



Boadiceas Backyard

To play WICKED WICKETS the game collector suffering from lack of space will need a separate sitting area. For WICKED WICKETS is a piece of furniture, a coffee table to

play cricket on. That not only takes up space, but also costs money – plenty of money. This select piece can be purchased for the amount of 660 Euro. In exchange, you will get the finest materials: amongst other things 20 individually designed tin figurines, measuring sticks

from Italian walnut and oak wood with brass applications, a custom-made dice set and of course the table made from birch wood. Richard Holgate, the creator of the game, assures us that you do not need to know cricket at all to join in the game. We cannot really judge; we have not dared to ask for a reviewer's copy.



**Coffee table inclusive:
WICKED WICKETS by Richard Holgate**

Fragor Games

To put the board of ANTICS on the table will require quite an effort: It has turned out incredibly unattractive. And it cannot be ruled out that one or the other visitor in Essen passed the game by for this very reason. What a mistake! Each player has his own ant colony and anthill. It consists of hexagonal fields, printed with action symbols. Three pawns mark which of the five possible actions are taken in each turn. How successful an action is depends on the level where the action field is located. At the beginning the anthill is comparatively flat (only one level). The player that, for example, enters new ants



onto the game board, delivers only one ant. Once the hill has grown in height (also following an action), a field on the third level will deliver three ants. After their birth, the ants go to work and form chains on the game board to gather food. It is mean, but there is not enough food for all; late ants will miss out, turning into late ants. And in addition, there are hungry anteaters in the game. ANTICS is remarkable: a fresh topic, no "unlucky at cards motif" (there is no element of luck), and with great attention to detail (food transport by ants).

Prime Games

Owing to a careless baker, London went up in flames in 1666. 13,000 houses burnt down at the time, 120 of those we can now torch ourselves in THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON. To begin with, they are randomly erected across the city space, and a special mechanism ensures that the various colors are almost evenly distributed. Only then do the players find out what

their color is and which houses they own. Before each turn, the fire is first allowed to spread. A played card sets the approximate route; in close-up, there are "fire priorities" to consider: The flames prefer to leap onto to build up areas not guarded by

trained fire fighters. After the fire, the landowner and the fire fighters are activated with action points, to control the flames, put them out or demolish blocks of housing. The firebreaks created in this way prevent the fire from spreading, but



Blame the baker!
THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON 1666 by Richard Denning

that does not help the houses already pulled down. Following the motto "Holy Saint Florian (the patron saint of firemen), save my house, burn another one!" this is all about preserving as many of your own buildings as possible on the board. These saved houses – as well as reaching certain secret goals, drawn from three card stacks before the game starts – will gain you victory points in the end.

After London has burned down, we could actually rebuild it with Martin Wallace's LONDON (see review p. 48), a game that is historically set after the great fire of 1666.

"Mijnlieff" is the surname of people with whom author Andy Hopwood spent Christmas in 2009. The game of the same name was awarded the title "Best Abstract Game" at the UK Games Expo in 2010. Its first edition, just about 25 copies, was immediately sold out; the second, with 100 copies, lasted until the SPIEL '10. The third, now in the program of Prime Games, testifies with 3,000 copies to their optimism.

In a fabric bag, there are 4 bigger and 16 smaller wooden tiles. The big ones are put together to form the board, the small ones are distributed among the two players. In your turn, you play a tile and thus decide where the other player is allowed to place one. The tiles are engraved with symbols that determine if the next tile is to be put in the same row, column, diagonally, adjacent or not adjacent. If a player cannot meet the requirements, he has to skip a turn, and the other one gets free choice of placement. In the end, each row of three scores one point. Tic Tac Toe squared. My colleague L. U. Dikus will like

the game. Unfortunately, the symbols are hard to make out on the dark tiles, which would result in a deduction of points in any review.

R&D Games

KEY MARKET is the first game in the highly regarded Key series where Richard Breese does not function as author, but David Brain. However, the small publishing company has made this game by editorial adaptation an adequate sequel for the series that once more deals with life, trade and the economy in the Middle Ages.

The players act on a narrowly confined rural territory, try to extract the best out of the areas and then sell profitably with perfect timing at the market mentioned in the title. In the town, one can join various guilds, which can partially cancel out certain initial limitations as well as count towards winning the game in the end. The eight rounds of a game match two years with four seasons each, which are also influencing events. As it is known from the start of a year which harvests will do well, planning is feasible and essential.

