

THE Campaigner

Issue 25



Burger Up
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LIFE



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It's a way of life

Prototype test for *Sand Castles*.

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**MOTIVE
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Editorial

Matthew Lee, Editor

contact@thecampaignermagazine.com

I am pretty excited.

Ever since learning about the game. Backing the Kickstarter. Adding it to my collection. The entire time I have known about it, I have loved *Burger Up*. And finally I get to pick Matt Parkes brain and learn all about its development.

Which is kind of Matt because, for some reason, I lose my mind when I am around him. He has every right to completely ignore me. And with just cause!

On the final day of PAXAus last year he had the dubious honour of demoing *Burger Up* in the Rule & Make booth directly across from where I stood promoting *The Campaigner*. Rather than do my job, of introducing people to the magazine, I was instead stopping passersby and pointing out Matt to them.

I may even have just stood and screamed "It's Matt Parkes!" while gesturing wildly at him, at one point. That might be something I imagined though. (I didn't imagine it.)



Matt Parkes teaching *Burger Up* during PAXAus 2017.

Of course, everyone else had no idea who or what I was talking about, and I didn't care. Everyone in the world should know about Matt and his amazing game. I may have been star struck. Or it may have been that last lunatic surge of insane energy brought on by lack of sleep, poor diet for the last few days, and months of stress.

And yet, Matt has remained a friendly and valuable contact (and technically a work colleague, now that I have done some jobs for Rule & Make). Which I think speaks a lot about the Australian tabletop industry. It is growing daily, but still, it is quite a small collection of people. At the moment it is as much a family as an industry. I say family because everyone doesn't always get along, but make it work anyway. Which is a nice environment to launch something like the Kanga Award into.

If you aren't familiar with Kanga you can read one of the judges, Ella Ampongan, talking about the award in the last issue. But as part of Australian tabletop media I have had a hand in shaping Kanga, and helped to bring this first award period to fruition. And what a journey it has been.

We will likely explore the development and implementation of Kanga in a future issue. But for now, suffice to say that bringing the award to life has been challenging, but as rewarding as I had hoped. It is quite an experience being involved in the distillation of a group of people's ideas and beliefs into a definable set of criteria.

A lot of work has gone into, and continues to be done on, this award. I hope that it is received in the spirit with which we have created it. But I guess time will tell.

Until next issue. ✕

The Campaigner looks at the most notable events in the recent months, and explores the real facts behind the stories.

Leaving the game behind

In a surprising announcement Christian T. Petersen revealed that he would be stepping down from his role as CEO of Asmodee North America. Petersen founded Fantasy Flight Games, where he was its CEO until it merged with Asmodee in 2014. At this time he moved into his role of CEO of Asmodee North America.

As Petersen exits his role, Asmodee North America will transition into two distinct business units: Asmodee North America Publishing led by Steve Horvath, and Asmodee North America Distribution led by Andre Kieren. Petersen is scheduled to vacate his position at the end of 2018. ✕



Out of the deep dungeon

Popular roleplay show Critical Role announced their split from Geek & Sundry. The team has created its own studio space, and will be producing all new shows independently going forward. Established shows like Critical Role VOD will still be released via Geek & Sundry.

You can keep up to date with Critical Role news, or purchase its merchandise, at critrole.com ✕



Undone

Tournament focussed event Unrivaled was forced to cancel its 2018 instalment. It announced in May that it would be returning in 2018 for a second 'Championship Season', with a total prize pool of USD\$300,000. This was up from the previous years prize pool of USD\$250,000.

However one month later in June Unrivaled was forced to cancel the event. The organisers cited money issues with Oomba Inc, the social media company that owns Unrivaled, for the cancellation.

A statement on the Unrivaled website explained the decision. "Recent unexpected changes have occurred with the financial status of our parent company, Oomba, Inc. Given these changes we are no longer confident that we will be able to fulfill a quality product for this year's Unrivaled tournament. We believe it is in everyone's best interest that we cancel the event this year and do everything in our power to make all partners and participants whole. This orderly wind-up will be taking place immediately. It is with our deepest regret to announce this change in plans."

The Unrivaled website (unrivaled.com) is still live, though no details of future events have been released. ✕

For the Emperor

In its 2017-2018 annual report, Games Workshop displayed a sharp increase in profits for the financial year. The 2016-2017 year saw the company with a pre-tax profit of £38.4m, whereas this year it rose to £74.5m. As part of this result staff with Games Workshop shared a £5m bonus.

