

## UNDERWATER POWER STRUGGLE

## ABYSS

TERRITORIES, INFLUENCE AND VOTES

ABYSS is in practice a "Card Game" so its box is really oversized for its contents and the board could have been avoided because its utility is really very, very marginal. But the editor (the French Bombyx) decided to make a marketing operation publishing the game with 5 different box covers. Each cover is different both in shape (all depict a menacing big "face" of one of the habitants of an undersea world) and color (pink, blue, green, yellow and yellow/reddish). Thus customers may purchase the face and/or color that they wish.

But of course marketing and artists cannot transform a bad game in a good one, so, let's proceed and see what we have to expect from this title. The place is somewhere down the deep waters of the Ocean: here some powerful "creatures" ruled the kingdom of Abyss in harmony with all the others races, protecting them from nasty monsters. Unfortunately even in the best kingdom (over or under waters) elections have to be held for the new King and we (players) are the new Candidates.

THE SILENCE OF THE WATERS IS CUT BY

## VOICES COMING FROM THE ASSEMBLY

The 440x540 mm board shows the great Assembly of the underwater kingdom with thousands of creatures divided in 5 big sectors, one for each "Allied" race: Medusas (Pink), Crabs (Orange), Hippocampus (Yellow), Nacres (Green) and Polyp (Blue). They are all represented in the game by 13 cards (values ranging from 1 to 5).

(See picture 1)

On the bottom part of the board we see the "Nobles" of Abyss (represented by 35 large cards). The top of the board will host 5 Allied cards during the "Exploration" phase. The game also includes: 1 "Menace" track (63x260 mm); 20 "Territory" tiles (60x215 mm); 20 disc "Monster Points"; 10 "Keys"; 50 "Pearls" (wonderful) and 5 small basins (thermoformed as oysters) to hold the pearls (and you absolutely need them because pearls tend to roll down the table ...); 1 small notebook to mark the final Victory Points (VP).

Set up is quick and easy: each player gets an "oyster" with 1 pearl inside, then the "Allied" cards are shuffled and the deck is po-

sitioned on the top-left part of the board while 6 "Noble" cards are displayed on the bottom part. Finally one Territory tile is randomly taken and displayed.

Each player, on his turn, may bring new nobles on the board, must take an action and, if he collects at least 3 keys, must take a ter-

## RetroGemonia

A fast and interesting game with beautiful graphics and a good atmosphere

ritory. If a player collects 7 Nobles or if the Nobles deck is exhausted the game ends.

## SPEAKERS TRY TO CONVINCE THE ASSEMBLY TO VOTE FOR THEM

Players start the game with just one pearl and they need to get more of them in order to influence their allies: pearls are collected defeating the Monsters, exploring deeply the Abyss, recruiting Nobles and ... being paid by other players.

The first decision that each player has to take is to RECRUIT or not new Nobles (in games terms, turn new cards from the deck): this will not happen at the beginning of the game, both because the Nobles track is full and ... you do not have enough pearls. But in the "middle" game very often you do not see the Noble that you need on the display so you may try to find one in the deck: you pay 1 pearl and you turn face up a Noble, positioning him on the display. If the



Bild 1 - Picture 1

display is full or if the deck is empty you cannot use this action.

Then players must **TAKE AN ACTION** selecting one of the following possibilities:

1 - **EXPLORE THE ABYSS** you take a card from the "Allied" deck and you show it to everybody. Then you offer the card to the other players (in turn order): if they wish it they pay pearls to you (1 pearls for the first card offered, 2 for the second and 3 for the third) adding the card to their hand. If nobody wants the card you may take it for free or you may place it in one of the "live" "hosting" cases on the board. Then you turn another card and you repeat the process. If the first 4 cases are now filled (and this does not happen too frequently, for the reason that we will see later) you have now to offer the 5th card: if nobody wants it you **MUST** take it (for free) but you also receive 1 pearl.

The deck contains also 6 Monster cards (Monsters): when they appear you still offer them as usual, but if somebody takes it a "fight" has to follow (see below). When you take a card, adding it to your hand, your turn ends and pass to the following player and all the cases must now be emptied: monsters are discarded and Allies are placed face down on the Assembly (each color on the related position).

