

Flick-driven Space Freighters



Well, let me refrain from talking about the final frontier. This phrase is out of place anyway since what would be infinity ends at the edge of the table. The table is our space, the playing area; there is no game board. Instead, the box is filled with larger and smaller cardboard pieces: planets and moons, suns, star rubble, and asteroids, plus Saturn. The instructions call all these pieces, blandly, "decorative elements." These elements are placed on the table as you like. And if the table is too big, the box cover and bottom serve as borders – which is recommended because the range of our space ships is limited.

The title of the game leaves no doubt as to what it is all about: we are pirates marauding around the universe. Each of us flies a plastic space ship that glides over the playing area at a height of five centimeters, trying to circumnavigate the decorative elements that are just obstacles.

Everybody starts the hunt for loot at his or her own pirate base, equipped with some money and energy to fuel the space ships. The currency unit is called MK; that stands for "Mega Kredite" ("Mega Credits"). Before we start, however, we need to distribute the loot throughout the universe. It comes in the form of small round

plastic discs, called "Freighters" in the instructions. Before the very first game, you even have to "load" them; labels for this are enclosed. On the front, each freight ship looks the same, but on the back they reveal their different cargo. And only those who bring the freight discs into play are allowed to have a look at them.

I Cruise through the decoration

In turn, we draw a starting contingent of freighters from a black bag, placing them anywhere on the table in between the decorative elements. But the ships don't stay there because the left neighbor

of the player who uses a freighter, flicks it to its final position. You need the right feel for this, since the freighters must not collide with decorative elements or turn over. This would cause damage to the flicker's space ship. Did I mention that a table cloth is a hindrance to the Flick Drive?

After the starting contingent has been distributed, we launch the rockets. Everybody starts with identical energy resources split over five cards. If you play one of them, you'll first have to deal with the two or three "cosmic events" listed on the card. They affect mostly the freighters. Either new ones are placed on the table and put in their final position by the neighboring players in the same way as in the beginning of the game, or we are allowed to flick a freighter ourselves that has already been placed – ideally into the flight path of our space ship so that we can capture the freighter.

The energy on the cards determines the thrust our pirate ship can use to move forward in space. For measurement, there

are movement tiles available that you lay down, one next to another, in front of the ship; thanks to their shape – stretched hexes – they even enable the ship to fly pretty tight curves. If there is a freighter on the ship's route, the pirate captain checks what it's loaded with and takes it on board.

On a pirate base, you can turn the load into money. However, the expected income is incalculable at first because a face-down price table



on each base indicates the price rate of the different kinds of goods. Only after the first purchase has been made are the prices revealed to everyone.

You can also refuel your ship with energy at the base – after having paid for it, of course. The supplies on board are short and nothing is more annoying than running out of energy shortly before a fuel station. In this case, the ship drifts through space without drive and is only able to move in tiny increments.

Now if you think pirate life is completely innocuous and you can loot recklessly, you have never been on a pirate ship. When being revealed, some

tion goes right into our pocket. The second victory condition is to have a certain amount of cash, depending on the number of players.

I Mostly harmless

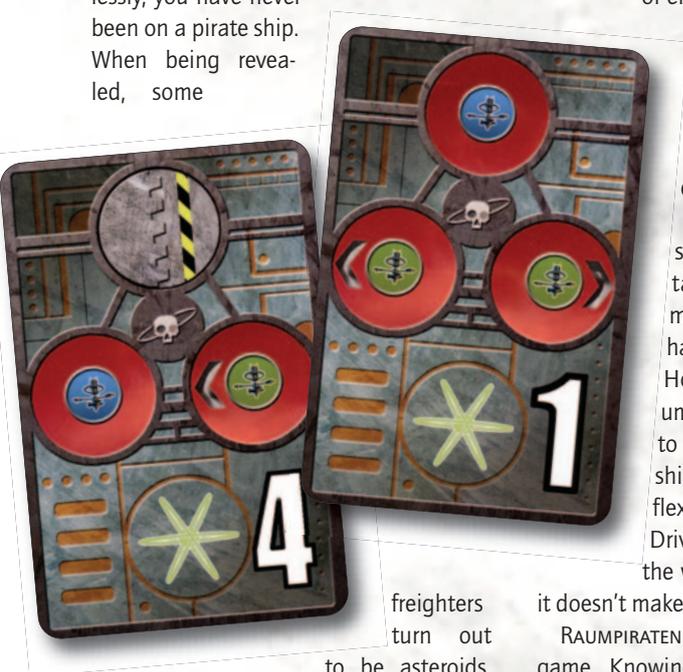
RAUMPIRATEN is a harmless, entertaining fun game. It's up to the players to establish the degree of fun during the setup of the playing area: too spacious an area where the pirates won't get in the way of each other is just as detrimental as too narrow passages between the planets. And if a pirate ship, with its last drop of energy, is heading to a base and you block it with a cosmic storm, you act as a killjoy because afterwards the player will drift through space without energy for many rounds.

The flight of the pirate ships reminds us of the fantastic ZAUBERSTAUBER (Kosmos) which unfortunately had much too short a life. However, the flying vacuums reacted more sensitively to flight control; the pirate ships are significantly more flexible. The flick drive Flick Drive of the freighters gives the whole thing its energy but

it doesn't make it a "CARABANDE in space."

RAUMPIRATEN is a more lightweight game. Knowing that, you will be well entertained for about an hour, no matter if you are two, three or four players.

KMW/sbw



freighters turn out to be asteroids.

Such a mistake may occur if the windshield is dirty. As a penalty, the ship takes damage. This means precisely that it loses an already captured freight or an energy card, which is much worse. Some freighters also have the Galactic Police on board. In this case, capturing is over until you reach the next base to pay some bribe money.

Once in a while, natural phenomena can trouble you, too. A few energy cards show cosmic storms or sun winds. If you play such a card, it is your choice which effect it has. In any case, it also causes damage to the space ships.

Of course, the whole piracy business certainly has only one purpose: to collect as much freight as possible and to turn it into money. We use the money to buy another pirate base, thus fulfilling the first victory condition. Besides this, the income from the base's energy fuel sta-



Title: Raumpiraten
 Publisher: Sirius
 Designer: Christophe Boelinger
 Artist: C. Madura, F. Condette
 Players: 2-4 (for two: →)
 Age: about 8 and up
 Duration: about 45-60 minutes
 Price: about 30 €

Reviewer	Playing appeal
KMW.....	7
L. U. Dikus.....	5