This follows on from a year where Games Workshop has been growing the variety of its range. Stand alone games have begun to feature more heavily, as well as licensed products such as the recently announced *Munchkin Warhammer 40,000*. ✕

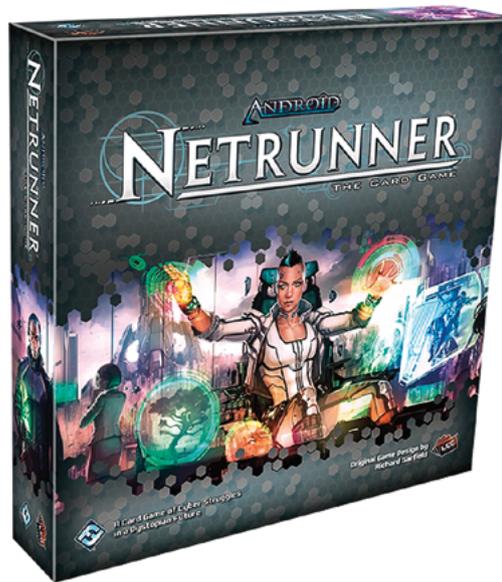
The trials of Oz

The Australian Government introduced new GST rules for online purchases. These new rules apply a 10 percent tax to all items purchased from international sellers. The previous threshold had been a AUD\$1000 minimum before tax needed to be applied.

In response Amazon blocked all Australian buyers from accessing their international site. Instead visitors are redirected to the .com.au version of Amazon, which offers a smaller selection of items. eBay had previously threatened a similar action, but upon the announcement of the GST revealed their plan to institute a GST collection system that should work worldwide.

Australian tabletop game design and publishing companies also expressed concern in the tax. Most tabletop industry utilises international manufacturing to affordably create their games, with many concerned that the added GST on their stock coming in will affect their ability to produce the games in an affordable way.

The main concern has been, while the GST applies to the company they are contracting, it is most likely that the manufacturers will just add the tax cost to the total. ✕



Close down the Netrunner

With the licensing period coming to an end Fantasy Flight Games revealed that it would no longer be producing *Android: Netrunner The Card Game*. The Netrunner license is owned by Wizards of the Coast. Sales of the game will cease late October, though Fantasy Flight Games still holds licenses to create and publish other game set in the Android universe.

Released in 2012 *Android: Netrunner The Card Game* provided innovative mechanics influenced by the original collectable card game. Fantasy Flight Games run of the game is being capped off with the deluxe expansion *Reign and Reverie*. ✕

Kanga

At the end of July new award Kanga revealed its finalists. Titles included *Barenpark*, *Lisboa*, *Skyward* and *The Lady & The Tiger*. You can find the full list of finalists on the Kanga Facebook page at facebook.com/KangaAward ✕



Interview by Matthew Lee

There are many who couldn't imagine a world without The Game Crafter. It offers a service that not only supplies game pieces, but allows designers to realize their creative visions. Not only that, The Game Crafter is surrounded by a sizable community, which the company actively supports while drawing inspiration and direction from it.

This issue we talk to one of the co-creators of The Games Crafter, Tavis Parker. He discusses how the business went from an idea to a global phenomenon, the logistics of offering an ever expanding range of products, and the success stories to come out of the community.

The Game Crafter, as we know it today, was created by you, JT Smith and Jamie Vrbsky. How did you know each other?

We were friends as well as business partners in a software company called Plain Black Corporation. We developed a content management system called WebGUI that was used by small businesses, universities, non-profits, large corporations, and the US government. While it's still in use today in several organizations, we have scaled back that business and focus on The Game Crafter and our other gaming-related businesses.

How did you hit upon the concept of The Game Crafter? Was it a mutual creation, or did one of you approach the others with the idea?

Our CEO, JT Smith, proposed the idea during a partner meeting and I thought it was an interesting idea but that there would be no market for such a thing. I believe I asked him if he was on drugs, because we were developing/deploying complex websites for our customers and suddenly he wants to go off and start making board games for people?!



The creators of The Game Crafter.



Donated designers table at Protospiel Milwaukee.

What made the idea of a system which allows people to create their own games and game components attractive?

After further discussion, he eventually explained that there was no one really out there who could make a nice prototype of a board game without charging hundreds of dollars and making it by hand. He thought we could use our technology/software background to make the process easier and cheaper for anyone interested in making a game.

When you first started out did you know there was a market for a service like The Game Crafter?

We didn't know how big the market would be. We thought if we could get to 100 orders a month in our first 6 months (we launched in July 2009) that it could be a successful side business. However, we got that in our first month (selling over 300 games!) and so we realized we needed to get an office and see what happens. This was driven more by JT's passion for game design and board games than research. But we know the core issue of there not being any way to make a prototype and we knew we could solve the problem with this business.

