

Introduction

In 2008, game publisher Hans im Glück celebrates its 25th anniversary. During this time, Bernd Brunnhofer and his staff have proven that economic success and top-notch games can accompany each other. We have taken this opportunity to devote the fourth *Spielbox Almanac* to the publisher Hans im Glück, joining author Reiner Knizia and the games *Carcassonne* and *Die Siedler von Catan*.

Including the new releases for the autumn, this game forge in Munich lists 92 published titles, of which 22 are add-ons. Not overwhelming for 25 years, but too many to talk about all of them here. Everyone who wants to know more can find hints in the *ludography*, along with the issues of *Spielbox* which contain reviews of the respective games.

In this almanac, we will present six of the key games from those 25 years once again, in the form of revised *Spielbox* reviews. With portraits of the designers and background info on the graphics and the editorial process involved with Hans im Glück games, we try to shed some light upon the secret of the publisher's success. It may be the way the CEO and his team test the ideas offered, refine them, and bring them to realization. Hardly any other editorial department is better at recognizing raw diamonds and cutting them to their full beauty than Hans im Glück.

But read for yourself. Have fun with the *Hans im Glück Almanac*!
Matthias Harde!

Contents

From Pensionopolis to the Publishers' Mount Olympus

What do Arnold Schwarzenegger, Manfred Deix, and Bernd Brunnhofer have in common? Right! All three grew up at about the same time in the Austrian city of Graz, and are now probably its three best known sons. It's remarkable what diverse characters the leisurely capital of the Styrian region (The Steiermark) has produced. All in a city which used to be ridiculed as "Pensionopolis" in the days of the monarchs. Since Schwarzenegger, now governor of California, has fallen from grace in his hometown due to his enthusiasm for the death penalty, the former Arnold Schwarzenegger stadium (where the soccer club Sturm Graz teaches its opponents the meaning of fear) now lacks a proper name. Maybe this is an opportunity for a Bernd Brunnhofer or Hans im Glück stadium?

During the sheltered youth of the adolescent Styrian, very little indicated his eventual rise to become the all-powerful boss of Hans im Glück. After matriculation, his parents pushed for an education as a village teacher, which Bernd dutifully finished. Back then, a very short education made it possible to teach at one of the many one-room schools in Austria. This meant life in a village: certainly not everybody's cup of tea. All this for an extremely low salary that only a vivid imagination could connect to the publisher's present appearance in finest Italian yarn.

As a consequence, the excursion into a teacher's life ended after a very brief period of time, to be replaced by studies of sociology in Munich. This had to be financed by taxi driving and other casual jobs, but the eventful life of a student after the movement of '68 was bound to offer more than a village in the Alps. His studies were finished successfully after 15 semesters, opinions being divided what was responsible for the long duration: the nightly cab driving or Munich's college life. A diploma in his pocket, the young sociologist began to teach at a college for public officials and additionally worked at an institute for industrial medicine.

At the same time as all these professional activities, Bernd got involved in a chess club where he met Karl-Heinz Schmiel. During this period his interest in board games also grew, leading to the usual

consequences: the desire to develop and publish their own games, which in turn led the pair to form the publishing company Hans im Glück. In the beginning of the '80s, events started happening very fast: continuing his work at the college would have demanded a PhD, an effort which didn't really seem justified considering the poor chances to find employment. Aside from that, the "Styrian pig-head" (according to his wife, who ought to know) had the glorious idea to issue an ultimatum to the ministry of justice regarding his teaching at the college. It wasn't even about money, but about the free choice of the means of transportation to the college outside Munich.

Because the contract with the college expired, and the ministry surprisingly let the ultimatum fade away, our sociologist suddenly had 100% of his work time at his disposal for publishing, which came in very useful. First a short apprenticeship as a silk screen printer was completed. The only problem was the residency permit, which wasn't easy for a foreigner to obtain without a regular occupation. At the time Austria was still a long way from joining the European Union. So, marriage was chosen as a solution, an institution frowned upon by the '68 movement. An indirect outcome of this decision was a son, Moritz, who was looked after by his father for two or three days a week during the first years of his life. This somewhat slowed the young publisher's vigor but never stopped it entirely.

A Loss, But Spare Time

In 1983 *Dodge City* was introduced as the first Hans im Glück game at the first "gamers' days" in Essen. The 150 hand-made copies were sold within an hour, which meant a certain financial loss, but it was a successful and encouraging debut for the two publishers. Moreover, the fast sell-off allowed them to enjoy the rest of the event in a carefree mood, getting to know the spirit of optimism in the German game landscape. Back then they didn't know that these would be the last relaxed days at the Essen fair for both of them.

The division of responsibilities in the company was obvious: Bernd Brunnhofer worked more on the business itself, while Karl-Heinz Schmiel, who kept his former occupation, invested more money. Yet there were tensions because the former pushed for professional-level production, naturally meaning higher risk, while the latter wanted to continue manufacturing their friends' ideas in very small, hand-made editions. In 1987 they parted on not entirely amicable terms when Bernd acquired the rights for *Rock Island* without his partner's agreement. But soon the private differences were overcome: afterwards both successfully negotiated with Mattel for licensed editions of their common games.

1988, however, was a year of economic crisis because mistakes were made in the production of the new games *PS* and *Affenbande*, causing a financial bottleneck. A loan from the Ossenbrunner family, friends of the publishers, helped overcome these problems.

Maestro, presented at the first appearance of Hans im Glück in Nuremberg, brought about a turning point in 1989. There was a lot of discussion about whether this game by Rudi Hoffmann should have been chosen as "Game of the Year" instead of *Café International*. This may have contributed to the fact that one year later the small publisher was able to adorn itself with the coveted title for the first time, for Klaus Teuber's *Drunter & Drüber*. Subsequently, the company expanded from a one-man firm to a small enterprise with several employees, and the appearance of the CEO also underwent a certain amount of change –not from a Volkswagen Passat to a Jaguar, but to a Maserati.

Christian Klein

Review

Debut with a Rip-off?

Brunnhofer and Schmiel had already played together regularly for a long time before they started publishing as a team. At their meetings a game often came to the table which needed interpretations of the rules, with quarrels flaring up over and over again. In order to answer all questions once and for all, the two hotheads decided to produce an edited version of their own – and to market it. With some well-known consequences. Here is the original review from *Spielbox* 4/1983, followed by a closer look at *Der Pate* a.k.a. *The Godfather Game* a.k.a. *Le Jeu du Parrain*:

Nobody can claim that German game inventors shy away from the questions of today's time. Here a topic is taken up which preys on all our minds: *Dodge City*, the game about the squatter scene in the Wild West.

Available squatters include cowboys, bandits, sheriffs, gunmen, and the ladies. As expected, a squatter's life in *Dodge City* is different from one in Germany.

The players need to occupy two or three of the seven old buildings on the board as quickly as possible. Houses are divided into 30-80 fields, depending on their size. Four or five of these fields are marked with symbols, which have to be connected with an uninterrupted chain of one's own representatives. The first player managing this is awarded the house.

The wrangling for the houses proceeds through phases with four rounds each. In the first round the marshal is elected who starts the game and derives a small advantage from that. In the second and third round people are bought and distributed among the houses. In the final round conflicts of opinions and interests are decided with weapons.

Electing the marshal, distributing people, and fighting all take place with the help of fight cards. Every player receives four at the beginning of each phase – one for each round. The fight cards are of different strengths and need to be utilized in a clever and economical way. One can play a high card in the first round to become marshal by all means, but what use is this in the last round, when the high card is missing from the fighting, resulting in the loss of three people?

Yet these are not the only nuts *Dodge City* gives us to crack. Also financial problems must be solved. It's in no way meaningless if a player's group consists of sheriffs, bandits, or gunmen. The people bought in the second and third round all have different prices. The basic western equipment of a lady for example is three times as expensive as a cowboy's equipment. The reason why the west is not exclusively populated by cheap cowboys lies in another peculiarity of *Dodge City*.

Monoculture Required

A house can only be occupied by one type of people. When a player has started to occupy the bank with ladies for example, all other players have to send ladies to the bank as well. But on the other hand there are also more victory points for a house occupied with expensive personnel.

Dodge City is an astonishing work. Its elements are rather primitive forms of familiar economy and card games: the squatting reminds a little of *Twixt*. Glued together with a couple of individual ideas, the result is – what a miracle – a totally new and distinctly original game. But the most wondrous aspect is that this game doesn't come from one of the established publishers but is a pure amateur edition. And it stands comparison in terms of material as well as its ideas.

We're curious about the next Hans im Glück game.

Eberhard von Staden

Editorial Work From the Beginning

At first sight the parallels are striking. Control of city quarters is achieved by placing one's own and removing the opponents' pieces. Only one sort of piece is allowed per quarter. Their type determines costs and revenue. Cards decide who may place what. Without a doubt, *Dodge City* is based on *Der Pate*, a game published in 1971 under the title *Le Jeu du Parrain* in France. But there is no doubt either that the base frame has experienced more than just cosmetic changes.

