

## GameFest 2015 Wrap-Up

Well, WOW!! GameFest Brisbane 2015 was the biggest show yet.. with 58 hours of games played across the 3 days (Friday night to Sunday lunchtime), and more than 30 people registered over the weekend.

Firstly a big GIANT THANK-YOU to everyone for attending, playing, hosting and supporting GameFest, not only this year, but over the previous 5 years as well. Whether you were there in person or in spirit, I have felt everyone's good will over the years.

Secondly, the the games this year were an interesting mix – representing a slight shift in focus, with no less intensity of enthusiasm for events, but with a definite favouring of the role-playing genre, tactical miniatures, horror themes and for trying new game-types (including a very original mash-up game by Ash “The Void Gothic” and a “Artemis”, tabletop-group-co-op game using a LAN network of computers to simulate the bridge crew of a starship.

Of particular note this year was also the overwhelming interest in a couple of games where we needed to run parallel sessions or large groups due to sign-ups for these events: Mice and Mystics and Eldritch Horror and a 9-player game of Formula D!

Of course, the staples of Carcassonne and Settlers of Catan were back, as was Dungeons & Dragons B/X (Basic-Expert). These were joined by the famous deck-building game Dominion, which has been out since Essen 2009 and has been going strong ever since. Thanks for introducing that one to the fold Brendon... ☺

For this year's Saturday night dinner, we ordered-in catering from Robyn's Charcoal Chicken and it seemed well-received.

This year's programme also saw some tinkering by yours truly, as we endeavoured to:

- place all the tactical games in the mornings (when, presumably our minds are sharper.. *though I'm not convinced that was the case for me on Sunday morning! :-)*
- place the Role-plays (or pseudo-RPGs) on the first night (Friday), and in the afternoon of Saturday.
- place the Board-games elsewhere; figuring that times like late Saturday night was the best place to put games that didn't require as much intense concentration.

The use of this year's venue changed somewhat in structure also:

- we included the use (with permission) of the downstairs area (affectionately known as the “Babuska lounge”) for either the more atmospheric or story-telling games or where a more peaceful environment was preferred; which seemed to work OK; *feedback on that is welcome BTW...*

Anyway, enough of my musings.. let's review the game round-up for this year:

**Formula D – Formula-1 Car Racing board game**



On the famous Monaco circuit, the drivers pushed their multi-million F1 cars around the track at breakneck speeds wearing out their tyres, engines, brakes, suspension and gearboxes until there wasn't much more than grinding metal and carbon-fibre left to carry them precariously over the finish line..

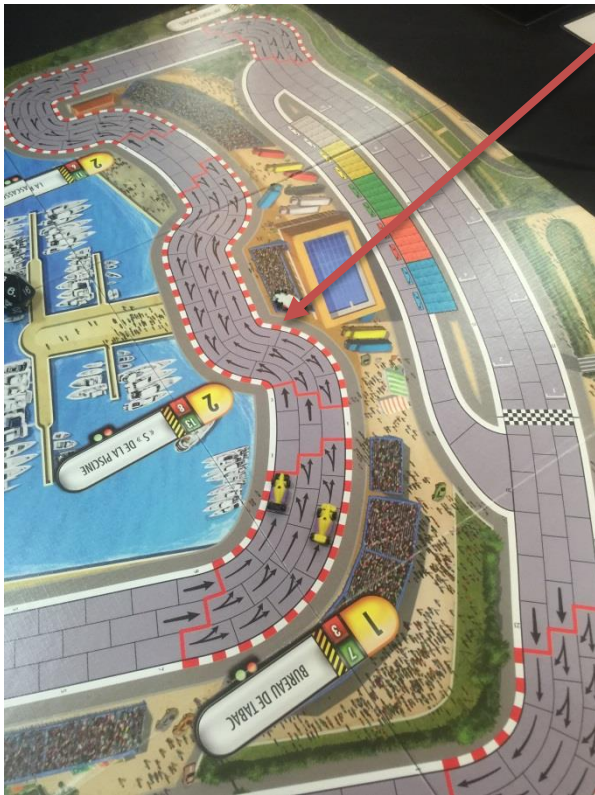


**The Stig** watched-on approvingly, as the drivers paced themselves..





Neck-and-neck action in the corners; and high speeds on the straights was the order of the day..