How did you decide on the scale of this initial endeavour?

On all of our businesses we try to boil down what we think the minimum viable product (MVP) is and release that. So the three partners hashed this out in terms of: 1 - What we had the capability to produce; 2 - What we thought we could sell in decent quantity; 3 - What we could afford to make. With JT's passion in board game design, we knew some basic products like poker-size cards, game mats, and basic game pieces (dice, poker chips, joystick pawns, etc.) would sell relatively well because they are the typical building blocks for games.

Our strategy from the beginning was to build a community around our service/business and not just be a business taking money from folks and giving them product. We wanted passionate people in a tight knit community around our business. We knew they would help us refine the website, products, and service. So we started by putting the MVP in place and then letting the community improve upon all aspects of The Game Crafter. That's why today we have 187,000 users worldwide and steady growth!

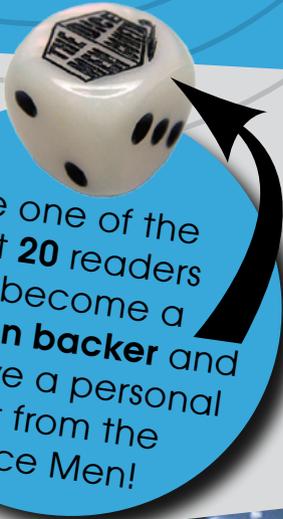
"I believe I asked him if he was on drugs..."

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CROWDFUNDING CHAOS

By Matthew Lee | Hooligans image from Vecteezy.com

Something strange happened on Kickstarter these last few months. By-and-large the community of people crowdfunding their tabletop creations has been pretty good about conforming to legal requirements. You know, requirements like not stealing other people's games or intellectual property.

However by some power from the alignment of the planets, elder god interference, or just dumb luck, a series of tabletop games hit Kickstarter that caused backers to take pause. We are talking about titles which raised serious questions about legality and responsibility.

Let's take a look at three of the most high profile cases. Each of which ended prematurely in an abrupt, but entirely different, way.



Dr Horrible's Evil League of Evil

Born from the Hollywood Writers Guild strike in 2017, *Dr Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* has a large and dedicated fanbase. So when *Dr Horrible's Evil League of Evil* hit Kickstarter in early July there was much excitement. So much so that the campaign flew past its funding goal within a day.

In what will be a recurring theme in this article, shortly after launch people started to ask questions. These questions seem to mostly have been prompted by Lucky Troll Games' first update post, where it briefly mentions that acquiring licensing is "part of the plan". This immediately sounded alarm bells for many backers.

The backers took to the Comment section, posting dozens of similar questions asking for clarification on the licensing status. By the next day Lucky Troll Games had posted another update, apologising for potentially misleading the backers into thinking that they possessed the license. Not long after this Lucky Troll Games opted to cancel the campaign.



Rather than disappear without a word, Lucky Troll Games continued to engage with its audience and provide responses. Later the same month they revealed plans to continue seeking the Dr Horrible license, while also pursuing a backup plan of developing their own theme for the game.

From the explanations given, and the continued information from Lucky Troll Games, it sounds like the licensing issue was an honest mistake. But most certainly legal issues would have arisen once the campaign funded. Either Lucky Troll Games would have been forced to forge ahead with producing a Dr Horrible game and incur the legal penalties brought on by the license holder, or changed the theme to something generic and suffered claims of fraud from the backers.

End result: Cancelled by creator.

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A burger is a wondrous thing. Ingredients carefully sculpted, layered and balanced to create the perfect experience with every bite. But behind every great burger is a chef, toiling away to make a better creation than all others. Restaurants live or die by their culinary decisions. Are you hungry to be the best?



O.G. Cheeseburger

BEEF PATTY

PICKLES

CHEESE

Ketchup SAUCE

Cheddar Cheese CHEESE

Pickles PERFECT SALAD

1

Lettuce SALAD

FE

By Matthew Lee

Food brings people together. So do tabletop games. Which means *Burger Up* might be perfectly positioned for a double helping as a social facilitator.

In it players are chefs, taking turns to build burgers in an attempt to satisfy customer orders. Ingredients are combined by stacking them on top of each other based on matching symbols. The more ingredients added to a burger, the larger and more valuable it is.

However players can't just slap ingredients on left and right. Customer orders contain requirements that must be met in order to claim them. This may be to include, or not use, certain ingredients. Or to make a burger of a certain size. When the requirements are met the player can claim the order, and the associated coins.