One problem was the abysmal set of rules it included. At a time without e-mail and web forums, one had to rely on self-help interpreting them. But the rules of placing and taking were a different issue. Author Jody Porter himself had heavily borrowed from somewhere else: *Go*. Control of the eight city quarters was fought out in eight matches of *Go* on a small board. *Go*'s way of pieces being taken and areas being marked off isn't really one of the simplest game mechanisms. On top of that it's time-consuming, because *Go* ignoramuses always use more pieces than necessary to take over an area.

Without further ado, Brunnhofer and Schmiel threw *Go* completely over board and introduced a duel system, which enabled players to get rid of opponents' pieces again. But first and foremost they eliminated the "from hand to mouth" element that used to hopelessly expose players to coincidence. Instead of drawing one card for each upcoming round, they granted everybody four cards per phase. Only the decision of which card to use for the marshal, first and second placing, or duel rounds made *Dodge City* what it is – a decidedly good game even according to today's measures, and given that the often crass effect of the event cards annoys some people.

Their set of rules may have been longer than that of *Der Pate*, but the young publishers solved the initial problem with instructions unambiguous even to hotheads.

“Dodge City” is no rip-off, but the first example of knowledgeable, extensive editorial work that should become the future trademark of the company.

Matthias Hardele

An Election Game?

In the categories of game duration and complexity, *Die Macher* probably holds the German record since its first publication. In addition to that, the original edition of 1986 also deserves a fair play award for the uncompromising anti-marketing declaration “for 4 players”. Here is the review of the newer edition from *Spielbox* 3/1998:

Yes, it's election year in Bavaria, but this shouldn't tempt anyone to consider *Die Macher* a mere election game, or even one that won't be worth anything on the day after. Some political party may cease to exist, but *Die Macher* will prevail, promise.

It's a heavy game even at first glance. In a purely outward sense, one you like to take in your hand and think: “Gosh. A whole lot in there.” And that's how it is. A wealth of material, everything very attractive, solid, built to last, and on top of it all the instructions: a brochure with 24 pages in seven chapters with subsections, not a booklet like some of Kalle Schmiel's work. Caution: reading material! But don't worry about it. Already the short description conveys a good impression, the structure is consistent and logical, illustrations are where they should be and helpful, and furthermore each of the three to five “makers” receives a player sheet with an overview of each round's progress, which proves to be very useful during the four hour game. Sort of like a corset.

Four hours? Yes, indeed. So is it a “spiel-freak” game, only for the tough guys? No, not at all. *Die Macher* is for everyone, as long as they can sit still and occupy themselves with only one thing for that long.

But for now, let's clear the table: the layout needs its space. Four state boards form a kind of parliament next to a federal board, and a space for deposited material. The colors of the various dice, rectangles, tiles, and cards correspond to up to five parties. (Footnote for the politically interested: it is not a must to choose one's own favorite party: you can win with the FDP, too, for example.)

Everybody owns five cards (plus three in hand) which are the party's platform – a “yes” or “no” or “more” or “less” regarding different topics. Later on, this platform will need to be aligned with the “people's opinion” in the separate states and also with the “federal opinion” on the federal board; this is a prerequisite for a good score. (Footnote for ideologists: if you think you always have to leverage your private opinion, you'll look very old very quickly. This is a strategic game, not a propaganda event.)

Six rounds now pass following a constant pattern: we purchase a starting player by auction, adjust the platform according to the people's opinion in the current state, send members of a shadow cabinet to the states for a fee in order for them to gather votes (depending on their power and their price) or to change the “trend” for one's own party or the opposition.

We buy “media pieces” and can influence opinions with them; we build coalitions with another party if the platforms allow it; we organize election events (placing pieces), and maybe purchase polls in an auction – the results of which aren't always comforting.

Money Isn't All That's Short

We do all this with great care, constantly pondering if an expense is paying off because money and materials are short most of the time; and of course we have to do it to win the election. The latter requires the combination of the number of campaign events, trends, and consensus with the people's opinion to reach the highest possible value – which grants mandates: in some states more, in others less. And this in turn grants money.

That's not all; but it's the core. In general one thing is connected with the other and all with everything anyway. Election winners for example may place “media pieces” on the federal board which score significantly in the end, and they also may change the federal opinion, and the party's base plays an

important role as well, and there are risky party donations and advantages or disadvantages of coalitions.

A Surprising Turn?

On the way to victory, there are numerous promising possibilities of setting top priorities (no one can win all the elections anyway). Negotiations are recommended in some cases, and surprises should be expected.

It is rare that the early rounds will determine who has the power in the Federation, and even in the last, seventh round the tide can turn (which by the way might be a small reason for criticism as the last election's winner can still radically change the important federal opinion). Players neglecting only one area, the mandates, the media, or the base, will face the consequences.

Four hours, seven rounds, same pattern? No, it's never monotonous. Instead it always makes for puzzling, calculating, and estimating, loosened up by bluffing and political joking. The winner rejoices of course, but even more so because it's the result of long work. Players who've lost are also glad: about the fact that hardly any other game is constructed so perfectly and simulates reality in such a seamless way. Participation was everything. Sounds much too Olympic? But that's how it is. Politician's honor.

Michael Knopf

The Publisher's Co-Founder Karl-Heinz Schmiel

Back on Board in the Engine Room

Inhabitants of southern Germany are often a tough act to follow in the northern states because of their outlandish interpretation of our native language. Therefore, many Southerners were delighted to welcome the Saxons on board in 1990, as they do even funnier things to German. In this regard, Karl-Heinz Schmiel is de facto doubly "handicapped," because he was born in Saxony and moved to Bavaria as a child. There he has integrated himself completely and even excels at dancing the Schuhplattler.

Karl-Heinz Schmiel's career progressed a little like his history with publisher Hans im Glück. He started out studying to be an electrical engineer and afterwards working as an IT employee for Siemens. Because this job didn't really appeal to him, he simultaneously completed training to be an educator. At that point he switched from Siemens to the Harthof children's house, an institution which looks after kids in the "Bronx" of Munich, where he's been working with few interruptions until today.

Even as a child, Schmiel showed interest in games of all kinds and – when there was time next to dancing and playing trombone – was involved in a chess club in Munich where he met someone like-minded, Bernd Brunnhofer. At first both considered the "game of kings" to be the only real deal, as many chess fans do, but soon had to revise this opinion. Infected by the board game virus, they started developing their own games and finally producing them with their own publishing company. Yet Karl-Heinz Schmiel knew he'd only pursue this as a hobby, since he truly enjoys his profession as an educator. This subsequently led to tension with friend Brunnhofer who saw his future in publishing. So they came to an abrupt separation in 1987, which also led to a personal breakup which luckily only lasted for a few weeks. Today, possible tensions are released at the playing table, where both develop unusual ambitions even during insignificant games.

The story's irony is that Karl-Heinz Schmiel – at least for some time – devoted himself full-time to making games for his company Moskito. Now that he is once again working as an educator, Moskito is cooperating with other publishers such as Heidelberger or Hans im Glück, where in addition to his re-edited *Die Macher* the newly developed *Attila* was released. As a paid employee for Hans im Glück, he is also responsible for sifting through the prototypes sent in and overseeing their testing.

Christian Klein

The Graphics of Hans im Glück Games

The Eyes Get to Play Too

Deep red is the box. A glance falls through a cutout, similar to the clubs symbol on cards, into a sparsely lit, smoke-filled room. Bearded blokes are gathered around a table: soldiers, cowboys, outlaws, too dim to recognize. All of them seem focused in their actions, but seem very suspicious. They are playing, at least for now. Will the scene stay peaceful?

The line drawing gracing the cover of the first Hans im Glück game, *Dodge City* (and therefore the first graphic business card for the young publisher) creates a rough Wild West mood right away. Bernd Brunnhofer isn't more than a passable draftsman. That's why he limited himself to his copying and pasting skills. Which didn't prevent him from making a visually compelling scene together with his partner Karl-Heinz Schmiel.

Here Draws the Boss

The game components are rather functional, but not entirely without decoration, continuing the Western ambience with stylistic confidence and few details. And the frame of the board offers a true Brunnhofer to be admired.

Already in 1983, with their extremely humble means, Hans im Glück always strived for making special games and giving them as "complete" a finish as possible. The design, combining game mechanisms and topic, both of which go hand in hand, creates a unique game experience. Certainly, this goal was not always accomplished, but there are many Hans im Glück games which are graphically remarkable, and we are going to take a closer look at some of them here.

Dodge City wasn't the only game where the publisher's co-founder was also the graphic artist. But Brunnhofer didn't want to expand his abilities in this area. Knowing very well that his strengths were in other fields, he left the design to others whenever possible.

Graphics style during the first few years of the at best half-professional publisher swayed between Eastern bloc, children's book, and comic book style. Some struggle with the means of production was noticeable, but at the same time a desire to get better. There are three existing editions of *Tiere im Wald* and its revision *Wildwechsel*, that literally show the publisher fighting its way up on the ladder of professionalism.