There were a couple of fiery wrecks which narrowly avoided flash mobs of spectators, but luckily their drivers were catapulted free, landing comfortably on deck-chairs beside the pool; *Pina Colada on stand-by of course..* 😊

...and there was some very tight racing in the S-bend corner:



**Mice and Mystics** – The fantasy adventure game where the players take the roles of heroes transformed into mice.. who must navigate the castle and defeat the plans of the evil queen!



Of course, although being mice allows the heroes to escape prisons meant to hold humans, it does present certain other unforeseen obstacles such as “climbing up onto a towering tabletop to retrieve a weapon” (aka *sewing needle*) only to find a bunch of rats (the evil queen’s guards transformed) waiting there to stop them..!





Due to the high level of interest in this game, we ran two simultaneous sessions!



The story-telling elements in this game are made very real by an advancing 'chapter clock', there being an often an unexpected *turn of the page!* 😊

Nice work Kahni and Andrew N for hosting.. and to Ash for painting a team of mice which certainly added to the visual appeal of this game!

In **Star Wars: Imperial Assault** – *the tactical miniatures game*...

4 new heroes of the Rebel Alliance play as a team to defeat the evil plots of the Empire (*the Gamesmaster*)..

In this episode Luke, Han and Chewie returned to Hoth (after the battle that ) to grab some intel on the Imperial plans. The player's heroes were sent in as a backup team to rendezvous with the trio.. Arriving on Hoth, the Rebels proceeded in a stolen Imperial AT-AT walker to a small Imperial outpost some distance from the captured Rebel stronghold. Luke, Han and Chewie infiltrated the base whilst the players kept watch outside..

Unfortunately, things did not go well, when a couple of AT-ST 'scout' walkers showed-up together with a detachment of storm troopers!

The walkers stood guard whilst the troopers investigated the AT-AT... the fight was on!



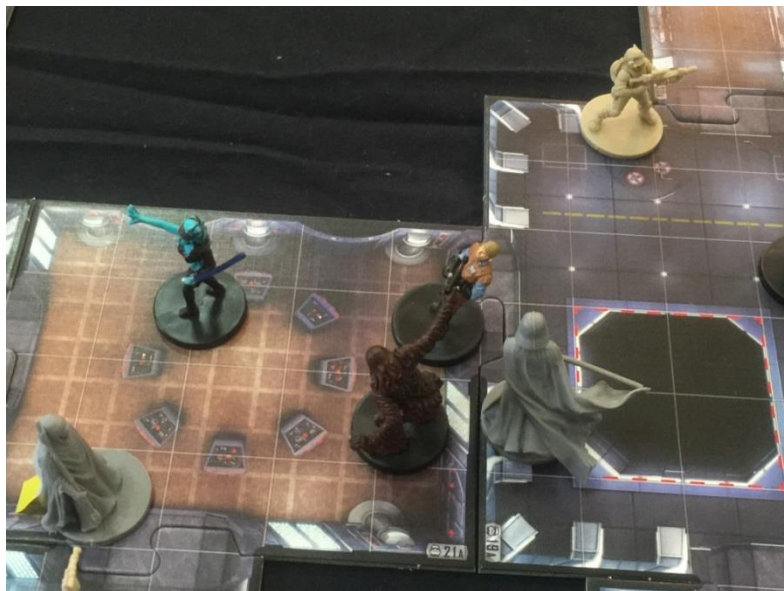
The players fought a pitched battle with the boarding storm troopers...



... and then raced into the base to warn Luke and his buddies.



