



Z-Man Games Newsletter

Issue 31



Note from the Z-Editor:

Welcome to Issue 31 of the Z-Man Games Newsletter!

This issue we preview Ninjato, a game of stealth and supremacy by Adam West and Dan Schnake. We also take a look at some fantastic resources for the wonderful Earth Reborn. Finally we review Lords of Scotland, a clever little card game that packs a punch despite it's small size, designed by Richard James.

I have to apologise for the lateness of this issue, my family and I were away for a portion of last month and this happened to slightly overlap with Zev being away as well. I decided to hold off on this issue for a month, from now on expect to see monthly newsletters as per usual. As they say in the land of television - we now return you to your scheduled viewing!

It's been great to see the number of people making comments in game forums across the web, and especially pleasing to see our google group has grown to over 650 members - thanks everyone!

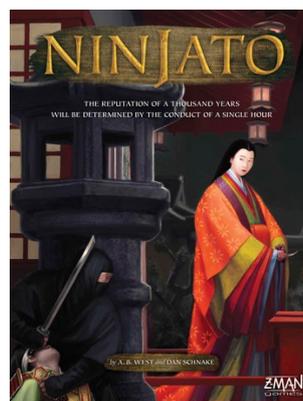
As I usually add, if you have anything you'd like to share with us, whether they be session reports, photos variant ideas, suggestions for the newsletter, or even just questions, send them in to newsletter@zmangames.com!

Thanks!

Giles.

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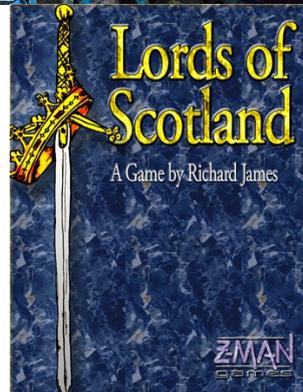
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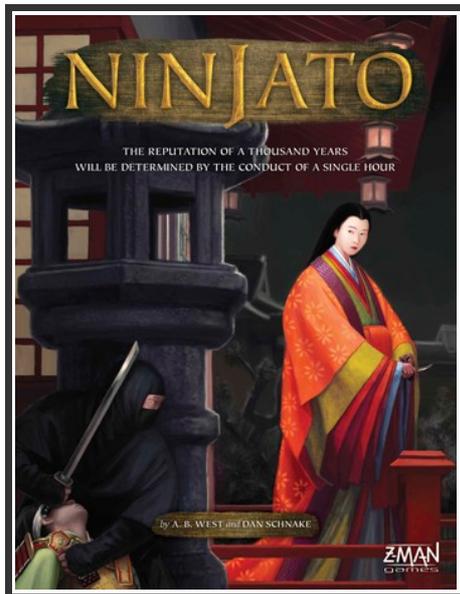


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Upcoming - Ninjato, designed by Adam West and Dan Schnake:



Ninjato is a game of cunning and influence for 2-4 would-be Ninja, and takes around an hour to play.

In Ninjato players represent Master Ninja, each striving to achieve the title of Ninjato at the games end. Players take actions throughout the game that may include visiting the Dojo to gain dojo cards, gaining skills, attacking or sneaking into Clan Houses to steal valuable treasures, using stolen treasures to influence envoys, and spreading rumours in the pavilion.

Each round players will, in turn, place their shuriken markers next to a location on the board and take the action associated with that place. Players must use their actions wisely. Visiting the Dojo is vital as it provides you with options when gaining skills and the power to defeat guards when attempting to steal treasures from a Clan House.

Gaining skills will provide you with important bonuses that can be used at different points in the game. But focussing too much on skills may allow other players to take more treasures from the Clan Houses.

When attempting to steal treasures from a clan house players must choose whether they wish to do so by strength, or by stealth - if strength then players must be able to defeat guards by playing cards higher than the enemies strength - if by stealth, they must be able to escape notice by playing cards that are lower.