In 1990, *1835* had already reached the penultimate stage. The compact, well-filled box was ahead of its time graphics-wise, at least in one important aspect. Even if the look of the game components cannot really be called spectacular, this is in large parts due to the Tresham original. One probably wanted to avoid doubts about what it is, as there were only three official *1829* descendants. But for *1835* the roadmap, the cards, and the layouts were all designed on the computer without exception, which was something special back then. A clean, tidy work, focused on serving the game. The visionary element was on the cover. Four numbers, made of iron, like rail pieces, impossibly bent and partly rotated in space – something unheard of. At least not seen on a game box. Nowadays every rickety PC from the discounter can run 3D programs, but at that time there weren't many computers in Germany that could do such things. Desktop publishing was still in its infancy, with Apple machines slowly moving into graphic studios and printing offices. People who were up to more in this area bought a Silicon Graphics workstation, like the one that stood at Zeilbeck & Natzeck Design in Munich (the work of whom will be mentioned later). Nothing more than four numbers, a date from the time of industrial revolution clad in rails, the topic encapsulated in the shortest form possible. Unfortunately the artist didn't trust the subject 100 per cent and – unnecessarily – supported it with the wheel of a locomotive.

Three Boys, Three Styles

Immediately afterwards came *Drunter & Drüber*. Three playful "golden boys" in the making met: Brunnhofer, Teuber, and Vohwinkel.

Vohwinkel had earned his diploma as a graphics designer in the same year and made a blitz debut with his first job.

Vohwinkel's illustrations may still seem a little awkward in many parts, but even then he demonstrated the characteristics distinguishing his work until today: rich detail, a distinctive feeling for textures, graphic metaphors serving the game, and funny noses.

Simpletons, as an artistic subject, are an invitation to let loose, even urging a designer to introduce a fair amount of graphic nonsense. The street network in this piece, for example, starts with a parking-

garage-like stable, the river rises from the waterworks, and the buildings are more crooked than any anthroposophical architect could ever imagine. And then the outhouses! According to legend, cows used to stand on the spots Teuber had intended for the (construction-hindering) voting. The option of simply building on the animals seemed too brutal to all involved for a family game though. It was Vohwinkel who came up with the idea of the outhouses. The need to vote for or against them, especially in such an active citizenship, just makes sense to everyone.

Also the idea of using the length of the “Jaaa” (“yees”) or “Nee” (“noo”) to measure the level of agreement or rejection shows how much this trio of publisher, author, and graphic designer enjoy playing. This had quality, atmosphere and wit. It brought game mechanism and subject as close to each other as is too rarely the case. With a “Game of the Year” award, the means available to the company increased. Now experiments regarding content and graphics were possible and greater risks could be taken.

Huge letters, jazzy areas, a jet bursting out of the box in comic style: the next game looked as if the publisher had signed Roy Lichtenstein. But they didn't go as far as commissioning the doyen of pop art in person. Nevertheless it was astounding how much art *Modern Art* actually offered. “Modern art has to polarize,” the publisher thought and demanded a design which wouldn't leave people indifferent. Viewing screens, game boards, and money clearly mirror the '80's which had just ended at that time, and today it seems retro. But the artworks we encounter are as fresh and astounding as before. Once again the Zeilbeck & Natzeck Design Company from Munich was responsible, and once again they tickled plenty out of their computers. In order to provide the art market with something to speculate on, five artistic styles were emulated:

- the liquid metal style of Lite Metal reminds one of the movie “Terminator 2 – Judgment Day” which had shown the amazed audience a year before what can be morphed back and forth;
- Karl Gitter's grid style conducts itself like a kind of candy-colored motherboard Mondrian;
- Christin P.'s pointillism prefers pictures in the spirit of women's magazines;
- Yoko lets it all hang out in the Lichtenstein sense – motors, rotors and jet engines produce decibel-pounding vocabulary;
- Krypto mixes all sorts of unreadable things in various layers.

The result was full of allusions, ironic and different from everything one had known in the games segment until then. Although a professional clearly recognizes the graphic filter used in at least three of the styles, the artists are very diverse and every card has an individual design. The costs for the graphics were accordingly high – the “Game of the Year” award offered the chance to give the game a more than adequate look. During the game fair in 1992, some of the cards were transformed into artwork-sized posters at the Hans im Glück booth. A young couple stopped in front of them, and she said to him: “That's totally ugly!” Publisher Brunnhofer heard this and felt confirmed: modern art has to polarize.

Later editions replaced the jet on the cover with a vintage car, by the way.

Scraping at the Clouds

The next highlight was located in an American metropolis by name only. Strangely enough, *Manhattan* also takes place in Sao Paolo, Hong Kong, Sydney, Cairo, and Frankfurt, not simply in different quarters of the city. Aside from that, both subject and components once again showed exceptional design. For the first time, specially manufactured plastic parts (in pastel colors, according to the style) were created, forming an attractive skyscraper scene in about 45 minutes. From a purely graphic view, the whole succeeded only partially. The board can be described as a neatly arranged tastelessness, creating a collage of cheesy vastness in an unconvincing way and baking it together with garish colors. The cards and the box, on the other hand, proved that computer time had been gainfully invested in the rendering of very tall buildings. Skyscrapers stretching themselves towards the beholder, the title bulging between the rooftops – true perspective! The cards displayed numerous excerpts of New York's busy streets, too. Of course the charm of such depictions has dwindled with the years, since we've been taken on many flights through urban canyons by Neo, Spider-Man, and other heroes of cinema, but back in the day they did impress. This new over-saturation of computer generated 3D images probably contributed to the fact that this “Game of the Year” from 1994 was the last title by Hans im Glück which was designed with this technique.

In 1995 the team grew to include a graphic artist whose drawing style has had tremendous influence on the games market ever since. In the case of *El Grande*, it wasn't the first time Doris Matthäus had dipped feather and brush into color for this publisher. She had already illustrated Hans im Glück's short and unsuccessful excursion into the area of children's games: *Story* and *Am Fuße des Kilimandscharo*. In terms of the amount of material and complexity of the designs, *El Grande* was of a very high caliber. One year before she had acquired the necessary know-how for such a project with her own publishing company, Spiele von Doris & Frank, with *Fugger*, *Welser*, *Medici*. That game

possessed a similar historic setting, one that complied with Matthäus's graphic style. On one hand precise in its playing mechanics, on the other hand in love with details, the style exudes a certain homely softness that contributes a lot to the appeal it held for a large audience.

The greatest achievement, and a major reason for the high playability, is the board. "The ideal balance between the empty and the full board," the publisher raves. Despite many pretty little things on the historic map, clarity is always warranted. This is a must in the face of constantly changing majorities, possible losses, actions, and victory points. The game's setting, located in Portugal, is a small stroke of genius in itself. With a few symbols, the game structure is displayed with its action and rating sequence, enormously increasing clarity as well as easing the entry of new players.

Beside the seductive plywood Castillo, as icing on the component cake, Brunnhofer attributes a large portion of the success to the cover, describing it as a classical-enigmatic composition. The two central figures, king and intriguer, are joined in a group but look slightly absently in different directions, as if fixating on different remote targets. In the background a sepia-colored landscape flows into the dramatically churning evening sky. A sensation during its first presentation, *El Grande* still hasn't lost any of its impact.

Two years later Doris Matthäus proved that *El Grande* was no "one hit wonder" with *Euphrat & Tigris* (1997). She manages to embed Reiner Knizia's majority system into a historic setting in such a way that its abstract structure takes a back seat.

Matthäus's part in the publisher's hitherto biggest success, *Carcassonne*, is not to be underestimated either. Her style exactly matches the tone of the game, between informal lightness and tactical depth. Nobody associates her drawing style with exaggerated complexity, with conflict, or even strain. The entire design relieves the potential buyer of shyness, and flatters his eye until the playing value finally speaks for itself.

Since 1998 the jury for the "Spiel des Jahres" (Game of the Year) doesn't award a special prize for the "Beautiful Game" category. By this it acknowledges the development of design standards in board games has reached such a high level that it seems impossible to elevate a single project. Publisher Hans im Glück has contributed to this development and steadily furthered it on its own. There are numerous titles in its program turning a game concept into marvelous illustrations, even if it's becoming harder and harder to stand out from the competition. I don't want to conclude without mentioning some other syntheses of art and style of design which have added substantially to the unique reputation Hans im Glück enjoys.

Components are a Synthesis of the Arts

Mention has to be made of the Japan design of *Samurai* by Franz Vohwinkel: a full-scale success from the cover to the player screens and the high-gloss polished pieces. In *Rasende Roboter* the same designer indulges in his preference for rust and metal things, chipped lacquer and dents, which on other occasions he can pursue during his work for fantasy role playing games or *Magic* cards. Equally remarkable is the way his cover for *Amun Re* combines statues, pyramids, priests, and the sun in the centre to create a blazing red dream of Egypt.

Or Marcus Gschwendner's sparkling clean design of the *Die Macher* reprint. While the bored backbenchers blow into their toy windmills, the faction's leader cracks the whip; genetically modified tomatoes can be stacked in squares; and the A in the logo reaches its hands up in the air, certain of victory.