Luke, Han and Chewie were still working in the control room, as the players encountered resistance within the base including Storm troopers, Royal Red Guards and eventually Darth Vader himself..!!  
*[heavy breathing under...]*



Eventually, the Rebels won out, holding off Darth allowing Luke and co to complete their mission. Luckily, Darth turned out to be a corporeal hologram with a limited run-time, and he vanished with fist shaking at the Rebel scum who defeated his forces. Once back in the AT-AT, the heroes mounted the speeder bikes and raced away before the Imperial AT-ST walkers could react.. **Rebel Mission successful!**



**Eldritch Horror** – a co-operative mystery solving game set in the dark world of the Call of Cthulhu stories by HP Lovecraft...



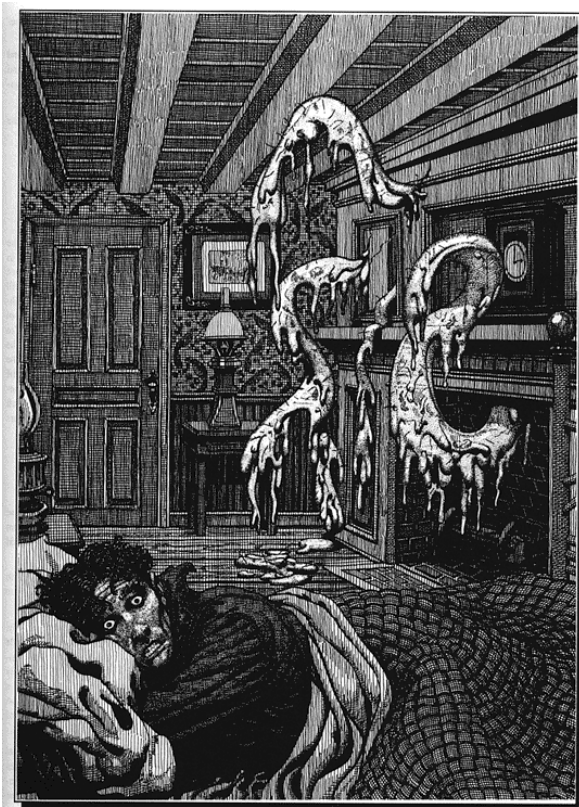
We ran two parallel games in the newly available *Babuska Lounge* downstairs:







... and with the smiles on their faces, it would appear that a 'horror-ble' time was had by all! ☺  
Thanks Drew and Kahni for hosting those games! ☺ There'll be no nightmares I'm sure...