The longer orders are left out, while other orders are claimed around them, the more money that will accrue on the card. Once the orders are exhausted players total their money stores, as well as any bonuses, to calculate their prestige. The player with the most prestige is hailed as the best burger chef in town.

Burger Up is for 2-4 players. It was designed by Matt Parkes and published by Rule & Make.

Prep Time

Those familiar with *Burger Up* know that at the centre of the game is a straight forward but elegant stacking mechanic. The way everything fits together, how the theme and gameplay appear seamlessly integrated, makes it seem like the game was approached with a singular purpose. But this isn't the case.

The origins of *Burger Up* are intriguing, because it starts with an entirely separate game. As well as game designer Matt Parkes being a little impetuous. It was through developing an area control game, and reassessing the complexity of it, that caused Matt to explore the possibilities of stacking items as a central design feature.

"[*Burger Up*] came from a single mechanic, taken from a completely different game I was working on." Matt explained. "It was a much, much larger game and was becoming overwhelming in terms of rules, scope and components. I was working on trimming things down and realized that the stacking mechanic was reasonably fun in its own right."

Extracting this portion of the game, and bringing it to the forefront of the mechanics, proved to be an enlightening move. This core mechanical structure caused Matt to recall talking with his partner about game concepts, with two fortuitously seeming to fit the stacking idea perfectly.

"I remembered I'd been discussing a game about ice cream or burgers with my partner and I immediately saw that stacking scoops of ice cream or burger ingredients was a perfect fit!" Matt revealed.

This is where Matt's impulsive nature kicked in. These revelations about the concept that would become *Burger Up* happened the day before a pitch meeting with Rule & Make. A pitch meeting for the area control game the stacking mechanic originated from.

Believing there to be huge potential for a game built around the stacking mechanic, Matt went

about creating an initial prototype using index cards scribbled with crude drawings. As Matt admitted. "I'd been pitching a different game to Rule & Make, and they'd seen a few prototypes and were interested. But literally the night before my first real meeting with them I came up with *Burger Up* and whipped up a prototype. They had a bemused look on their faces when I told them my huge area control game about time-travelling gods had been shelved, and the game was now about burgers. But they went with it."

It was an unexpected development, but one Rule & Make were happy to be a part of. Allen Chang from Rule & Make explained why they ultimately decided to work with Matt on *Burger Up*. "What I feel Rule & Make is good at doing is to package the game with an engaging theme, great art and high production quality. However, fundamentally, the game design has to be solid, unique and fun, and Matt's design had those qualities." Allen said.

Following the Recipe

Matt, along with input from Rule & Make, now began to form the game itself. Early versions saw players constructing burgers as they saw fit, rather than fulfilling orders. While fun to create and name burgers with impunity the game lacked the direction Matt sought.

This quickly led to criteria being introduced, though in a far less structured way than we now know it. Keeping with the stacking theme, players were tasked with creating the burger requirements themselves. "Originally the Order cards were modular and stacked together much like the Ingredients." Matt explained. "Top Bun cards were in the deck and so you had to satisfy the Order card and find a Top Bun card at the right time. This had several problems, but the modularity also meant some Orders would say "Must have no meat and must have bacon" which needed extra rules to work around. It was obvious that it needed changing."



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AVCON 2018

By Luca, Hudson and Matthew Lee | Photos by Matthew Lee





Regular readers will be familiar with *The Campaigner's* AVCon coverage. Ever since the event introduced tabletop we have been keeping an eye on it, watching as it grows and changes.

This year I ran into two people in the Tabletop Room. Luca is eight and Hudson is seven, and both were attending their first AVCon alongside their respective fathers. Both Luca and Hudson's fathers are tabletop gamers, an interest which the boys have inherited.

When I talked to them their insights were fascinating. So with their parent's permission Luca and Hudson agreed to give *The Campaigner* a look into their time in the Tabletop Room, and some of AVCon proper.

Hudson and Luca decided to sample almost everything in the Tabletop Room. This included playing most of the prototype games in the Indie Tabletop Games Area (ITGA). This area seemed to strike a chord with them, and the idea of game designers looking for player's feedback intrigued them.

"I liked helping people play their board games and giving them ideas how to improve." Hudson said. "Because I like helping people. My favourite games there were *Hexcargot*, *Gnomes Come Home* and *MeMO Island*."

"It was cool that they made their own games and they were really good." Luca agreed. "My favourites were *Gnomes Come Home* and *Hexcargot*."

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Simon McGuire

Each issue Featured Hobbyist looks at a member of the community, explores what the hobby means to them and takes a look at some of their collection. This issue we talk to Simon McGuire from South Australia, Australia.



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