Or *Medina* with its wealth of wooden pieces and its rather unspectacular graphic design. But the way the desert city grows on the initially empty board from the different pieces creates a very distinctive and attractive visual. This was only possible because the wood manufacturer Seidenstücker and the publisher spent a long time tweaking all the parts.

Or the wonderful *Attika* by the Casasola brothers Marcel-André and Manuel with a sun-flooded, beaming antique city on the box. The components are decorated with ornaments (which also make things easier for color-blind players), tiles are adorned with pretty depictions of buildings, and there are layout boards with a short overview and brief, elegant, and richly illustrated rules on just four pages with tasteful typography. A real treat to the player's eye.

Or Oliver Freudenreich's symbol spectacle in *Goa*, making Rüdiger Dorn's rule-studded work playable and covering it all with a velvety "graphic feel".

Or the small gallery of French illustrators from *Ohne Furcht und Adel*, among them Julien Delval who would later work for Days of Wonder. Due to this success, Delval was commissioned to illustrate the similarly chaotic *Kabale & Hiebe* with his relaxed pastel paintings. In every one of his pictures one feels the French tradition of comic artistry, from the longing of Julia to the shady assassin prowling through the darkness with a dagger under his coat.

Or the boards by Michael Menzel, elaborated with the digital brush in enormous detail. One ought to study them with a magnifying glass: in *Hazienda* for example, but also in *Thurn und Taxis* and the current hit *Stone Age*.

Or the miniature artworks by Harald Lieske: gentle whispers of brush strokes in gouache. In *Wikinger*, *Ming Dynasty* and *Die hängenden Gärten*, the color structure can almost be felt with your finger.

Or... or... or...

Over the years, Hans im Glück has published much where good playability and good looks found each other. The primary reason for this may be the personality of Bernd Brunnhofer, himself a great artist in the craft of game making.

Christof Tisch

[Kritik Modern Art: Einleitung neu, Rest aus Knizia-Almanach]

Art Cologne? Art Munich!

Modern Art unites the strong ideas of a high-class designer and creative editorial optimization and superb design in a congenial way, the result being an absolute highlight of the publisher. State of the art is still Hans im Glück's original: Neither the US edition by Mayfair nor the Brazilian one by Odyssea Jogos nor the Scandinavian by Lautapelit are able to hold a candle to it. Here is the review from *Spielbox* 6/1992, written right after its publication. More on *Modern Art* on page 9 and in the article on the editorial work of Hans im Glück.

Something always goes wrong

At the Spiel fair in 1992, publisher Hans im Glück was showing only one freshly produced game, as they were almost every year. Possibly too fresh this time. Already on the first day a number of customers came to the booth to report that *Modern Art*'s play money had literally melted away in their hands. At first, they tried to explain this with sweaty fingers induced by stress during the game, but it soon became obvious that it was a production flaw. The manufacturer had used a glue for the money sheets which required more time to dry. As it was, handling the money made parts fall off the back. All the money sheets had to be printed anew, and the unsold games repacked. Everyone who had received one of the first copies could get a replacement by request.

Portrait

Judge and Editor Dieter Hornung

Extreme Game Testing

Observant readers of a typical set of Hans im Glück rules have probably already noticed this name, in the list of playtesters. Often he is even singled out from this group because of his special merits, especially in more demanding games. Who is this grey eminence of the publisher, some kind of Richelieu? Not likely, as he is someone who represents the philosophy "Hans im Glück, c'est moi," where they know how to surround themselves with competent counselors. And Dieter Hornung is certainly one of their most important game editors. So it's about time to get him out of the shadows.

Dieter Hornung's link to Hans im Glück dates back to 1983. After the first game fair in Essen, which delighted its participants, the board gaming club "Die Spuiratzen" organized a similar event in Munich, and the publisher enthusiastically joined in. Jo Weigand, chairman at the time, told Brunnhofer and Schmiel about two game-crazed jurists, among them one Dieter Hornung. Contact was established quickly, and since then the now retired judge of the social court in Munich has been testing all the prototypes from Hans im Glück and Moskito almost every week.

Because Hornung is a game freak of the first generation, owning one of the most interesting game collections of Munich, he is equipped with valuable knowledge and virtually unsurpassable experience

in this area. Naturally, he is most interested in the “spiel freak” games, so the mass-market designs usually don’t go down particularly well.

Due to Hornung’s previous profession, the judge mostly considers his verdict on games to be final, knowing no higher appeals. So the relationship with the Styrian publisher (who also develops pretty strong opinions) hasn’t always been free from tension. But both have managed to create a very constructive atmosphere, with benefits for both sides. Meanwhile, Dieter Hornung has somewhat departed from the purism of his initial years, and also takes pleasure in commercially successful games, such as *Carcassonne*, as long as they reach a certain standard of quality. His value to Hans im Glück is estimated so highly that he contractually participates in successes like a “Game of the Year” award.

Using Oxygen Deprivation for Subtle Balance

Aside from his qualities as judge and game player, Dieter Hornung is first and foremost a patriotic Bavarian. This may seem a little strange to someone not born in this somewhat weird state at the border of the Alps; especially if one knows that Hornung isn’t very close to the CSU, which acts like the Bavarian unity party. For one thing, this patriotism manifests itself in a profound knowledge of history, which is why he also wrote the historic introduction for Schmiel’s *Lieber Bayrisch Sterben*. For another thing, he equipped his sons with the old Bavarian names Quirin and Severin, making sure they wouldn’t have an overly easy start into life beyond Bavaria.

Despite his certainly impeccable actions as a judge, Dieter Hornung’s true calling is without a doubt the testing and developing of prototypes. His secret is a special chamber, also known as the “smoking cellar.” It’s probably Orwell’s room 101 for non-smokers. The ceiling feels like it’s four feet high, the playtester practically immured by precious games. Here Munich’s high-performance smokers gather alongside Dieter Hornung with his pipe, creating an atmosphere where your opponents can only be guessed at behind a wall of smog. It is generally known that the human mind is able to perform special things under extreme conditions, and this cellar is a life-threatening situation for sure. Compared to an evening there, the ascent of Mt. Everest without oxygen seems like a casual walk in the woods. Hornung’s spiritual predecessors have used such exceptional situations in deserts or on mountain ranges to create religions. As the world-wide market for religions has reached a certain degree of saturation but the same doesn’t apply to games, the cellar is used for the latter. People who’ve ever wondered where the unusual ideas and the subtle balance of Hans im Glück games come from find an answer here: under complete oxygen deprivation the testers fall into an almost trance-like state, making game testing possible on an otherwise unachievable level.

Christian Klein

Editorial Work at Hans im Glück

In the Polishing Department

No game reaches the printer the same way the author submitted it. This is not much different from literature. Everyone knows John Irving, but who knows his editor? Or even his German translator whose job it is to give the text style in our language? The cultural business needs its stars, in the case of games the designers. Things will gladly stay that way, but it’s worthwhile to take a look at the share others have in it.

Editorial work is a back-breaking job, at Hans im Glück even more than somewhere else. It’s no secret that complex material gets its chance there, too. While the hundreds of prototypes arriving each year also include more complicated ones, even simple game ideas are hard to judge in their unprocessed state, and that’s just the first step. With only four releases per year, most are sifted out just by reading the instructions, because not every game can be tested, and certainly not a hundred times. It does happen that games are played one hundred times at Hans im Glück before they’re published. But this is way past the stage of deciding whether an idea is good or not. At first, only two matches are played, to consider the number and type of players, as well as strategies. As soon as the weak points are identified, changes are made and tested, discarded and tested again. Until the time comes to choose whether to write the rules, or to postpone the project for another fair.

The author is involved in all this of course, wherever possible. The first version of *Drunter & Drüber* for example was appealing. But it became apparent too quickly who was pursuing which goal – who would promptly be torpedoed by the other players. After that, Bernd Brunnhofer tweaked a version more acceptable to him. Klaus Teuber did like this one, but not in every aspect, which is why he got to work on his own part again. He had the idea with the latrines (even if these still had another name back then), implementing all the bluffing and tactical finesse which would later on distinguish the game. As a consequence, Brunnhofer wanted to remove his “freak variant”, but Klaus Teuber insisted on keeping it.

Occasionally, development results in several variations, each one of them market-ready, like in the case of *El Grande*: the variations “Korntal” (where Wolfgang Kramer lives) and “Munich.” The latter was developed by Hans im Glück and later published as *König & Intrigant*. Dieter Hornung had been particularly committed to this process, and it almost led to a personal break-up with him when Bernd Brunnhofer, in the presence of Wolfgang Kramer (and Jo Weigand), went for the less demanding but more colorful and accessible “Korntal” variation – not the least because it would have better chances to win a “Game of the Year” award...

Sometimes More Really Is More

From time to time a submitted game works flawlessly the way it is; but an additional level of complexity would suit it well. One example of this was *Modern Art*. Reiner Knizia’s submission was limited to collecting cards using various auctioning methods. Development added the idea of increasing value when an artist is one of the most popular ones more than once, an idea mainly conceived by Dieter Hornung, providing the game with significantly more depth.