KEY MARKET is again adorned with the pretty drawings of the publisher's sister Juliet Breese. The kit with aptly formed vegetable and animal pawns also adds to make the game an event, not only where tactical and planning aspects are concerned.

Surprised Stare Games

TOTEMO comes, just like MIJNLIEFF, in a fabric bag, which is however much more voluminous and filled to the rim. We unearth a tablecloth, used for counting

the points and as a base for the wooden platform on which the totem poles are to be built. What will be a pole at one point comes now in individual parts: 49 wooden dices in rainbow colors painted with totem pole-like faces and printed with numbers. To prevent the blocks from collapsing when they are stacked on top of each other, they have a peg on one side, and a matching hole on the other.

The rules are simple. In your turn you have a choice between three dices randomly drawn from the bag, one of which you place onto the platform, either directly on the ground or on top of another dice. If colored surfaces should be allowed to touch, they need to be either identical or neighbors in the color circle. Red also matches red, orange and purple, but not yellow, green or blue. The more matching surfaces are touched by the dice, the higher the score. If the scoring marker on the tablecloth scale reaches a bonus field – these are established in each session after an elaborate system – you will get another turn. A nice abstract brainteaser, which unfolds with special charm through its topical guise.

KMW/cs

**Optimistically dimensioned 3rd edition:
MIJNLIEFF by Andy Hopwood**



**With peg and hole:
TOTEMO by Tony Boydell**



Japon Brand

Under this name, every year at the SPIEL, a handful of Japanese designers and publishers have presented their creations in a confined space. The often fresh ideas are really invigorating. If only communication weren't so difficult. If there is no interpreter present, only sign language and the help of a friendly nod prevail. Nobody expects to converse here in German, but even with English, you don't get very far. The games are available only at the booth, but just in small numbers, because the Japanese focus not only on direct sales to end consumers in Essen, but also on contacts to western publishers. With success, as shown by the examples R-EKO, FAIRY TALE, TRADERS OF CARTHAGE and PARADE.

Most of the games have been designed and packaged in a very space-saving way. The title gives away what GRIMOIRE (One Draw) is about: an old spell book. Each player has one of these books, identical in terms of content. Initially, you can choose only one of the six spells. With each round, your skills improve and you can add another spell. Each player secretly selects a spell for the next round (indicating it by putting a bookmarker at the relevant point in the book). The spells determine the order of play. After the spell has taken effect, each player takes a quest card from the display. You score victory points for treasures as well as for companions, but also for special skills that, like

the spells, change the rules of the game.

MAI-STAR (Kanai Factory) – in English, "Dancing Star" – was the name of a legendary geisha. When she was dancing, the stars came down from the sky to watch her. But even this superb geisha grew old and faded, so several candidates tried to become her successor: Japan in search of the super-geisha.

Each geisha has special skills in three areas. She can serve a guest, played through a character card, only if she meets his requirements – in this case, he pays for her services. The card can also be played as a mentor, helping the geisha get better values and more solvent guests.

HAU LA (Saien) is a building game with unusual materials. You put connecting strips in a round punched board. The material is foam-like and flexible; the strips are of different lengths and have holes, too. Both ends of the first strip stick in the base plate; from that position, the sculpture grows in height. Each player has to build in the tag of his own color; it determines from where to continue on his next turn, and at the end of a game establishes who will be the new starting player. Eventually, the player whose tag has reached the highest position wins. A game for the eye and for the brain.

THE TRUCKERS (Artra Design) is the Japanese interpretation of AUF ACHSE; except for the theme, however, it has nothing in common with Wolfgang Kramer's game. You drive in a circuit on an abstract board and load goods or steal them from another player. All players secretly and simultaneously determine the action of each round, trying to guess

what their competitors are planning. This is a game that appears typically Japanese only because of its illustrations; in other aspects, it could just as well have originated in Europe.

TANTO CUORE (Arclight) has to be mentioned for the sake of completeness – a DOMINION clone with an unusual theme. Each player is the owner of a house and hires maids to assist him. Besides a cleaning woman, laundress and cook, there is also a "scrap-user", a "teaser" and other illustrious characters in Manga style. The girls can get sick or pick up bad habits, but they also show much affection, represented by pink love cards. So far, the cards exist only in Japanese, but you can download an English translation. -kmw/sbw

Miro would have liked it:
HAU LA by team Saien



Don't get distracted:
SHOWBOAT by Noah Levin, Mark Nowacki and Abhishek Radhakrishnan

