



# Essen Impressions

Article and photos by Fred Horn

The Main Hall before the start of the Fair. Visitors wait for the moment they can run in and get their place on the available play tables in their preferred company booths!

Once again, the “Internationale Speiltage” (International Game Days) Spiel ‘16 / Messe Essen was bigger and more crowded than last year’s event. The fair proved more than successful and offered a real experience and an adventure into the (European) game world.

more than 1000 publishing companies from approximately 50 countries filled the halls with their booths—from small spaces up to enormous play areas. Show attendees traveled from across the globe and Ms. Metzler announced the Spiel attracted 174,000 visitors for the 4-day event.

Last but not least, this year the “Neuheiten Show” (Exhibition of New Items) tallied some 1200 newly published games and extensions, along with pretty much any other new thing you could think of. In the past, the “Neuheiten Show” was always placed next to the Press-Conference Hall; this year it got its own hall.

Indicating its growth, this year’s Spiel also necessitated an increase in the number of available hall spaces. Three more were added from last year’s event.

After two days of wandering through all of the exhibition halls, I became keenly aware of the fact that the “Neuheiten Show” was not presenting all of the newly published items, and also that a new interest in abstract games was not visible in the games being exhibited.

What became clear was the overwhelming interest in the playing of games. From opening to closing time all available tables had their ‘aficionados’ for the particular games of that company. And in the end, bags loaded with games to take home.

This year I wanted to concentrate on the “Newcomers”—those publishers who were first-time Essen attendees. Merz-Verlag offered me a small list—some twelve companies out of the seven countries.

**Australia:**  
Gregarious Mammal  
Freed Games

**Columbia:**  
Azahar Juegos

**Azerbaijan:**  
Fibonacci

**Zagreb (Croatia):**  
Unboxing Games

**Canada:**  
Blind Ferret Entertainment

**Hong Kong:**  
Pat Piper

Vesuvius Media  
Inside Up Games  
Wrebbit Puzzles

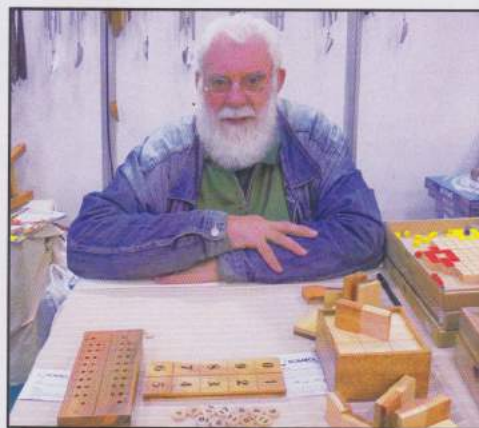
**Iran:**  
Pendar Rastin Ayan-  
deh/Majimba  
RP Cubes/Kaladaran PLC

It all started on Wednesday, October 12, with the press conference. The attendance of journalists was less than expected, and looking around I spotted a number of empty chairs



Plenty of room at the press conference

Dominique Metzler of Merz-Verlag—the biggest trade show organizer in Germany—could once again announce that all records were broken. This year



To completely end this personal report of Essen Spiel ‘16, here is your reporter promoting his own game “15” published by ROMBOL



At the “Neuheiten-Show” I stumbled upon two small Dutch firms who were also first timers. What I really wanted to know was if there was a greater offering of abstract-strategic games from these “Newcomers” as was predicted last year. But such was not the case. Most of the new companies were not even offering already published games, but had come to test their games before starting a “Crowd-Funding” venture. And still there were only a few abstract games on hand.

Here is my photographic impression of all these “Newcomers.”

AGPC



Azahar Juegos ..... Columbia



Gregarious Mammel ..... Australia



Unboxing Games ..... Zagreb (Croatia)



Fibonacci ..... Azerbadjan



TACTRIX ..... Holland



Vesuvius Media ..... Canada



Sunny Games ..... Holland



Inside Up Games ..... Canada



ForlAgo ..... Sweden