Very often the trick is in omitting things, like in the case of *Müll + Money*. The designer, Dr. Jürgen Strohm, had submitted a highly complicated opus lasting several hours. One can guess his original concern, devoting oneself to the enclosed “experimental simulation variant.” As all testers will confirm, the original did have its appeal, but had to be transformed into a market-ready game first.

Sid Sackson’s creation was based on “Property” from the book *Spiele anders als andere* (“Play Differently From Others”), published by Hugendubel. And it could be processed to market readiness, as Sven Kübler did for *Piatnik*. There the game was published as *New York*. In the editorial department of Hans im Glück, where the game had been sitting before, the development involved so many ideas – most notably those of Andreas Seyfarth – that the result was more or less by accident an independent work, at best inspired by Sid Sackson, which even earned the laurels as “Game of the Year” under the name *Manhattan*.

Today, there are numerous opportunities to compare “director’s cuts” and “theatre versions” of games. At authors’ meetings, like the ones in Göttingen, Haar, or Berlin, everyone can examine ideas in their original state and test them. The SPIEL in Essen also shows some projects in the early stages. With Hans im Glück, you don’t even have to travel to see the process of development. With *Tiere im Wald* and *Wildwechsel*, two versions of the same game were published by the same company. Also Richard Breese’s original *Kingdom* can be compared to *Morgenland*. And Günter Cornett later published *Canaletto* more or less in the form he had initially submitted it as *Le Jardin* under his own label. Looks as if he liked his own version better.

There are some designers who refuse any editorial treatment of their games. It’s understandable that Rudolf Ross belonged to this small flock – once bitten, twice shy. His design, published the way he intended by Hans im Glück as *PS*; had been botched up as *Rivalen der Piste* before. Publisher Bayerwald hadn’t recognized that the dice mechanism conceived by Ross doesn’t really work with a reduced number of tracks or rounds.

So far almost only in-depth editing has been discussed because the fine-tuning and balancing of a basically well-performing game is rather unspectacular but nonetheless a fair amount of labor. *Sankt Petersburg* for example worked right from the start as a prototype called *Artefax*. Yet it took two more years until all card values, discounts, and special abilities were perfectly balanced and the designer as well as the publisher were finally satisfied with the result.

To a great extent, the fact that Hans im Glück has been capable of such a profound work of developing for 25 years is certainly owed to Bernd Brunnhofer himself and his staff. But one mustn’t underestimate the contributions that the troop of creative volunteers surrounding the publisher has made. People mentioned at the end of a set of Hans im Glück’s instructions over the years – and there are quite a few of them – haven’t just “played along,” but have made a significant contribution to the final result. Take a closer look, many of the names under “for many testing rounds, comments and suggestions, author and publisher thank” might seem familiar to you.

Matthias Hardel

Published By Others

Some games edited by Hans im Glück were in the end published by another company. Here is an incomplete list:

[...]

* In the end published with significant changes from the prototype

** Kosmos had the prototype first, hesitated for a long time, but finally accepted, which is why Hans im Glück didn't get a chance.

Something Always Goes Wrong

Part of an editorial department's business risk is that working on a game doesn't always lead to a marketable result. In this case the investment was in vain. It is even more regrettable if this investment didn't only consist of time. That's what happened with a very nice design involving willows and wells running dry. It was about building fences, which determined the owner of a parcel of land. Soon the wells turned into cows inhabiting the parcels via dice rolls – the more the better, as long as a certain number wasn't exceeded which made the entire parcel worthless because of over-grazing.

While the development was still in progress, the playing materials for *Morgenland* had to be commissioned. Because he didn't want to lower his price, the manufacturer from the city of Kaufbeuren had the idea of combining two orders to minimize the high tool costs. No sooner said than done: the pieces for the willow game were included in the commission, decreasing the price of the *Morgenland* treasure pieces by a remarkable two thirds. Theoretically. Since then Hans im Glück's basement has been storing sacks with 15,000 bags, 30 cows each – rather pretty cows by the way. The willow game didn't materialize, but we haven't seen the end of the matter yet, maybe there'll be a suitable idea.

Review

El Grande

More Than Just Beautiful

After the "Spiel des Jahres" jury had awarded *Die Siedler von Catan*, more complex games were eligible for a short time. Today an *El Grande* would be unthinkable as a winner, and instead would be fobbed off with a special prize for "complex game" at best. And this even though the publisher Bernd Brunnhofer had deliberately opted for the "easier" of two finished game versions in order to have a chance at winning the award. And *El Grande* even offered room for more, as the add-on *Großinquisitor und Kolonien* showed. Here is the original review from *Spielbox* 6/95:

The presentation, i.e. the game when it's set up on the table, makes many curious about the content. It's truly a feast for the eyes, with the graphics by Doris Matthäus and the carefully selected components. But caution: is it maybe just a beautiful game? Certainly not.

El Grande is intended for two to five players. During about one and a half hours they try to become as influential as possible in the nine regions on the board. In order to do that, they need to cleverly distribute one "Grand" (larger wooden cubes) and up to 30 Caballeros (smaller blocks) in such a way that they yield the most points at the end of the third, sixth, and ninth round of play, as well as in some special areas. A rating index of each region determines how many points there are. In general: players who have placed the most Caballeros receive more points than the second or perhaps third runner-up. The rest get nothing. And if your own Grand or the king figure is located in the region where you have the most influence, the ratings grant two additional points each.

45 beautifully drawn action cards in an unusual square format are segmented into five different classes. The higher the influence of a card is, the more Caballeros are depicted on it. Before or after performing this action, the small wooden cubes representing the Caballeros may be distributed among the regions from your personal inventory (called "Hof" or "court" in the game), further increasing your influence.

The action cards are dealt according to the power card played. The person with the highest value (everyone has 13 cards with numeric values between 1 and 13) may choose one of the five open action cards first, followed by the players with the next values in sequence. After each round new action cards are uncovered, and used power cards are removed from the game.

Bidding for the action cards presents one with a dilemma. A particularly valuable action card will probably only go for a power card of relatively high numeric value. But power cards for their part are decisive for the replenishment of Caballeros. The higher a power card, the fewer Caballeros can be taken from the box (called "province") to the court for future use. A low power card, the 1 for example, allows for six new Caballeros to be distributed among the regions with the help of the action cards, whereas the 12 or 13 don't grant any Caballeros at all.

Gathering Strength For the Next Round

Having played the lowest card is an advantage as it permits you to play a power card first during the next round. Playing the same number is taboo for the others in a round. If you have memorized the opposition's remaining cards, and own high-value power cards as well, this means free choice among the five action cards on display.

The single rounds pass in a similar fashion: reading the brief text on the action cards, playing the individually suitable power card and receiving in turn one of the action cards. The newly acquired pieces are – depending on the tactic – placed immediately or maybe only after performing one of the various actions: your own or another player's Caballeros travel from one region into another, perhaps even to leave the board and return to the court. Or His Majesty himself, the king, relocates his throne to another area, thus bestowing two bonus points on the most influential player in the ratings. The point yield can change for a particular region, too. In this case corresponding markers are placed on the rating index. Very popular are those action cards that directly lead to a special scoring for a single region or several areas.

Players who don't want to send their Caballeros to one of the regions can also throw them into a plywood tower, called the "Castillo." At least three times – more often with some special action cards – the tower reveals its secrets and discloses the Caballeros inside. At first, the tower is rated like a normal region. Then the Castillo Caballeros can additionally be distributed into the regions. Every player secretly chooses their target region with a round disc. So, the tower doesn't just give additional points which can decide the game, but will significantly change the balance of power in the regions, too. So, you should try to memorize how many Caballeros have been thrown in by yourself and by the opposition, because peeking is not allowed during the game.

Following this excerpt from the rules, readers will recognize that the game as a whole is pretty complex, but by no means overloaded, and not hard to understand for players with a little practice. Describing all further subtleties, particularly the meaning of the various action cards, would go beyond the scope of this review. The twelve-page instructions are well structured and clear, furnished with many illustrations and examples, leaving no question unanswered.

In *El Grande*, luck and tactics balance each other, the mechanisms intertwine smoothly. But the possibility of planning actions in advance decreases with the number of players. *El Grande* unfolds its full strategic appeal in games with two players: it really conveys the impression of two grandees sitting opposite each other, waiting for the other to make a mistake. Excellent! Regardless of the number of players, the situation on the board always requires your full attention. Local majorities are juxtaposed with the effects of action cards. One evaluates and decides on the right action, increasing one's own or decreasing the competition's influence. The entire game is that simple.

Cumbersome Beginning

Players getting into the struggle for power in historical Spain are entertained well for one and a half hours. Reading the action cards may be a bit cumbersome at the beginning and hamper the flow, however. The game runs more fluently after two or three matches when the meaning of the cards doesn't need to be looked up any more. Two tracks provide better oversight: one deals with the individual rounds, and the other – running all around the board – shows who's currently in which position. The game's functionality is well thought out, its equipment splendid without being overstuffed. I personally find only the wooden Castillo a tad too showy and clunky. So much material has its price of course. During the SPIEL '95 in Essen, *El Grande* was available at the special fair discount of 80 DM [today about 40 Euros – editor's note]. Afterwards it's supposed to go for ten DM more. No matter if the discount was responsible or not, at the fair *El Grande* sold like hotcakes.

