

deducts \$5,000 from the player's ultimate end-game total.

After the cowardly players have withdrawn and their cards are discarded unrevealed, the remaining players must face the music. If anyone played a 'triple bang' card, their target opponent is gunned-down, suffers a wound, and is knocked out of the round. If a player suffers three wounds, he is out of the game. The remaining players then reveal their cards. Players who were the target of a bang suffer a wound and are likewise knocked out of the round. 'Chick' cards have no effect. Any surviving players discard their cards and divide the loot amongst themselves.

Here's the rub, though: the money must be divided evenly. Since the denominations are \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$20,000, occasionally the money will not be able to be divided evenly. If this occurs, the money remains in the pile until the next round, when five new cards are added to the pot. Otherwise, surviving players take their equal share and add it to their stash.

Players then repeat this procedure seven more times until all players have depleted their stash of cards. Surviving players tally their total cash, and subtract \$5,000 for each shame marker they have collected. The gangster who successfully grabbed the most loot is victorious and the envy of the underworld.

Several variants are included with the game, including advanced rules, which give each player a 'super' power. Each player receives a special card which can be played at any time. There are ten potential powers which grant a variety of abilities, including increased stamina, bonuses for exterminating gangsters, or the ability to choose your target after everyone else. There is also the 'insane gangster', who carries a grenade and wounds all gangsters still standing that round. Ouch. These powers are fun, but some are considerably more powerful than others. This can be a bit unsatisfying if folks take the game too seriously.

The game is one of bluff and guesswork: did that gangster aiming his gun at you play a 'chick' card, or is he really going to shoot you? It is also one of playing the odds and risk assessment. You might be willing to take a chance if only one gangster is

aiming at you, but if two or three gangsters have you in their sights, is it prudent to remain in the round and chance receiving multiple wounds? It may well be if the potential 'take' is rich.

Since bullet cards are discarded face-down if a player withdraws from a round or is shot by a 'triple bang' card counting is not completely accurate. Usually, you cannot be 100% sure of the identity of the cards remaining in a player's hand, so you must be content with taking calculated risks.

But lest you think the game has a hidden layer of strategy or depth to it, don't be fooled: it doesn't. It is truly a light game that allows players to get into their character, point toy guns at each other, and act silly. Sometimes silly can be, well, just too silly. Other times, however, it can be fun. Cash 'N' Gun\$ provides the latter: good, silly fun.

EARLY REACTION

Dan Blum

If you don't mind a game with lots of chaos and simulated violence, this is a good example of the game - it moves quickly and requires just enough thought to be interesting. If you don't like games like that, avoid this like the plague. I like playing games of this sort every now and then, generally late at night. If this were somewhat cheaper I'd probably get a copy. As it is it's rather pricey for what is essentially a smilish card game - the foam guns look neat but are not really necessary.

CAYLUS

Ystari

2-5 players, 60-150 minutes

designed by William Attia

reviewed by Stuart Dagger

Ystari first came to our attention a year ago with Ys, a well received game whose core mechanisms reminded people of those in Richard Breese's game Keydom (the game later published in a revamped version as *Morgantland* in Germany and as *Aladdin's Dragons* in the States). Caylus is their new offering and it has again been well received, topping the Essen rankings list generated by the readers of the German magazine *Fairplay*.

And it too has core mechanisms reminiscent of those in Keydom. To an outsider it looks as though one half of the Breese game provided the initial spark for Ys, while the other half did the same for Caylus. Only this time there is a flavouing of Keythedral in there as well. If the Ystari people don't have a small shrine to Richard in a corner of their office, it is about time they did. However, these observations are not intended as strictures. There is a world of difference between the wholesome lifting of someone else's work and the use of a good idea that someone else has had as the inspiration to create something new of one's own, and the two Ystari games are comfortably at the honourable end of the spectrum. Richard can feel flattered, but he has no real cause to feel aggrieved.

In Keythedral, players try to collect resource cubes, which come in a variety of types, and then hand over specified combinations in order to help "build the cathedral", scoring victory points as they do so. The story line in Caylus is pretty much the same: collect resource cubes representing wood, stone, food, and so on, and then use them to build things. The big thing being built this time is a castle. So we have the same resource cube idea and the same basic scenario, but from there the games are completely different.