(See picture 2)

2 - **RECRUIT ALLIES** instead of exploring the abyss you may take all the cards from one of the "live" positions on the Assembly. Of course a little memory effort will help you in your decision (you will be happy to take cards with value from 3 to 5, if they are available) but this is not so fundamental. Allies are necessary later to recruit Nobles, so this action is alternative to the exploring "slow" process (one card per turn) and will save you a lot of time ... if your opponents were kind enough to leave some cards in the display.

3 - **RECRUIT NOBLES** this is the most important action of the game, as Nobles will grant you VP, some special "powers" and the

"keys" that are necessary to take control of a territory. Each Noble may have up to four characteristics:

(a) - **Cost**: this number shows the total value (in Allied cards) that you need to pay to get the noble. Some of them need only **ONE TYPE** of Allies because they belong to one race only (for example the **MASTER OF MAGIC** belongs to the Medusa/Pink race), but most of them need 2 or 3 types. This means that you must pay that cost using exactly this number of allies, including the original race of the Noble (the Master of Magic needs 3 races to be recruited, of which one must be Medusa). The total value of each race is not important as long as you use the right number of races and the minimum cost of the noble. You may also use pearls to pay (partly or totally) the cost, but the number of races must be fulfilled in any case.

(b) - **VP value**: The number of VP granted by the noble at the game's end.

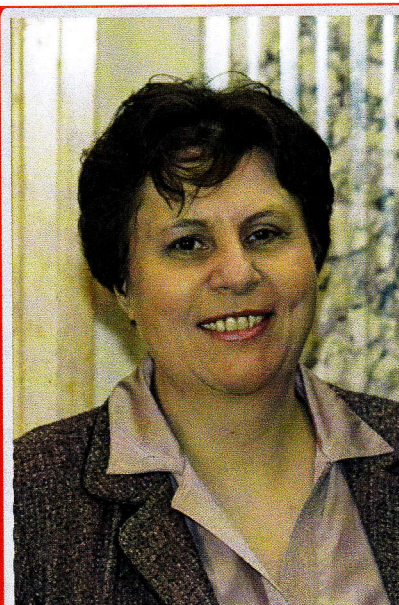
(c) - **Power**: most (but not all) of the cards have a power that the player may use once (if the card shows one "arrow") or many times in the game. Those powers let you have some advantages (discounts in recruiting new Nobles, pearls, free Allies, attacks, etc.).

(d) - **Keys**: again most (but not all) of the cards have a key on the top right side. Keys are necessary to take control of new territories. There are 5 Ambassadors (one per race) that have 3 Keys and therefore they immediately grant a new territory to you: but to take control of one Ambassador you need to have Allies of **ALL FIVE** races (and the usual number of requested points).

After having paid the necessary cost you will put in a Reserve the lowest value Allied card: it becomes one of your faction's **ASSOCIATED** member.

(See picture 3)

3 - **CONTROLLING TERRITORIES** as we have already seen players need 3 keys to get a new Territory. As soon as they have those



## 40 Years for WIN

Dagmar de Cassan, Editor-in-Chief

Yes, International Toy fair is behind us and again we have seen many games, which we would like to try instantly.

But, really, now would be the time to play all those games that we brought home from Essen, because Essen was only four months ago and there were quite a few games there, for instance **THE MAGNATES**, of which or Markus says that for him it was the best Essen game. How do I make up my mind about a new game? Due to this plethora of games it is not easy to play all games several times, one has to make a preselection.

And this preselection is different for each gamer, the various preferences and player characters meet in the competition on finding the best game. Twice a week, in our games club, we have time and many visitors to try out all games with that purpose in mind.

Here, in WIN, you find our opinions on current games, games that maybe should find their way into your collection and appear on your game table regularly.

In our database **LUDORIUM** you can find all those games.

Come and take a look, and find out about all those games that you are still missing out on, at <http://www.ludorium.at>

Do you like our WIN? Until we have caught up on our backlog, we do not take new subscriptions, you can read all the issues free of charge, see

<http://www.gamesjournal.at>.

Our games compendium, **GAME BY GAME 2016** is available as a PDF, too, see

<http://www.gamescompanion.at> p





Bild 3 - Picture 3

3 keys (both from nobles and/or from defeating monsters) the players MUST select a territory: they may look at the already displayed (face up) territories or they may pick up to 4 new ones from the deck and select one of them, leaving the others face up. All the used keys are sent back on the reserve, while the nobles are placed behind the new

acquired territory: thus they lose their powers. Selecting the right Territory is a very important action, in this game, as they will grant you, at the game's end, a "fixed" number of VP and a "variable" number of points if you satisfy certain conditions. For example the SANCTUARY offers 4 VP and 3 extra VP for each Associated member of the Medusa

faction that you have collected. (See picture 4)

I already named the MONSTERS but I never gave any detail on them: we just know that monsters can be encountered during the Exploration action. As usual those cards must be offered to the other players and they can buy it for 1-2-3 pearls. The players



Bild 4 - Picture 4

who takes the Monster has to fight it: he "kills" it automatically receiving the bonus indicated on the "Menace" mini-board.