Edwin Ruschitzka

On Course Early

This publisher bears its name with good reason, one should think. Every couple of years, out of a clear blue sky, the critics' award suddenly drops in with its sales guarantee, and everything else comes out all right in the end. But this isn't quite correct because Hans from the fairytale "Lucky Hans" is not *lucky* but *happy* – despite his economical failure. The critics' award may be a matter of luck, too, but it's possible to improve one's own chances for the happy coincidence to actually occur. Apart from that, a publisher like Hans im Glück cannot exist merely on the "game of the year" ("Spiel des Jahres"), not even on several prizes. Because the period between the happy events needs to be bridged as well.

While a "game of the year" sells six-digit numbers, Hans im Glück usually works in the four-digit area. Such a budget cannot sustain a regular staff, even if it doesn't exceed the size of a cycle ball team without substitutes. When it hit him again in 1996 after 1991 and 1994, Bernd Brunnhofer commented dryly: "Nice rhythm, we should keep it!" Which wasn't accomplished entirely. Prior to *Carcassonne*, the reserves built up in good times had almost been depleted. But *Carcassonne* turned the tide because Klaus-Jürgen Wrede's laid-back stroke of genius might achieve the status of a long-term classic, which would mean *steady* annual sale quantities in the five- or six-digit area. Only publishers with a classic in their program, be it *Scrabble*, *Mensch ärgere dich nicht*, *Memory*, *Kniffel* or especially *Monopoly*, can afford to make games without worries – if the classic is maintained and cared for.

Some fans may be annoyed by the rabbit-like multiplication of *Carcassonne*-esque titles as they occupy space in the areas more "interesting" games are in. Such fans should think about the fact that the games they're interested in depend on the success of titles like *Carcassonne*.

The playing depth of the titles found under the pig rider logo is only subject to rather minor fluctuations. The games from the first five years staked out a corridor the publisher is still moving in today. Let's take a quick look behind.

It began with *Dodge City*, the precisely accurate revision of an unsatisfying original. The result did pack a punch but – unlike the source – could also be played in a more visceral way. Entirely different was *Tiere im Wald*, an astonishingly tough tactical game considering its cute looks.

Open For Expansions

Already in 1985, the first add-on: *Dippi Totale* was born out of the wish for variety from the slightly outworn *Diplomacy*, and to met the demand for more tactical possibilities. This rare object consisted of a world map and 24 hand-sawn airplane squadron pieces, not to mention the instructions, with eight pages almost as extensive as Parker's "original."

Like *Dodge City* before, and most of its successors, *Greyhounds* was controlled by cards. Unusual for the time, but certainly not as surprising as the asymmetrical layout of the complete game. Opinions differed – and still differ – on whether the accountant who has to confront three betting people has better or worse chances. In any case, a variation enclosed with later editions makes the accountant's life a bit easier by allowing him to be more flexible in the setting of quotas. Three players were able to play *Greyhounds* thanks to an ownerless dog, running along as a dummy – obviously an early fit of marketing thinking. Something the following game did not exhibit.

Selling a game for exactly four people was already difficult enough, as every dealer who carried *Die Macher* back then can confirm. And aside from the most die-hard fans, all customers were scared off by its four-hour duration. Later *Die Macher* got company with *1835*, but that was still the upper end of the demand spectrum.

In the lower end not much happened either, apart from the unsuccessful attempt to reach younger players with *Story* and *Am Fluss des Kilimandscharo*. Something as simple as *Affenbande* remained an exception. The latter wasn't the children's game it seemed like, but rather something for gamblers: smart and quick, characterized by bluffing and instinctive feeling.

Although *Die Macher* and *Affenbande* weren't indicative of future projects, *Dodge City*, *Tiere im Wald* and *Greyhounds* pointed the way for the publisher. Quite deliberately.

"I don't want to make games people will still talk about in 100 years, but practicable ones with weight – substantial fare for a large audience," the publisher says. With this he refers to the current state of the company, but simultaneously characterizes all 25 years. Brunnhofer's credo actually coincides with the one of the jury "Spiel des Jahres," so it's almost wondrous that so far Hans im Glück has won the main prize only five times.

A look at its failures tells more about the publisher than its five big awards. The precise content of this list is open to dispute, but it's supposed to consist of titles that had what it takes yet weren't really able

to score with critics or fans. Having published games like *Canaletto*, *El Caballero*, *Morgenland*, *Müll + Money*, *Magellan*, *Attika*, *Hazienda*, *Taluva*, *Ming Dynastie* or *Oregon* is indeed honorable. Every single one of them inventive and of very good or great playing value, they went down nevertheless.

Unintentional Milestones

Die Macher, *Euphrat & Tigris*, *Goa*, *Sankt Petersburg* and *Wikinger* should have secured their place in our collective memory. Acknowledged delicacies people will probably still talk about in 100 years, against the publisher's will – if in a century anyone except for historians will still talk about board games at all. Provided that this will be the case, one can expect a steady stream of insiders' tips and ideas, with *Dominion* and *Palais Royal* the next ones already visible on the horizon.

Matthias Hardel

Authors From 25 years

If there's anyone who complies with the boss's taste more than the boss himself, it's probably Reiner Knizia, uncontested frontrunner in terms of publications.

[Tabelle]

Listed are all designers with more than one publication from Hans im Glück. Entries with the same number are in alphabetical order. Add-ons were not taken into account. Altogether, 25 years included publications by 44 authors.

Volker Weitzel

The First of the Mohicans

Since their beginnings as a subtenant in Winfried "Vino" Seiler's "Zabelwerkstatt," Hans im Glück has done their own manufacturing. But eventually the games weren't made by hand anymore, the delivery was outsourced in 1988, and with the first "Spiel des Jahres" award the distribution was transferred to a partner. Yet the administrative efforts constantly increased, not just due to the 100 prototypes that needed to be sifted through every year after *Drunter & Drüber*. It simply was time for an Indian to join the chief.

Born 1958 in Darmstadt, Volker Weitzel was struck by the passion for playing games at a very early age. This however didn't mean board games, but rather sports activities in general. In his youth hardly any sports discipline was safe from him, very much to his parents' chagrin. After he finished high school, despite every objection, he went to Marburg to bring German medieval literature up to speed. In his parents' house Weitzel had only experienced three games: *Elfer raus*, *Monopoly* and *Kniffel*. He never touched any of them after moving out. Being a rookie game-wise, he had the good luck of living under the same roof as a well-known American game collector.

After finishing his studies, he was offered a part-time job at the German game archive (Deutsches Spiele-Archiv), which in theory went well with his dissertation. He accepted. As a consequence Weitzel spent the whole day at the archive, abandoning his dissertation (until this day, science has been waiting in vain for "The history of board games in the literature of the High Middle Ages"). Of course he didn't play all of the 10,000 games in the archive during his five years there, but he did get to know the most important ones.

For private reasons Volker Weitzel moved to Munich in 1992. Hans im Glück didn't offer him a job, but with the words "I'm the right man for you" he was hired anyway. From this time until he leaves the company in 2000 he's "maid-of-all-work" for administration, bookkeeping, dates, author and press contacts, production and fair planning, play tests, licensing and fee accounting, website contents and so forth.

And today? Besides working as a marketing and distribution manager at a software company in Mannheim developing the market leader among the branch solutions for steel and metal construction, he – of course! – still has a game circle. And not just current novelties are played but also titles he has wanted to play again for a long time.

Respect the Peasants!

More than seven years have passed since our colleague Michael Knopf reviewed *Carcassonne*. When he wrote it he couldn't know that he was dealing with a future "Spiel des Jahres" winner, nor that it would sell millions of copies and be available in over 50 countries. While the basic game definitely appealed to the reviewer, his verdict on the first add-on (at the time called "Wirtshäuser und Kathedralen") already resonated with the question of whether this wasn't a bit too much of a good thing. Unfortunately we cannot get his commentary on the currently 15 *Carcassonne* games and extensions – without a doubt it would have been as witty as it would have been sophisticated. Here are now both original texts from *Spielbox 2/2001* and *2/2002*.

[Rest der Kritik "Carcassonne" + Text „Kaum spürbar“ aus *Carcassonne-Almanach*]

Something Always Goes Wrong

In the publisher's stand at SPIEL '07, every press visitor received a *Carcassonne* add-on called "Abtei und Bürgermeister" and could participate in a little error hunt. Some saw it right away, others didn't notice it at all: the *Carcassonne* logo had been forgotten on one side of the box. The boss remained calm – quite contrary to the pair of designers whose names were disfigured on the *Thurn und Taxis: Glanz und Gloria* box in such an unforgivable manner.