*A sleeping victim awakes as the creature oozes softly into his room.*

**Assassinorum Execution Force** – a tactical game of far future combat set in the Warhammer 40k universe..

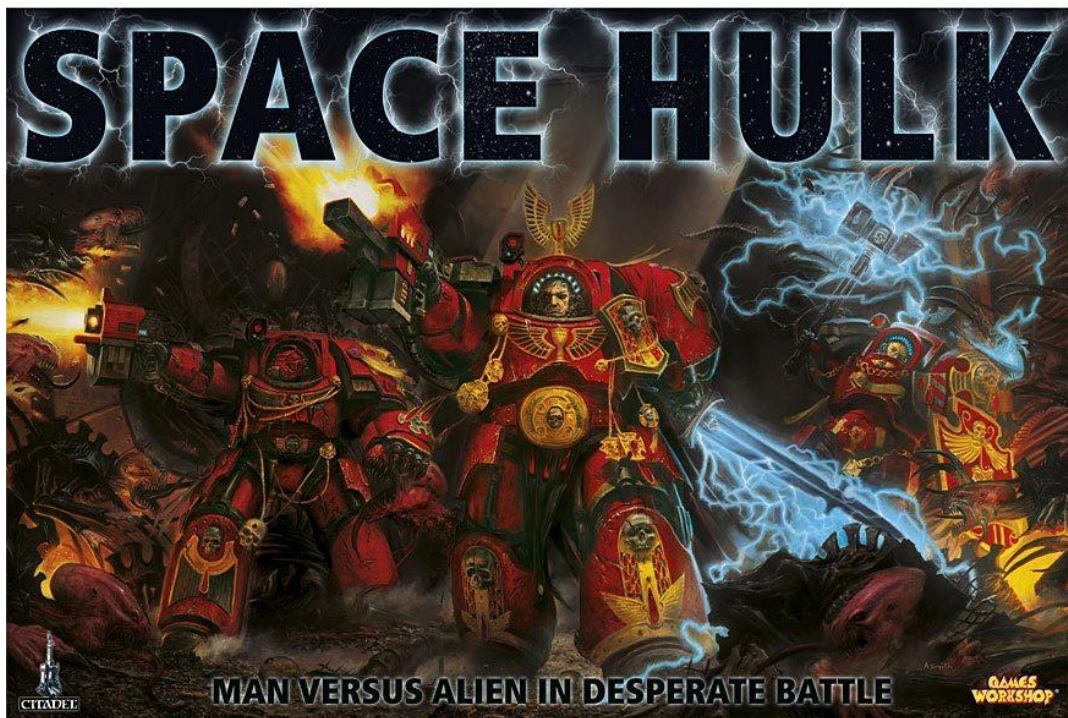


*The players of this game were once again treated to the superlative painting skills of Ash (who also hosted this new high energy combat game.. visual appeal was certainly the order of the day.. Wow!*





The players certainly seemed to enjoy themselves.. Thanks to Ash for looking after my teenage nephew Sean who had a blast, not only playing this game but also..... **Space Hulk:**



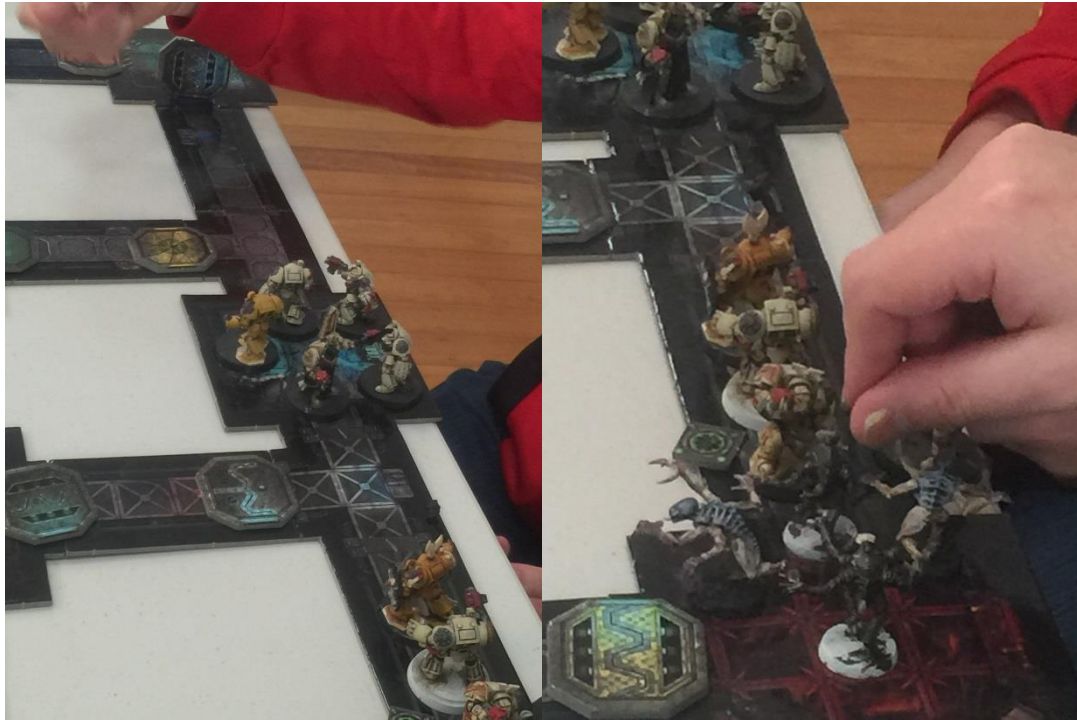




Another visual (and tactile) feast for the senses.. **Thanks to Andrew N. for supplying the board and rules and to Ash for supplying (once again) his superbly painted miniatures..**



