might benefit from this necessarily send out the “Knight” immediately — knowing that a “Parasite” can even undercut this; this card modifies the die value by -7. It seems that you have to consider quite a few things; in the end, though, everything culminates in a pretty chaotic outcome (especially in the four-player game), but that’s the whole point of it.

I would fully recommend KING OF 12, if it weren’t for the card design. This starts with the names written on the cards; the choice of names is a complete failure. Instead of the word “Alchemist,” the card should show “x2” in big letters, since it doubles the die value.

The picture of the alchemist drawn by the illustrator is nice: A mythical creature drips a liquid over a blue die. But does this double the die value, or does it reduce it, or does it even destroy the die? Nice is not automatically good. The images give no indications whatsoever, and they are not even any good to see at one glance where there are identical cards lying on the table, since the illustrations look too similar.

The illustrator may have done his best; but when it comes to functionality, this is one of the worst card designs ever. The images are counterproductive, the card names make no sense — and the lack of any symbols is totally incomprehensible. Why is “The Machine” written on the card, but not “+7” in big letters? And why are all the cards uniformly white? Successful brisk card games don’t necessarily need to have a retro look in the style of Uno. It is certainly allowed to embellish the cards, be it with llamas, oxen or mythical creatures, but the focus must be on quick recognizability.

It is too bad that this is not the case here, since KING or 12 is basically good, at least with three or four players. Besides the seven cards per player for the basic game, the box also contains another five cards as an alternative, so that there is some variance even after many games.

KING OF 12 is a luck-dominated game; but the luck factor can be influenced if you keep counting. However, you shouldn’t obsess with that, since the game is the most fun if you play it on a gut level.  

Harald Schrapers/sbw

**Fianco**

Considering the game principle explained on the cover, a motto might come to mind that the chairman of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) State Council, Erich Honecker, is said to have expressed shortly before the end of the state, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary in 1989: “Forward ever, backward never!” Applied to the game FIANCO, this means that players may move and jump only straight forward, diagonally forward or sideways.

During the set-up, each of the two players sticks his eleven pegs (one plays with red, the other with black) into the predefined hollows of the beechwood game board. The instructions explain the rules in just a few sentences, although there are two variants. The objective is to move one of your pieces onto the opponent’s starting line.

In the standard version, you move your peg only straight forward or sideways, not diagonally. However, you jump and capture diagonally forward only. If you have the possibility to capture a piece, you have to do it. Chain jumps are not allowed.

In the so-called turbo version, you may move, jump and capture straight forward, diagonally forward, or sideways. Capturing is not required in this variant. In that sense, FIANCO contains two completely different games in one box, requiring different ways of proceeding, both of which might seem familiar, though.

Aren’t there countless games where you have to remove all opposing pieces or reach a target area or a target line at some point? Just think of HALMA or CHECKERS. Time and again, modern authors have used the basic principles of those classics, and their actual achievement has been to slightly vary them. This applies also to Fred Horn, but it doesn’t minimize his accomplishment.

FIANCO can be recommended to all those who are willing to part with the required amount of money for this brisk, lightweight game. One game takes hardly longer than 10 to 15 minutes, so there is always time enough for a rematch. And if even a quarter of an hour is too long for you, you can easily put the game away and continue later on. The pegs stick firmly in the hollows and thus can’t inadvertently get out of place. Whether FIANCO is ideal when you are traveling, as the publisher claims, remains to be seen, though, since it is not a lightweight in terms of the materials.

Edwin Ruschitzka/sbw

**FIANCO** (Gerhards Spiel und Design) by Fred Horn; for 2 players, about 8+ years; duration: about 10–15 minutes; price: about 35 €.