Treasures are used to influence envoys, who will provide a number of points depending on how much treasure was used to woo them, and during each scoring round, will help a player score points if they have more envoys for a clan than any other player. Treasures are also used to gain Rumour cards - which are important ways of scoring points at the end of the game, and can reward your choices earlier in the game if they are carefully selected.

Ninjato is a game of many layers, pursuing Rumour cards can be a vital way of scoring points for the skills you have developed, the Elite guards you have defeated, the Rumours you have spread and so on. Players can also focus on gaining envoys, and by clever attacks on the other Clan Houses can influence the



balance of power amongst the clans themselves - meaning more points during scoring rounds. But should a player spend a lot of treasure gaining an envoy for a short term windfall, or should they be more cautious, hoping to gain more envoys for a longer term plan? Of course, all the machinations and choices that go in to planning your winning strategies must also balance the need to develop useful skills and gain vital Dojo cards - without which any attempt on a clan house, and therefore a treasure, would be impossible.



Just like the fabled Ninja, the best player will be the one who best manipulates the in-game situation to their own advantage - swooping in to influence the right envoy at the time when that Clan is in ascendancy, spreading opportune rumours, building up their strength and skills to enable them to steal ever more and more valuable treasures from the powerful Clan Houses - this is the player who will score the most points, the player who will achieve the vaulted title of the Ninjato: the invisible sword of the ruling clan.

Check out the wonderful player-aids created by Ninjato's talented graphic designer, Peter Gifford:

http://www.headlesshollow.com/downloads/games/Ninjato_v1.pdf

Released - Earth Reborn, designed by Christophe Boelinger:

Every now and then a game comes along that grabs you, it grabs you then it shakes you. As a game company Z-Man Games is in the business of publishing games, we'd like to think good games. Earth Reborn isn't just a great game though, it's an experience!

Set in a post-apocalyptic and dystopian future players of Earth Reborn will have the opportunity to experience the story and battles of two factions, the warrior-like NORAD and the supernaturally enhanced Salemities. Games are like adventures, or stories, with players fighting to achieve their goals, often tooth and nail to the end.

Since it's release Earth Reborn has had some reviews we've been very proud to read. This page is dedicated to all those wonderful fans who support and love this game as much as we do!



Earth Reborn comes with a set of highly detailed and pre-undercoated miniatures representing the factions of the game. Some players out there have put together wonderful shots of painted models, but most especially check out:

Peter Gifford, aka: Universal Head has put together a wonderful painting guide that can be found by clicking on the link below:

<http://blog.gamesparadise.com.au/earth-reborn-painting-guide/>

Peter is also responsible for some absolutely fantastic Rules Summeries and Play-Aids – so check them out:

http://www.headlesshollow.com/freebies_games.html#earth

Finally it's very much worth mentioning that Ludically, Z-Man Games' partner in Earth Reborn and company co-run by Earth Reborn designer Christophe Boelinger manages a website in both English and French for fans of Earth Reborn. There you can find a vibrant community of Earth Reborn fans, as well as mountains of downloadable material. Not only can you download the rule and scenario books, but in the vault there are also 3-4 player scenarios, as well as a scenario creation tools and other goodies, check it out here: <http://earthreborn.ludically.com/home>

Released - Lords of Scotland, designed by Richard James:

Lords of Scotland is a card game for 2-5 players, designed by Richard James, and plays in around 30 minutes.

In Lords of Scotland players are trying to muster clans (cards) and play them over a series of Skirmishes. The winners of the Skirmishes will be able to claim supporters, and the player able to claim 40 points worth of supporters will win the game.

Lords of Scotland is one of those games that is simple to teach and explain, but which also hides layers of choices that create a rich game experience in a short play time.

On a player's turn they must do one of two things: 1) recruit a clan (draw a card) from the recruit pile. Or 2) muster a clan - which is to play a card into the skirmish.