Space Marines entered the Hulk on a search and destroy mission against the vile **Tyrnid genestealers..!**



Clearly the blood-letting and explosive combat assaults in this game were of extreme **amusement value:**



**Dungeons and Dragons - BX** –D&D using the ‘Tom Moldvay’ era boxed sets



Although there were no TPKs this year, I did start off the game with an Undead Beholder as the first monster, and one character did die – of course that death could be attributed to another player character accidentally setting off a massive spell-trap explosion which blasted their poor unfortunate colleague into multi-coloured vapour..!

The high-level PCs explored ancient tomb, destroying a lesser Lich, avoiding other deadly traps, animating a sarcophagus lid and recovering an ancient artefact designed to summon and control Black Dragons.



*Overall, the D&D was an excellent nostalgic romp, that I'm likely to run again.*



**HeroQuest** – *dungeon adventure board game. A precursor to games such as Descent.*

As Dungeon-crawlers go, this game is one of the best known and a personal favourite of mine.



With their sci-fi miniatures gaming behind them, Rob and Sean embarked upon Troy's fantasy dungeon bash with gusto... besieging the plans of the evil *Morcar* (GM)..



With wonderfully simple mechanics and some of the *best of breed miniature scenery in it's day* (I still use them in my RPGs to this day), HeroQuest is a delight to play and suitable for older pre-teens and adults alike.

Unfortunately, it's out of print, but you sometimes come across a copy in a thrift shop..





Below: HQ contents when new:



Above: detail of the furniture and dungeon dressing. Figures come unpainted, but the combo of full colour cardboard and plastic really works for many of the pieces even unpainted!

**The Void Gothic** – a sci-fi mash-up game system by Ash.

Set in the Warhammer 40k universe, this fledgling RPG started its life well before GameFest; with Ash play-testing the system and scenario on those who would not actually get to play on the GF weekend... I was in one of the playtests, and remember having a great time.

Ash was going for a mash-up of action-packed combat system with narrative-control elements and a rather elegant personality profile / madness/horror management system.. and I believe he succeeded.





The babushka Lounge provided a relatively quiet environment to run the RPG...



Thanks to Ash for working so hard on this one.. and thanks to all the playtesters that made it possible.. Another GameFest-first! Cheers Ash! ☺

Horror and space-sci-fi – can someone say: *"Event Horizon"*...? ☺



**The Settlers of Catan** – the canonical German board game.



Meanwhile in another part of the Babuska lounge.. several tribes of **Settlers** were vying for control of an idyllic island called **Catan**. What would GameFest be without this classic game.





**Artemis** – a starship bridge-crew simulator.

As mentioned earlier, this was a tabletop-group-co-op game using a LAN network of computers to simulate the bridge crew of a starship.. and it was flamin' awesome fun! What a blast.. 😊

We had several folks take the captain's "chair" (in fact the captain always stood.. it made more sense and was heaps easier to command the crew..) I took the first couple of missions, then Craig had a crack and then Mark S. We also swapped in different crew and the players changed positions to get a feel for different bridge jobs.. including: Helm, Weapons, Engineering, Comms & Science.

We played several missions which ran around half-an-hour each, and we played different scenarios ranging from war on two fronts.. to exploratory missions with less combat.. though, we did tend to get a bit bored when we weren't blowing things up.. 😊



Above: Captain Mills commanding.

It's a great game, and, played-out, it actually NEEDS the whole team to cooperate and be coordinated by the captain else it falls into chaos..



Above: a couple of the crew – view from the other side of the bridge – right foreground: Engineer's console showing damage status of the ship.