Something Always Goes Wrong

During the production of "Carcassonne" hardly any disasters occurred apart from a small blunder made at the very beginning. The problem was irreparable because it concerned the back side of the tiles. Nobody had expected *Carcassonne* to become such an overwhelming success with a whole series of add-ons, so the back of the tiles was designed in a rather subtle grey pattern instead of wild colors. But deviations in the color shades are easier to spot the less pronounced the pattern is. Every printer faces an almost unsolvable problem when he needs to match the exact brightness of a purely grey surface. It's a flaw that hasn't prevented the add-ons from being successful. In any event, the value of knowing which tiles don't come from the basic game decreases with the growing number of tiles coming from various expansions.

The Editorial Treatment of *Carcassonne*

Small Vital Steps to Success

When Klaus-Jürgen Wrede's *Carcassonne* landed on the desk of Hans im Glück, the game largely looked the way it looks now. Even the first test together with Dirk Geilenkeuser revealed to Bernd Brunnhofer: there's something to it. Further rounds quickly showed that some fine-tuning would be necessary. Brunnhofer more or less single-handedly finished the prototype in time for the SPIEL '00. But it didn't cross his mind then that "the classic" every publisher dreams of was born.

From the beginning there were 72 tiles, also showing the three known elements: city, meadow, and street. It's no coincidence that the number three is practically a constant feature in later versions, but rather this is due to the fact that more elements would exceedingly limit the placement options.

The original *Carcassonne* possessed a type of tiles that today doesn't exist anymore: empty meadow. Because testers mostly pulled long faces when they drew a virtually empty tile, the cloisters were introduced – anything but boring in terms of point potential.

Wrede had equipped the players with ten pieces each. This had good reason, because once they were placed one didn't get them back until the final scoring. The alternative of scoring and getting pieces back as soon as a structure can't be expanded any further requires fewer figures. Fortunate for the production costs, but much more than that, because intermediate scorings in loose sequence create many small arches of tension, something the game greatly benefits from. Thus even small

structures have their appeal, releasing the otherwise rare pieces back into the game. The inventory management we now perform during every match vitally contributes to the *Carcassonne* system's appeal.

Like today's version, Wrede's original only allowed placement on the tile just played. From the get-go, the designer had focused on the present. Nobody was forced to remember their own turns or even who had added which tile. But Wrede permitted the use of one or two (!) pieces in those places where there was already a claim for a structure. Which leads to the crucial difference between prototype and final product. It was, for example, possible to place one's tiles directly next to a city segment where there was already a knight, and to insert one or two of your own knights. This caused attrition warfare resulting in one player getting all the points for a city, street, or meadow while all other participants got nothing.

The award-winning final version entirely lacks simple wrangling for majority. In fact – apart from the right tiles, mind you! – subtle dexterity is necessary to overturn established majorities. Instead of always focusing in the most valuable structures, the game involves many locations at the same time. It is due to its special character that with the expansion of your own structures, you have to extend the structures of the other players, too, without being able to act as a parasite – no matter how much you might want to.

We're not going to speculate here whether *Carcassonne* would have started such a triumph in its original form. It's a fact that an excellent prototype and congenial editing have come together for an exceptional game.

Matthias Hardel

A Heart for Aspiring Authors

Klaus-Jürgen Wrede published his first game at Hans im Glück – something he isn't alone with:
[...]

The Coachman Knows the Way

The "Spiel des Jahres" (game of the year) jury found *Thurn und Taxis* like a football on the penalty spot, ready to score. And it did. Nevertheless, the game didn't find as many players among game magazine readers as one might have hoped. Although it may not seem like it to us, the instructions were obviously a hard hurdle for players not too familiar with board games. Here is the original review from *Spielbox 2/2006*:

If it wasn't for the reputation of both publisher and designer, this game would be at risk of being misjudged as a simple travel game located in Southern Germany. Because a short summary sounds unspectacular and an error of judgment – even after a short trial game – cannot be ruled out, a review here is the ideal medium to clarify things.

On a historical map, a network of roads connects 22 cities of today's Southern Germany and neighboring states. The spelling of "Carlsruhe" or "Baieren" is no mistake, but points to a past when the Thurn und Taxis families established a network of mail coach stations in the 17th century. Along with a set of cards featuring three mentions of each city, the game includes 20 coach stations that up to four players can place in the cities. You can place these houses after playing a route with at least three city cards.

Like a String of Pearls

Six face-up cards are laid out next to the road network. One turn is relatively short: a player takes one card, plays one card, uses the special right of an office bearer, and may be able to finish the current route.

The first card to be played as the beginning of a route is not subject to any limits. But the following cards are! Each card has to be connected to the left or right end of the growing row of cards, and must always show an adjacent city. Several turns result in a row of cities, one after another, like pearls on a string: for example Carlsruhe – Stuttgart – Ingolstadt – Munich.

Whoever wants to start a new route has to have finished the current one in the previous turn.

Placing houses is allowed when finishing a route, but by no means automatically in every city. If you aren't already represented in the city in question, you may place either a house in every city of a state that is a part of the route network, or a house in every state. Therefore state affiliation is of the greatest importance. Baiern, the largest state by far, consists of eight cities, some others like Hohenzollern only one, while Switzerland possesses two and Baden three. Concentrating on one area pays off. Players represented in states like Baden, Baiern, or Württemberg / Hohenzollern with one station in every city receives the highest bonus available for it. But diversification is rewarded, too, because installing at least one station in each state outside of Baiern is worth up to six points. Additionally, the first player to build a route of at least five cities earns even more victory points.

Furthermore, you are awarded with the coach card of the next higher value (worth up to three points) if the route includes at least three (first coach) to seven (fifth coach) cities.

As soon as a player has purchased his or her fifth coach, or placed all his or her houses, the game ends with the closure of the current round. The player responsible for the end of the game receives another victory point. For the final scoring everyone adds his or her collected points, with unused houses costing one minus point each.

Easy Access

So far, the function of the office bearers hasn't been explained. Their number was reduced from nine to four during the game's development. In order to make use of an office bearer's support, the active player simply declares which person it involves. The postmaster allows you to draw two city cards instead of one, while the "postillon" entitles you to play two cards at once. If you are unsatisfied with the six cards on open offer, you can use the bailiff (Amtmann) to exchange all these cards. Finally, the wainwright (Wagner) facilitates the purchase of a coach, even if the route is actually too short by one or two stations.

While access is easy thanks to the straightforward rules, novices lack a feeling for the right decisions. But this doesn't matter much later, because the rules of this game are consistent, and can easily be memorized before you start to play a second game.

The tactical considerations are more difficult to describe: should you use a short route for the scoring and do without a coach and long route points in order to secure the area bonuses? Is it better to place your houses in three Bavarian cities or one each in Tyrol, Baiern, and Salzburg? Everything has its advantages and disadvantages; so it's never irrelevant which direction a mail coach takes. Of course, you should always try to get hold of a coach card, and avoid building routes through cities where you already own mail stations if possible. An optimal turn achieving everything at once is pretty much never accomplished, something needs to be given up practically every time. Especially the conditions under which houses may be placed are an elegant trick, comparable to the placement of pieces in *Carcassonne*. It's often such rather inconspicuous rules that create high quality of game play.

Sometimes, the current situation tempts you to change or entirely abandon your former plans. For example, you may preventively secure Pilsen, the only city bordering Lodz, to be prepared for a future route. But miscalculations are punished by the point system. Players scoring for areas or long routes later than the others receive less or – in an extreme case – no points at all. One needs to stay on top of things in order to set the right priorities.

The bonus rewards are carefully balanced, so a search for perfect routes to victory is in vain. There isn't even a recognizable advantage or disadvantage at the beginning: while the players with a later turn can react to the triggering of the game's end during the last round, the player with the first turn has an earlier opportunity to earn a bonus instead.

Due to the constructive approach of the simultaneously developing route networks, all players have their sense of achievement. Only the point penalty caused by the time limit creates a footrace and thus competitive pressure. So *Thurn und Taxis* is in no way free from viciousness. The existing routes, together with the stations already built offer plenty of clues about who urgently needs which card. Therefore, players like to remove such cards before their competitor can take them, keeping them in their hand until the stack is shuffled once more if possible.

Gambling is possible if desired

The impact of luck is not insignificant. When the last Bavarian city needed doesn't seem to want to appear, it's almost exasperating. And players who hope for the right card and therefore don't finish a route, even when they don't hold a card for its continuation, risk having to discard all their already placed cards in a route during the following round. "How many times has Sigmaringen been played so far, and who's got it on their hands?" someone might ask who has played Zurich and only holds Ulm in his or her hand. With a good memory and understanding of probability you can gamble for the right card and avoid, canceling your mail coach tour most of the time.

In games with two players, bonus tiles for the areas only differ by one point, moderately changing the game's strategies without doing any harm to the quality. On the contrary, I even like *Thurn und Taxis* with two or three players a little better than with all four participants.

The graphics have turned out very well. The board is clearly and beautifully designed, and all cities show easily recognizable churches and landmarks. The requirement to build routes between adjacent cities increasingly sharpens your perception of where each city is located, providing an additional learning effect in geography, so players who have to read all names upside down soon aren't handicapped anymore.