The board has three areas, the first of which is the castle, where pieces will be played to mark the progress of the building work. The castle comes in three sections: dungeon, walls and towers. They will be completed in order and things happen with the scoring as each section is completed. The second area is a chart. The king hands out favours, mainly in connection with work on the castle. They come in four types and the chart is used to mark your progress in each. The third, and largest, area represents the settlement that is growing up round the castle. At the start of the game it is just a village, but more buildings will be added to serve the growing needs of the population and of the castle. Victory points come partly from helping to build the castle and partly from helping to expand the town, which is strung out ribbon-development style along a road - a fact that is the basis of several of the game's clever and novel subsystems.

The road begins with six special buildings, of which more later. There is then a bridge, followed by six sites which will be filled at the start with a set of neutral buildings - those of the original village. There are then a couple of fixed, "pre-printed on the map", basic buildings whose sites can't be further developed and whose function is to guarantee that the two basic actions needed to ensure that the game keeps moving will always be available. After that comes the road where the new buildings will go, each on the site next after that of its predecessor. Two special pieces - the bailiff and the provost - begin the game on the last of the neutral buildings.

The buildings to be built by the players come in four types: wood, stone, residential and prestige. At the start of the game only the wooden ones are available.

Each player has 6 workers and on your turn you either pay to place one of them on to the board, or you pass, in which case you are out for the rest of the placement phase. A worker may be placed either on a building that is not already occupied or in the build area for the castle. If it goes on a building, you will gain either the resources or the action that the building offers; if it goes in the castle area, you are undertaking to put at least one of your "houses" into the construction of the castle. Don't do the second of these unless you are sure that by the time that phase of the turn comes round, you will have the necessary resources, for the king gets cross with defaulters.

In the early stages of the placement phase it costs 1 denier to place a worker, and even this can be too much if you have ambitions to place all six, as money is tight. However, it won't stay at 1. As players pass, they place a marker on the bridge and this drives up the cost of placements for those that remain - a neat little device that enables you to affect other people's plans by shifting things they'd like to do into the "too expensive" category.

After everyone has passed, the provost is moved and his position will be important in the next phase, for only buildings that aren't ahead of him on the road will be activated. One of the special buildings gives its occupier the opportunity to

move him up to three spaces either backwards or forwards, an action that costs you nothing (beyond what you paid to put your worker there in the first place). Then, as the "building activation" process crosses the bridge, each player (in the order in which they passed) has the opportunity to move him further. You can again move him up to three spaces in either direction, but this time it will cost you 1 denier per space. Buildings then continue to be activated until the provost's square is reached.

Each of the neutral and basic buildings either gives you a resource cube, enables you to buy a cube, enables you to sell a cube or gives you the right to build a wooden building. Note that you can't just decide to erect a wooden building; you have to gain the right to do so by assigning a worker to the appropriate building, and you can't do that if someone else has got there first. This pattern will continue with the stone, prestige and residential ones. Fortunately, with the wooden buildings there are two of these squares and so there isn't a bottleneck restricting the early development.

Building a wooden building costs you resource cubes and gives you victory points, both when you build it and subsequently when another player places a worker there. The wooden buildings are, for the most part, like the neutral and basic ones in their effects, but give better rewards. For example, whereas only single cubes were on offer in the earlier buildings, the wooden ones will offer you two. I say "for the most part" because there are two that break the pattern. One is the mason, who offers the right to put up a stone building, and the other is the lawyer, who gives you the right to replace either a neutral building or one of your own wooden ones by a residential building. Stone buildings, like the wooden ones, follow a "similar but better" pattern in what they offer, while the residential ones give you extra income. The residential ones are also a necessary preliminary step if you want to erect a prestige building.

Having dealt with all the buildings, attention now turns to the castle. Everyone who has put a worker there must make good their promise to add at least one house to the area. They can add

more if they wish. Each of these builds costs resource cubes and gives you instant victory points. Renegade on your promise to the king and you lose victory points.

The turn then ends with the bailiff moving either one or two spaces along the road – two if the provost is ahead of him on the road; one otherwise. The progress of the bailiff controls when the game will end and can trigger one of the intermediate scorings. So the speed at which he goes is something that matters, and since it is the provost who controls his speed, this is another thing that you need to bear in mind at the point earlier in the turn when the opportunity to move the latter occurs. Shifting the provost can not only decide whether certain buildings are activated, it will decide the movement of the bailiff.

