

## GAME LAB 2010 REPORT

Game Lab 2010 was a successful part of GameStorm, and we were pleased to be right in the middle of it all. We expanded to three play tables from two last year, and it appears we used every bit of our bigger space. A special thanks to all our staff and designers that made this year a great one by giving us their time and their talents. THANKS ALL!

### GUESTS

We had awesome participation from Guest of Honor Tom Lehmann, who play tested other designer's games, and found time to give personal feedback to them. He ran a play test of his own new, completely untested prototype, and played his newly-released Race for the Galaxy and 18xx games, and spoke on several panels. Richard Garfield also played one of his own prototypes in Game Lab, and was featured in several fun panels.

Special guest Dave Howell did a terrific session for designers covering the Golden Guidelines of Game Design. In addition, other industry guests Jeremy Holcomb, Carey Grayson, Phil and Calye Lacefield and Janice Sellers all spent time in Game Lab sharing their expertise, play testing and helping new designers improve their games.

### PLAYERS AND PLAY TESTS

Overall, we had about **120** people play one or more games in Game Lab, or run a game they designed, or attend a Game Lab workshop, or help staff Game Lab. We had 18 designers showing one or more games each. A lot of people stayed in Game Lab for multiple games. In play tests alone, folks played over **300 hours** in **50** play test sessions. Since only 24 play tests were scheduled, this means we added 26 **more** sessions (1 or 2 hours) on the fly. Not one GameStorm "buck" was given out for the volunteers who staffed or GM'ed those additional 42 hours. Many of the staff functions we needed were done by designers or play testers who saw the need and offered to volunteer.

Compare this to a few years ago when Proto-Spiel was hosted at GameStorm and ran a total of 12 play test sessions. And just a year ago, Game Lab finished the con having done about 28 play tests. To do 50 sessions was a huge increase.

### PRIZES

Our most popular activity was play testing, and besides learning a new game or two, every person that played a full game earned a lotto ticket good for a drawing only held in Game Lab. Because of the number of sessions, and the fact that most of our prizes were small (worth \$3.00 or less) or medium, we held about 64 drawings over four days.

We gave away 51 prizes. Interestingly, many players and designers chose not to take their earned prizes, leaving them for the first time players and first time designers. GameStorm had given us 14 prizes total (value \$275.00) from the general donations locker, which was appreciated. In addition, several companies who were teaching Game Lab classes or running play tests directly donated a total of 43 more prizes, big and small (value \$378.00).

And finally, we even had designers take GameStorm bucks they had earned as volunteers purchase 8 more prizes from the GameStorm store (value \$127.00) and add those to the prize table. There's good support from involved folks toward this slice of GameStorm.

## OPERATIONS

This year we adopted a theme that Game Lab would offer at least one new session, class, play test or event every hour from 9 am through 9 pm every day. This often challenged us on needed staffing. However, overall we did have enough people, supplies, space, prizes, resources and tools to accommodate the increased demand for play testing that we experienced over the four days.

We stayed a few dollars within our \$300.00 budget, in part because of the generous donations we received from the industry professionals after GameStorm had started. For planning, we had amazing support from the Boardgames team, especially our direct liaison Chris Brooks. Other GameStorm staff from the president on down all tended to help Game Lab get what it needed when we were in a pinch. Hats off to them!

## REACTIONS

Overall, reaction to the bigger, better Game Lab was very positive. Several players, whether to get more chances at prizes or just because they liked the atmosphere, hung around and played every chance they got. Several new designers came to GameStorm only because Game Lab was being offered. We had several repeats from last year, designers who came more prepared and as a result got in twice the play testing of last year. Our Guests of Honor participated in Game Lab and encouraged new designers.

Email feedback from participants has also been positive. Some designers are asking whether we can do Game Lab events in conjunction with the GameStorm free gaming days. Several others have expressed a wish to join a mailing list or online group to share gaming resources and develop plans for Game Lab next year.

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