

Steve Jackson Games visits Here Be Books & Games

By Tina McDuffie

It was a lovely sunny day. The door was open to let in the fresh air while local gamers gathered around two card tables to enjoy the newest games from game publisher *Steve Jackson Games* as well as previews of soon-to-be released titles. Randy Scheunemann, Playtest Coordinator for the company, introduced five new and soon-to-be released games to *Here Be Books & Games*' visitors during his 4-hour visit from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday, February 23rd.



Clockwise from left: Alicia Calahan, Tim Mierzejewski, Randy Scheunemann and Dave Calahan playing Revolution! by Steve Jackson Games at Here Be Books & Games in Summerville.

Game publisher *Steve Jackson Games* is best known for *Munchkin*,

its hugely popular humorous card game filled with puns and mayhem that pokes fun at fantasy roleplaying. *Munchkin* has since become a successful *line* of games with: 9 expansions to the original; 8 additional themes, parodying westerns (*The Good The Bad and The Munchkin*), kung fu movies (*Munchkin Fu*), the supernatural (*Munchkin Bites*), superheroes (*Super Munchkin*), spy movies (*Munchkin Impossible*), science fiction (*Star Munchkin*) and Lovecraftian fare (*Cthulhu Munchkin*); a *Munchkin* board game (*Munchkin Quest*); and its own *Munchkin Roleplaying Game*.

The 5 games Randy introduced during his visit to *Here Be Books & Games* ran the gamut, including: a political area control game; a push-your-luck Zombie dice game; a quick, portable game you can carry in your pocket; a unique spatial puzzle game; and a bidding/push your luck party game similar to *Liar's Dice*. Here's a closer look.

Revolution!

This three- to four-player game was definitely the star of the show. In *Revolution!*, players secretly bid against their opponents to gain the support of the people, acquire the most influence in the town's establishments (Town Hall, Market, Cathedral, etc.) and gather more Gold, Blackmail, and Force for the next round of bidding! Knowing where to push for support, and where to back away and let your opponents fight, is the key to victory. The player with the most support of the people at the end of the game wins. An expansion that will accommodate 5 to 6 players and add more play options is expected later this year. Suggested ages: 13 and up. Number of players: 3 to 4. Playing time: 1 hour. Retail price: \$39.95. Available now. *Here Be Books & Games* has a demo copy of this and the other games reviewed here in their game library so you can drop by and check them out. They'll even teach you how to play.

Zombie Dice

This was the first game Randy introduced. This humorous game with a zombie theme consists of a colorful dice cup containing 13 special dice in 3 different colors, green, red and yellow. Players take the part of Zombies trying to get as many brains as they can while avoiding getting shotgunned: 3 blasts and you lose all the brains you accumulated that turn and play passes to the next player. The first player to acquire 13 brains wins the game. There's a catch, though. Not all of the dice are created equal. For example, the red dice have more shotgun blast symbols than brains or footprints, the green dice have more brains than blasts, and the yellow dice have an equal number of everything. What did the players think? It's a light, fun game you can learn in a few minutes, that plays quickly and is a good filler while you're waiting for other players to arrive or need a break after playing a brain bender. Lots of laughter and groans are sure to ensue. Suggested ages: 10 and up. Number of players: 2 or more. Playing time: 10 to 20 minutes. Retail price: \$13.13. Expected release: May 2010.

Cthulhu Dice

The name of this very portable game is a misnomer as it consists of a *single*, large, beautiful custom 12-sided die with Lovecraftian symbols. The single die is all you need to play and comes in a variety of luminescent colors. While the *Cthulhu Dice* package also contains 18 glass "marbles," any tokens handy, including pennies or peanuts, can be substituted to keep track of each player's "sanity." Play is quick, 10 to 20 minutes, making this another great humorous filler. The goal: be the only player with any sanity left. Each player chooses a player to "attack" then rolls the die. The die determines whether the player will be able to take a sanity token from the defender, move a token to the center of the table for Cthulhu, etc. The defender gets his chance to respond, rolling the same dice in the hopes of thwarting the attack. Play is quick and lively. Again laughter and groans are to be expected. Lose all your marbles and you're mad. If everyone goes mad, Cthulhu wins! Ah, ha, ha, ha. Best of all, the single-die component of the game makes it extremely portable, so you can play it anywhere: while you're waiting for food at a restaurant – use the sugar packets for sanity tokens, at the park – a few pebbles will do. Well, you get the picture. Suggested ages: 10 and up. Number of players: 2 or more. Playing time: 10 to 20 minutes. Retail price: \$4.99. Expected release: April 2010.

