We are more than satisfied with the outstanding results of the fair. The incredible extra crowd numbers were dealt with superbly by all the additional and regularly scheduled trains put on by the regional railway Ruhrbahn, as well as the significantly higher number of car-parking spaces made available at the venue. Our visitors could travel smoothly to the event. We are very proud to welcome so many people to Essen every year from across the globe. The new visitor record for SPIEL has once again shown that more and more people see board games as a way of decelerating our overly-digitized everyday life.”

—Dominique Metzler, Executive Director of fair-organizer Friedhelm Merz Verlag emphasizing the excellent outcome of the 35th international games event.

The 35th international games event “SPIEL ‘17” (October 26-29, 2017) proved to be a real crowd-puller again this year. An overwhelming amount of 182,000 visitors at this world’s largest trade fair for board games caught up on the trends and highlights in the sector.

Already in the run-up to the fair, “SPIEL ‘17” registered a record number of 1,100 exhibitors from 51 nations (again beating the previous year’s numbers: 1,021 and 50 respectively).

Spread over 72,000 square meters of exhibition space: Halls 1; 2; 3; 6; 7; 8; 9 and the child-animation in the ‘Galeria’ (Gallery), there was more than enough for everyone’s taste. Exhibitors brought in thousands of games to marvel at, test, try, and to buy—amongst them, 1,200 new releases.

With this enormous supply of games from the multitude of exhibitors, you have to focus on one topic. This year I decided to visit my fellow Dutch game inventors/designers. They had all rented smaller booths to present their newest brainchilds.

I chose to ignore the larger Dutch companies this time, (all present in Hall 3) Jumbo; Goliath; White Goblin Games, in order to make room in this report for those smaller Dutch publishers. You’ll find some information about them, accompanied with a photo and reference to their websites. This account will provide you a glimpse of what Holland presented at Essen.

Hall 1

My start—Hall 1—where in Booth G125 inventor/publisher Corné van Moorsel held court for so many years in Essen. He is the real survivor, always only presenting his own games under the name Cwali. www.cwali.nl
Hall 2

In Booth F117, I discovered Amsterdam-based Moondance Games. Working together with the original inventor/designer Mark Millar, Robert van der Dussen developed the ‘game-system’ Dwarf War.

www.moondance.com

The next and last space in Hall 2 with a Dutch touch was Booth F146 where the firm Laserox, from The Hague, shared duties with enterprises from Malla and Budapest.

Laserox is not a game publisher per se, but instead a company that offers materials to create the inserts to help organize one's game box.

laserox.net

Hall 6

The first stop in Hall 6 was Booth C110 where The A-Factor Shop from Waalwijk sold t-shirts with printed comics, but no games! Continuing on...

Two alleys further onwards I found in Booth E104, Keep Exploring Games from Dordrecht. Owner Martin Looij was presenting his second game “THE DUTCH EAST INDIES.” www.keepexploringgames.com

Just a few steps away one stumbles upon Booth F102 and the game BARPIG. From Amsterdam, the creators of ‘The Adventure Party Game’ BARPIG, “Johno” and “Phil,” employed Kickstarter to get their business going. They presented their game in a “subtle” way! www.barpig.eu

Booth H133...not my “cup of tea.” Fabion is a webshop outlet based in ’s-Hertogenbosch where all kinds of material for fantasy games can be ordered.

Back down the row to Booth G106 for Golden Age Games out of Amsterdam. Another Kickstarter project for the game ‘CAPTAINS OF THE GOLDEN AGE,’ the first game from inventors Aaron and Niek.

Niek Jansma & Aaron Groot

Hall 3

This was the hall where the Dutch “Big Guys” had their large areas. One could also find in Booth Q116 the small firm Quined Games. From the tiny village of Oud-Reijenland, Arno Quispel delivers wonderful games to the world. quined.nl

Next around the corner I came across Booth H108 where two startup Dutch firms, Black Box Adventures from Utrecht, and TMM from Sittard, along with a Belgian firm, Jumping Turtle, showed their new releases. www.blackboxadventures.com; www.themountainmen.nl
Hall 7

The first Dutch firm in Hall 7 was located at Booth B116. Hailing from the town of Enschede, the firm DGT designs and develops a wide range of digital timers and electronic chess boards. Wonderful products! www.digitalgametechnology.com

Just a few steps away in Booth C117 we find Splotter Spellen from Woerden. This firm is a long time exhibitor, first coming to Essen in 1997. At the show, they launched “KIEK, 20 YEARS OF SPLITTER”—a special anniversary edition of the game KIEK. www.splittershop.com

Onward to Booth D112 where we find Tactrics from Deventer. John and Hans are still trying (a year before introduction) to sell their game VORTEX. www.tactrics.com

Hall 8

On to the last Hall with a Dutch touch!

The first encounter is with Karasjek Games from Delden at Booth A156. But this is only a shop selling second-hand games.

In Booth B110 Erik Winkelmann from Breda is presenting his cooperative board game “21 DAYS.” Having achieved success with his Kickstarter campaign, the game is being launched at “SPIEL’17.” www.21daysboardgame.com
One booth further, in B112, I find Comfortably Strange Publishing, also from Breda.

They are not a firm with published games but (as they say themselves):

"They want to become part of the creation process of these unknown gems of the industry and to help introduce them to the world."

They were essentially there to contact game authors. www.comfortablystrange.com

Continuing down this row, Booth B120 is the place to find Ellis and Dennis of HenMar games from 's-Hertogenbosch. Ellis introduces his new game Seven at the fair. henmargames.eu

On the opposite side of the row, in Booth B121, Handels Onderneming Telgenkamp (Trade firm Telgenkamp based in Heerhugowaard) is using its location to inform the public about their business model to sell games from the various publishers. HOT SPORTS + TOYS

Director Stephan Telgenkamp mentioned their anniversary: 25 years in business!

Under the name HOT Games, the company promotes those games they like the most. They are not a publisher but only a trade firm. www.hotgames.nl

And just around the corner, the last row comes into view. I first stop at Booth C110 where Martijn and Suzanne Weterings from Kwatta Ventures out of Leeuwarden display Cave Pilot 55. This game was the result of their successful Kickstarter project. cavepilot55.com

I really needed two days at Essen’s “SPIEL’17” for this tour centered around the Dutch participants. In the course of meeting up with a few old fellows of mine and also seeing a lot of new faces from enthusiastic newcomers, full of faith in their ideas and or new publications, I was able to collect a lot of information.

It is an honor to present this report to you, the readers of the AGPI Quarterly.

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