Above: a couple of the crew and the main view screen on wall at the front of the bridge.





Above: the main view screen – used mainly by the captain, but the thing that also made this game fun for spectators.. The green circle indicates shield status.



Above: main view screen – Enemy torpedo hot on Artemis' shields.

(Apologies for the washed-photos of the main screen.. they're actually screen-grabs from a short video I shot while playing. *Camera's generally couldn't even see the main screen in full daylight..* but it was just fine for the players - Mark)

**Vikings** – a economic resource management game simulating the requirements of managing a Viking community. Resource pieces include coins, several types of ships and islands. The game is interesting in that “the only interaction between players is indirect contention for resources during the buying phase” (Ref: boardgamegeek).



ERIK THE VIKING Me? Of course! I've been looting and pillaging up and down the coast.  
HELGA (*looking sceptical*) Looting and pillaging, eh?  
ERIK (*on the defensive*) Yes.  
HELGA What about the raping?  
ERIK Shut up! (*mildly annoyed*)





**Betrayal at House on the Hill** – a game of mounting horror and suspense...

The visit to the 'haunted house' started-off innocently enough...





But then strange things started to happen.. the House seemed to have a will of its own!

Perhaps it was the timbre of the GM's voice..?

Perhaps it was the barely discernible picture on the wall beside the weird  
runes on the plaque beside it..?

The ominous narrative twisted this way and that until finally.. you felt the need to  
utter the phrase: *"Curse your sudden yet inevitable betrayal!"* ☺





**Forbidden Desert** - a co-operative game about desert survival. The players are trying to recover a legendary flying machine buried deep in the ruins of an ancient desert city whilst being chased by a deadly sandstorm and scorched by the desert sun.



Happily for our players, they managed to assemble the magical amazing flying boat in time to escape the danger..

**Dominion** – a deck-building game of kingdom making and *one-upmanship*..

*...from the back of the box:*

"You are a monarch, like your parents before you, a ruler of a small pleasant kingdom of rivers and evergreens."...

"To do this you will hire minions, construct buildings, spruce up your castle, and fill the coffers of your treasury. Your parents wouldn't be proud, but your grandparents, on your mother's side, would be delighted."



The stalwart dominion-makers played-on until midnight Saturday.. well-done guys! 😊



**Carcassonne** – another essential German board game..



Good to see it make an appearance at GameFest! ☺ May all your farms be rich ones!



**Tannhauser** – a tactical miniatures board with an occult / alien-science twist..

Tannhauser pits axis vs allies in a World War I that never ended.. Each side is vying for military superiority by either acquiring occult power or alien tech or by denying same to each other. The missions played-out are performed by Special Forces using experimental (sometimes detrimental) devices and super-powers.





**The Great War** – although **Memoir 44** was scheduled for this Game Fest, there were less sign-ups for Sunday morning's session than expected, and so, the host (Troy) ran his newly-acquired Great War game – by Richard Borg, the same designer as Memoir 44.



The trenches of WWI never looked so good! Visually-pleasing as all of the Memoir line has been, this game appears to be another big hit.. I'm sure we'll see more of it at future Game Fests...



George: That's funny sir, because we didn't order those new trench-climbing ladders either.

Blackadder: New ladders?

George: Yeah, came yesterday. I issued them to the men, and they were absolutely thrilled. [calls to Baldrick] Isn't that right men?

Baldrick: [from the doorway] Yes sir, first solid fuel we've had in months.



Once again, and finally, we'd like to say **Thanks** to everyone who attended, visited, supported and/or played at this year's Fest.

We'd also like to thank our hosts: Troy, Brendon, Ash, Drew, Kahni and our backup hosts: Geoff and Paul.

So, it is with a fond farewell we wish you all good-gaming over the coming year, and look forward to seeing you all again next year at Game Fest 2016.

Warm Regards and Thanks,

Mark Mc. and Andrew N.