The Stars Are Right

This was my personal favorite. It's kind of like those slide puzzles with numbers that you push around to try to get all the numbers in order or graphics that you move around to form a picture. The artwork in *The Stars Are Right*, however, is much more colorful and interesting and it has the popular Cthulhu theme Lovecraftian fans loves. In this puzzle game, your goal is to arrange the tiles which represent a starry night sky, complete with suns, dark suns, full moons, half moons, quarter moons, dark moons, star clusters, shooting stars, and asteroid belts. Your goal is to rearrange the sky by invoking various Minions, Lesser and Greater Servitors and Old Ones (you use their powers to swap adjacent tiles, push a row or column, and flip tiles) so you can summon other Minions, Lesser and Greater Servitors and Old Ones to work for you and gain the points you need to win. It sounds much creepier than it is. The theme could really be anything – it's the

puzzle aspect that makes the game so fun and interesting. Just when you think you've got the sky arranged just right, the player before you can rearrange it to suit his goals and mess you up, so you might want to ignore the board (tile layout) until just before your turn. While the game accommodates 2 to 4 players, it would also make a great solitaire game, too. Suggested ages: 13 and up. Number of players: 2 to 4. Playing time: 1 hour. Retail price: \$27.95. Available now.

Nanuk

In *Nanuk*, hunters boast how many animals they can acquire in so many days. Each player is dealt a hand of three cards featuring birds, seals, fish and/or deer. The first player boasts that he can catch a certain number of animals in so many days. The next player can either up the bid, like in *Liars' Dice*, or claim that the hunt is doomed: that is that they don't think it's possible for the Hunter to catch that many animals in that many days without encountering Nanuk, the great white polar bear. When a player calls Doom, the Hunter who just made the boast becomes the Hunt Leader. All of the other players must now secretly decide whether they want to join the hunt – in which case they'll add cards from their hand to assist the hunt – or that the hunt is doomed – in which case they do not participate, but still set aside a card that will be added to the reward. This innovation sets *Nanuk* apart from, and provides a major enhancement over, *Liars' Dice* as does the beautiful artwork. All the Hunters contribute their cards to assist in the hunt, then according to the number of days the Lead Hunter boasted he would hunt, a number of cards are drawn from the deck that may help the hunt as well. But watch out! If the Hunters run into Nanuk, the great white polar bear (depicted by a polar bear symbol on some of the cards in the deck) and don't have an Inuksuk for protection, the hunt is doomed and the Doomers reap the reward. This is a fun party game that can become quite noisy and interactive as the Head Hunter can try to convince his fellow players to participate in the hunt while the Doomer tries to persuade them to stay home. Suggested ages: 13 and up. Number of players: 5 to 8. Playing time: 30 minutes. Retail price: \$27.99. Available now.

Steve Jackson Games kindly provided *Here Be Books & Games* with demo copies of all the above-described games as well as *Frag: The Gold Edition*, *Munchkin*, *Munchkin Cthulhu*, and *Munchkin Quest*. So, you can drop by *Here Be Books & Games* to try them out. The store's staff will even teach you how to play. These games, and many others by a variety of publishers, are also available for play at *Here Be Books & Games'* monthly Game Night, the first Saturday of every month from 6 p.m. 'til midnight and for demos anytime. The owners, Tina and Tim, often take a break in the afternoon about 4 p.m. to play, learn and teach games. You're always welcome to join them. See their web site for details (www.herebebooks.com) or call (843) 695-1498. Store hours are Tuesday thru Saturday from 10am to 6pm.