Thurn und Taxis is not a difficult "freak game," but at the same time it appeals to frequent players. Clever and challenging weighing is needed again and again, but without requiring brooding over things because the options are manageable. The lightness of the process is fascinating. The uncertainty if one will get their desired card creates enormous tension, masterfully held up by the constant presence of intermediate goals. And players who haven't achieved victory despite their skilful planning of routes demand the chance to get even all the more, telling themselves to take coaches in every rating this time, not to waste cards on it, occupy Passau early on, not to start in the West and so on.

This is a sophisticated, and in every respect well-rounded composition without rival in its genre.
Christwart Conrad

Average Spielbox Marks

[...]

Rounded to the first digit after the comma. In brackets: number of marks involved.

Less and More at the Same Time

Glanz und Gloria took an unusual step, just as if it wanted to reach the game press audience on the first try. The first *Thurn und Taxis* add-on didn't complicate the original game but rather offered a simpler rule alternative for the geographical set. Yet "Alle Wege führen nach Rom" meanwhile also caters for people who can never get enough adjusting screws.

As a counterpart to Baiern (Bavaria), the geographical alternative of Northern Germany offers a two-part Prussia. The free trade cities of Frankfurt, Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck – neither states nor parts of the states surrounding them – prove a bit awkward during the placement of houses but come with their own bonus tiles. So far, so familiar.

A completely different matter is the office bearers because the wainwright (Wagner) is missing. The rationalization for this includes all the coach cards. On the backside of each North German city card there are one, two, or three horses showing. Whoever takes a card can either add it openly to his or her route, or use it face-down as coach horse(s). The number of coach horses limits the route length to between three and eight cities. Luckily, the coach everyone receives instead of his or her headquarters at the start is equipped with two horses. Unlike their fellows, these don't have to be discarded after the end of a round, so you don't always fall back to zero.

A welcome breathing space is based on the ability to use some city cards together with horses when nothing suitable has shown up to continue a longer route. It happens only very rarely that you have to shed your whole setup in frustration. Because players don't need to continually work their way up with coaches, a tedious and not quite uncomplicated duty disappears, and so does the *raison d'être* for the wainwright. But if you miss him, you can also play on the new board by the old rules without problems.

Game Within the Game

"Glanz und Gloria" doesn't work without the basic game because the houses and the original set of rules are not included. This material doesn't have to be bought twice, but it's not possible to purchase the north map instead of the south. And regarding "Alle Wege führen nach Rom," it doesn't make sense either. "Die Audienz," the larger of both variants in the package, extends the game towards the south, although not in the familiar way.

Five coaches in the colors of the five states are on their way to Rome, each occupied by one envoy of every player. Whenever a coach arrives in Rome, the tile-shaped passengers visit the appropriate papal clerk and are placed on the corresponding audience space on the bottom of the board. Envoys

that are already there are removed from the game. In the end, every tile on an audience space yields one to five victory points depending on its rank.

Obviously every player strives to have the coach with his high-ranking envoys arrive in Rome as late as possible to prevent them from being displaced. Timing is required because the coach is not supposed to still be on its way when the game ends. The coaches are moved one field for each city on which no house is placed when finishing a round. Moving southwards is an obligation but nobody is forced to choose the shortest route.

Without question this part of the add-on is beautifully done, but it can be considered doubtful that it pays off to base the coordination of your route on who moves which coach towards Rome at what time. Because the envoys are hidden in the coaches and thus invisible until they arrive at Rome, it's hard to guess who is acting according to a plan anyway: if a player is bluffing or has simply forgotten the location of his cardinal and his altar boy.

Unimposing

The counter sheet is largely taken up by the materials for "In Amt und Würden." 26 tokens show one office holder each. Players making use of an office holder receive a token. As soon as no office holders are left, which happens faster with the wainwright (4) than with the postmaster or postillion (8), every player has to submit one to four different tokens, which – depending on the number – enables them to get a city card, a victory point chip, or the right to place a house. Thanks to a small overview card, you neither need to memorize this bonus scale nor look it up in the instructions.

Although the variant seems rather unimposing, and runs alongside every player turn despite the additional move, it is still challenging. Inserting a house that would be hard to place in the traditional way for four tokens must not be underestimated, especially in the middle of a game. For this, one gladly puts one's preference for certain office holders on the back burner in favor of a more balanced utilization.

With its fortunate relationship between effort and effect, "In Amt und Würden" reminds one of "Kurier der Fürstin." In this add-on (a supplement in *Spielbox 5/2006*), the first house in each city earns one telegram (Depesche). Every two telegrams (or just one if the player currently owns the courier piece) allows you to secure the services of another office holder during your turn.

Whereas it's been a common practice among publishers for years to keep at least their award-winning games in the public eye with add-ons, opinions on their reasonableness generally differ. The views range from "always with everything" to "only pure." The material offered for *Thurn und Taxis* doesn't aim to convince extremists of one belief or the other. Yet they do give reason to get a terrific game that has already been around for some time back on the table. In the case of *Glanz und Gloria* even a "light" version that is not one iota less good than the original.

Matthias Hardel

[engl. Regeln Stone Age + Kultstätte liegen bereits vor]

The Staff of Hans im Glück

Down to Earth

For small publishers, shrinking back to normal size after the boom of a „Spiel des Jahres“ (game of the year) has subsided is tough. Hans im Glück did not become the victim of a bloated apparatus, also because they entrusted partners with the personnel-intensive distribution of their games. It was the same with Fun Connection soon after the release of *Drunter & drüber*: a congenial partner was found in Blatz (Schmidt Spiele). This allowed them to run the show with only two full-time employees. Here is some (self-written) information on Dirk Geilenkeuser, Georg "Schorsch" Wild and newcomer Moritz Brunnhofer.

Dirk Geilenkeuser was born in 1973 in Bergisch-Gladbach but moved to Würzburg at the age of three. There he and his two older siblings made an early acquaintance with games like *Sagaland* and *Scotland Yard*, as well as classics like chess or skat. In 1985 he found a copy of *Spielbox* in a small library – and from there fate took its course. He subscribed to the magazine and ordered older issues. Every article was absorbed, building the first basis for his ensuing career. Games were bought at flea markets at a good price. At the beginning of his studies, Dirk founded the “Würzburger Spielerlei” with friends, the first open game club in Würzburg. Game reviews in the “Schmidt” city magazine led to a visit to the Toy Fair Nuremberg in 1995 where he sat at Volker Weitzel’s table during the first Goldsieber evening. This and many other fortunate coincidences resulted in full-time employment at Hans im Glück after finishing his business studies in 1998, at first with the focus on designer contacts. From 2000 on, when Volker Weitzel left the publisher, Dirk was responsible for all office work, since 2002 supported by Georg Wild. Today he mainly manages the organization of all the publisher’s parts. This ranges from the accounting for designers to communicating with foreign partners and writing game rules. Even after ten years the work is still a plum job that perhaps would never have become reality without discovering *Spielbox*.

Schorsch Wild writes about himself: After my fluent entrance I’ve been a full-time staff member of Hans im Glück for about five years. Unfortunately, I can’t really be much more precise. Already during my professional career, which has included geriatric care, one of the then very hip internet start-up companies, and heaps of typical student jobs, I also landed – due to my personal turmoil – in the game testing circle around Dieter Hornung.

After that, the enormous success of *Carcassonne* opened the publisher’s doors to me (thanks Klaus-Jürgen!) because this success not only led to all kinds of banks driving trucks full of money to the publisher, but also to all sorts of people unloading trucks full of work. One day Dirk asked me if I could do some of this work in exchange for some of the money.

At this time the professional turmoil had abated in favor of studying social pedagogy. After this study’s maximum duration I couldn’t delay the graduation any longer and (rather unsuccessfully) applied for youth work. Luckily Dirk asked me again if I couldn’t do even more work (for even more money).

I would have been foolish if I had said no to that. This was about the time the fluent entrance started via mini and part-time jobs which meanwhile has become a full-time employment, giving me a dream job, the occasion to visit cities (outside the working hours) and ride a (hair style damaging) motorbike.

Moritz Brunnhofer about himself: As my parents’ only son, in a way I grew into gaming. I played games together with my father early on, and he almost never let me win. He taught me to play fair right from the start because otherwise no victory is a gain.

Nevertheless, my way to Hans im Glück wasn’t exactly linear. Not having to serve in the military, I had some time after school, which I spent very productively in Munich’s nightlife. Then, after I had worked in the amusement segment for not very imaginative all-inclusive tourists on Crete for a few months, and in the end also established Hans im Glück games there, I flew back and moved into my own apartment. With much interest but little zest I started studying physical technology, which captivated me for two whole semesters. Subsequently, I attended a school for project and event management. Of course college life needed an adequate amount of free space as well. After a promising but fruitless search for internship in Munich’s event scene, I dropped by at Hans im Glück again. And lo, I immediately liked it. Not completely inexperienced, I quickly found my way and can now participate in a very productive fashion.