You will have realised by now that turn order matters, since going first is the only way to guarantee that you can place a worker in whichever building matters most to you. This, like the movements of the two officials, is handled in clever fashion. Instead of the usual "shift the start player marker one to the left" routine, there is a building that gives the right to adjust the turn order in your favour. Like the square that gives you the right to shift the provost, it is one of the "specials" that are positioned before the bridge. Another in this set gives you money. There is also one that gives you the right to buy a royal favour.

Royal favours give you stuff – money, victory points, cubes, etc. You get them either by purchase from the special square I have just mentioned, from erecting certain of the prestige buildings or by matters to do with the building of the castle. There is one on offer on each turn in which at least one player adds to the castle. It goes to whoever who added the most houses this turn, with "first to add" being the tie-breaker. They are also given out when each of the three sections of the castle is "completed". This occurs either in the natural way of "all relevant spaces are filled" or when the bailiff arrives at the appropriately marked spot on the road. These section completions are the "scorings" I referred to earlier and when one occurs, it is a matter of counting how many houses you have placed in the current section of the castle. If you haven't placed any, you

will lose victory points; if you have placed at least two, you will get one or more royal favours.

What you can take as a royal favour is dependent on where your markers are on each row of the relevant chart. The further along a row you are, the better the reward you can take.

Caylus is a game that takes a long time to describe, not because it is overly complicated, but because there is a lot going on. It all hangs together and the helpful graphics, together with the phase structure, make it quite easy to learn, but there is a lot to think about and it is necessary both to plan ahead and to keep a watch on what the others are doing. The time I have given for the game is the one that is printed on the box, but I find it difficult to imagine how anyone could play it in an hour. A 2-player game with very experienced players, maybe, but with four or five inexperienced ones you will need the full two / two and a half hours. That makes it long by the standards that are currently fashionable among mainstream publishers, but I, for one, don't mind in the least. Caylus is two and a half hours well spent, and it well deserves the high marks given to it by the Fairplay scouts. There are too many games I have still to play for me to be handing out "best in show" awards just yet, but this is sure to be a contender.

EARLY REACTIONS

Neil Walters

Impressive design from Ys. Tough choices have to be made where to concentrate your workers and forces you to get your priorities right. Definitely a long learning curve as I found it extremely easy to get actions in the wrong order! The sequencing of the different building types for each game ensures solid replay value, and I look forward to many future plays.

Greg Schloesser

This is a deep, intricate game that requires detailed planning, foresight, and strategies. Each turn is filled with vital decisions, all of which have a direct impact upon a player's fate. This isn't a game you will likely play with your young children or the friendly, elderly lady next door. But for those who enjoy tight, challenging games filled with a myriad of important decisions and

numerous strategic options, however, Caylus is an engrossing game.

Alan How

Beautiful production values, lots of interaction, loads of decisions and plenty of planning options. Right up my street and I look forward to many more games.

DAREBASE

Matt Worden Games

2 players, 15 minutes

designed by Matt Worden

reviewed by Alan How

Darebase is a 2-player abstract strategy game. It features an 8 by 11 grid and the aim is to get your players to capture the flag – as in the school yard theme. In the game, there are five player pawns on each side and they tag (capture) one another to take them out of the game. Reducing the number of players makes it easier to capture your opponent's flag or achieve one of the objectives of the scenario you are playing. The mechanics are well thought through. Each player is assigned a power rating with higher ratings able to tag lower rated opponents. The players are represented on the board by numbered wooden pawns and their corresponding power values are displayed on chunky wooden cubes.

The key to the game is the dice and like Matt's previous game (Castle Danger), the mechanics are nicely worked out. Initially three six sided dice are rolled and arranged in a lowest to highest sequence. The two lowest are usable and allow one of the numbered pawns to be entered on the board. The distance it moves is governed by the one of these dice and the number of the one used is the other. A '6' is a wildcard for any of the pawns while doubles also allow free choice of pawn. On the next turn, the lowest die is re-rolled and placed at the end of the row (no longer necessarily in sequence). The two non-rolled dice are then used to move a pawn a distance on the grid. This gives a progression to the dice, while allowing some control over what your opponent will be doing. The planning aspect makes the game edge up a notch in execution. The power