open and the two, you have two facing pages. And then you do that over and over again until you get to the end. And then you have the last monster. And if you defeat the last monster, you win. If you don't defeat the last monster, you lose. The thing is, all the other monsters. If you defeat them or don't defeat them, then you just take a penalty. But the final monster. You lose the game if you don't defeat it.

So there's. It's an interesting give and take where you could just have bad luck on your draw. When the big. When the final monster shows up because it's a deck builder. So you might have a draw where you draw a bunch of stuff you

don't, you can't use, which is an argument to keeping to managing your deck really well, I guess. But the reality is, it just means you could lose because you had a bad draw. Now, that doesn't happen every time, but it is one of the things that could happen. I think that's kind of inevitable in any co-op game where there's randomness, you could have randomness, get you, you know, **pandemic**, you could be the best pandemic player ever. You could sometimes just lose because the cards were were ruthlessly mean to you. That is a thing that happens in Big Book of Madness.

I really like this game. I'm happy to keep playing it, you know, once a year or something. I don't think I'd want to play it too much more often than that, but if I had a group that was really into it, it'd be fun to play it and try to try to do it on really hard. I do wish there is a there was an expansion released for it, and I did not pick it up at the time. And I think now it's pretty much impossible to get without paying a lot. And I don't like the game enough to pay a lot for it, but I wish I had gotten the expansion when I had the chance. So that's a miss on my part. But otherwise, that's the Big Book of Madness. Published in 2015 from Maxime. Maxime Romberg with art from Xavier. Gunfight Durin. Published by IELLO and dusted off by me.

All right. Our last game of the day is **Mysterium Park**. This is a 2020 release that is a narrowing down of the well-known team deduction game Mysterium. If you haven't played it, Mysterium is an interesting game where you have a ghost and you have a bunch of psychics, and. The ghost's job is to give clues to the psychics about a puzzle. The puzzle is each. So there's a grid of people, places, and weapons, and each person. Each psychic has one person, one place, and one weapon that they are trying to discover. The ghost is trying to give them clues about which person, which place, and which psychic, or which weapon that psychic is looking for. The clues are in the shape of these sort of beautifully drawn art cards, with surreal, complex pictures on them, which results in these difficult to interpret images. And you have to try to figure out what the ghost is trying to tell you and then interpret that. That's how **Mysterium** works.

Mysterium Park is just that, but less in the original Mysterium. Like I said, it's person, place and weapon in Mysterium Park. It's person and place. Weapon is not a thing that you're looking for. In Mysterium Park. So the game is narrower in terms of scope. The result of this is that you just don't have as much. You have to think about the design. Instead of being a creepy old mansion where you have been summoned by a millionaire or whatever, a Scottish lord. In this game, instead of the creepy old mansion, it is a circus. I don't really understand why you're there. I, I will confess I did not read the thematic thing, but you are psychics trying to solve a murder at a circus and it's just person and location within circus, I guess. So it's the same game. It just goes faster because you're only solving three things instead of four or two things instead of three.

All in all, I think it's a really fun game. It is essentially as fun or the same amount of fun as Mysterium, as regular Mysterium. And I think it's, uh. Yeah, worth checking out if you get a chance. That's Mysterium park.

Well, that brings me to the end of this board game. Espresso triple shot. I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk today. I'd love to hear what games you've been playing. Head over to BoardGameGeek guild 3269 and share your gameplays there. Otherwise, drop me a line, Brendan@rattleboxgames.com or send me a message on BoardGameGeek. Wombat939 is my username there. Well, 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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