

Weihnachtspinguine



SPIEL 05: Deciding to go for another funny looking little game, I went to the small and outside Germany rather unknown publisher Harald Mücke (www.spielmaterial.de) who had a cute looking game called Weihnachtspinguine (Christmas Penguins) on display. The game is set before the funny sounding story that Santa Clause has loaded up his sly with gifts at the Northpole and is now taking a rest before he goes on his voyage to deliver the presents. However, a bunch of rowdy Penguins (the players) now comes running for Rudolph the Reindeer and the sly full of gifts...

Thus, the players start to move their penguins over the polar area towards the sly by rolling the dice, but one player at the beginning of the game has to stay out because he will play Santa who has come running on order to save the presents by catching the penguins. Thus, that player will move Santa instead of his Penguin, and he must continue to move Santa until he has captured one of the other Penguins. The captured player then has to assume the role of Santa and remove his penguin, and the capturer now may enter the fray with his own penguin.

A rampage Icebear, cracks in the ice, landscape features and random event cards spice the game up and bring movement onto the playing area, resulting in a funny penguin hunt and a step-by-step changing playing area. Although from the rules perspective the game does not offer any real innovative breakthroughs, it still is a good, entertaining game which also comes with great looking playing pieces. To my mind, it's sometimes a shame that such small but nonetheless nice games even at Essen do not always get the audience they deserve.

FRAGOR GAMES, the booth just beside, came to Essen with 500 copies of the game, most of which were already on pre-order by players from around the globe. Thus, he was actually SOLD OUT on wednesday, even before the convention itself started. Judging alone from the cute look of the game with its custom-made playing pieces, I was not surprised to hear this news, but nonetheless I was happy to hear of the good selling success for FRAGOR GAMES since it showed once again that sometimes Essen could prove itself to be a boost for smaller publishers. However, with FRAGOR GAMES being virtually on a booth neighbouring WWW.SPIELMATERIAL.DE, the sometimes rather different acceptance of two games couldn't get more obvious. Both Shear Panic and Weihnachtspinguine have cute looking playing pieces which give the games an outstanding appearance, but while the booth of FRAGOR always is filled with customers this other booth only receives minor attendance from the public. And this actually is not justified by the quality of the games, since Weihnachtspinguine - although being not that innovative as the brain-teasing sheep moving mechanism in Shear Panic - is a game which certainly makes up in fun what the other makes up concerning strategy. Overall, I couldn't tell which game I like better.