Cards are numbered in the top left hand corner, this number is the card's Strength, after 5 rounds a skirmish will end. Once a skirmish has ended, players will, in order of highest to lowest strength, pick one of the supporter cards to keep in their scoring pile. Of course, the higher the number the better, as a player will win the game if they manage, over many skirmishes, to claim 40 strength points worth of supporters.

Sounds simple, and on the surface it is. However, it is not as simple as just being lucky enough to play the highest value cards - each card also has a power which may be activated if the card's strength is equal or lower than any other card currently in play. So playing a low value card will mean not adding much to your strength during the skirmish, but may allow you to activate a power that will swing the balance of play in your favour.

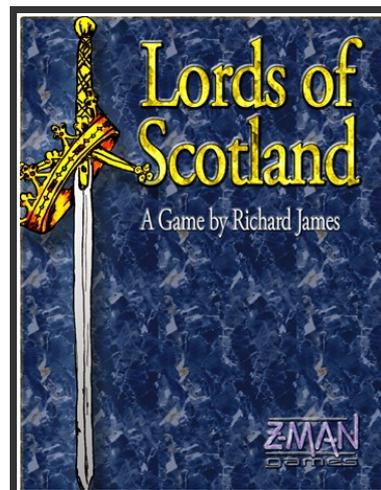
Herein lies the key to the game, players want to play the highest value cards, but will also want to play cards with a low enough value that they may activate powers that will benefit them. Of course, a player may also choose to play a very low valued card to make it harder for other players to activate their powers, but it will be no guarantee, as a card with a value of 1 will always activate.



The powers on the cards create a high level of interaction, some will allow a player to claim multiple supporters (and perhaps therefore deny supporters to another player), some will allow the switching or discarding of cards, some will allow an extra draw, or an extra muster. The many interactions caused by the powers, and the effects they can have on game-play are significant, and need to be considered when playing cards. The push and pull dynamic created by the need to play high cards and therefore get first pick of the supporters and the desire to play low valued cards to activate powers that could have a big impact on the skirmish causes a player to think carefully about what cards they will play and when.

Two other key rules need to be seriously considered - when playing a card (mustering) a player may play the card face-up, therefore potentially activating its power, or face down - maintaining an unknown element. A face down card will never have its power activated, but will be flipped and its strength counted when a skirmish is over. The second key rule is that if a player manages to play cards all of the one color (bloodline) they will double their strength at the end of a skirmish. Playing cards of a high enough strength to gain the supporters you need, but low enough to activate the powers that will help you or hinder your opponents; bluffing with a face-down card and using card powers to full effect; choosing when to play a card and when to draw a card are all key choices that need to be made in the course of each skirmish.

The game is all about gaining supporters, so if a player can do that by playing the highest cards and hanging on to them, by stealing cards from opponents, by spoiling the pool of supporters for other players or by using card powers to best effect then that player will manage to win the support of the clans, and the crown of Scotland the brave.



Subscription Information:

We have created a google group called '[Z-Man Games](#)'. Anyone can sign up to be a member, and you can adjust your settings as a member so that you receive email notification of any posts made to the group. At this stage only Zev and myself have posting privileges, and aside from notifications about this newsletter and any hot news we think is really important nothing will be posted to the site to clog up your mail boxes.

If there is ever going to be a long delay (of over a month) I will do my best to make sure I post it to the google group to keep everyone in the loop!

We have over 650 members with more joining each month!

You can join the [Z-Man Games google group](#) by going here: <http://groups.google.com/group/zmangames> and following the prompts to join up.

Release Schedule:

<i>Coming Soon</i>	<i>No Date Set</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ares Project • Dark Minions • Mondo • Ninjato • Undermining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equibrion • Pocket Battles: Macedonians vs Persians • Vinhos

Links:

www.zmangames.com
<http://groups.google.com/group/zmangames>
www.filosofigames.com
www.boardgamegeek.com
www.boardgameinfo.com
<http://fortressat.com/>
www.purplepawn.com
www.bgdf.com