This has 6 cases and each case grant a certain Bonus: case 1, for example, let you decide between receiving a pearl OR taking a "Monster Bonus"; the third case will grant you a "Key"; the fifth the possibility to get a Key and to select between 2 pearls, or 1 pearl and 1 Bonus or 2 bonuses. Bonuses are cardboard discs (35mm) that grant from 2 to 4 VP at the game's end: the players take them randomly from a reserve and keep them secret.

Monsters may also be refused by all players: therefore they are placed on the 5 storage cases exactly as the other cards "Allies". If you ignore a Monster the indicator on the Menace board will advance one case, thus offering a better price for killing one of them in a future turn.

THE ASSEMBLY IS FINISHED: NOW WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE NEW KING

This game is addressed to families and casual gamers: the Rulebook is really very well done and easy to read, rules are clear and after a first reading you do not need to go back to them; components are strong and very appealing. For regular players ABYSS is still a challenge. I noticed the difference after having assisted at a couple of games between my younger son and his friends (all 18-19 years old) where they used an aggressive and direct approach. Playing the same game at my club with regular players the strategies changes a lot. Expert players probably will not like this game too much, mainly because of the important luck factor (when you have to randomly sort cards "Lady Luck" is always important). But if you do not disdain to play against luck the game is enough competitive to immediately ask for a "Bis".

What I most like in ABYSS is the proper use of pearls: in effect it will take a couple of games to understand their "real" importance, but then the players will learn when and how many to stock in a "calm" phase of the game, and when it will be time to spend them to acquire GOOD Allied cards (those with 4-5 Points). In a game, for example, I took notes about one player who war apparently ... sleeping until the middle game (but collecting pearls and pearls) when he suddenly "woke up" (while he was first or second to bid), purchasing up to 3 colored cards (6 pearls in total) and immediately acquiring the best available Nobles. Pearls have no role in the VP calculation: they are only used if two players have the same VP total at the game's end, giving the victory to the person with most pearls.

The second "tactical" comment is about the proper acquisition of the Allied cards. You need to "differentiate" since the beginning,

and this for three reasons:

1 - With 5 different races you may acquire a (very powerful) Ambassador

2 - All other Nobles just require that you have at least "one" card of their race plus different race cards as indicated. Therefore having a good reserve of different races may help very much when necessary.

3 - Always remember that when you acquire a new Noble you also create an ASSOCIATED member for your faction and this must have the lowest points value between the ones that you spent. Therefore you have to try to acquire cards with 3-4 points and to spend them without using lower numbered ones. In games with expert players this will make the difference.

The WINNER will be the player with most VP and those are collected as follows:

- The "Monster Points" (turn up your tiles and show their contents)

- The "Noble Points" (the number Left/High on each card)

- The Terrain Tiles (fixed VP and variable VP for having performed the other tasks on the tile)

- The "Associated Points": you divide your Associated per faction and then you take the "strongest" of each faction. b

Pietro Cremona

## INFORMATION

Designer: B. Cathala, C. Chevallier

Artist: Xavier Colette

Price: ca. 70 Euro

Publisher: Asmodee 2014

[www.asmodee.de](http://www.asmodee.de)

PLAYERS  
2-4  
AGE  
14+  
TIME  
60+

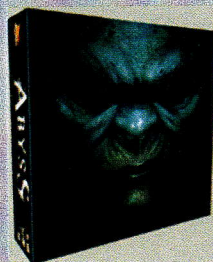
## EVALUATION

Fantasy, cards  
Users: With friends  
Version: it  
Rules: de en fr it pl  
In-game text: yes

Comments:  
Attractive components \* Good rules \*  
Easy enough for casual players, interesting enough for experienced players

Compares to:  
Games with victory points acquisition over several intermediate steps

Other editions:  
Asmodee, Bombyx, Rebel.pl



My rating: ★★★★★

## GAMESBUYER INFORMATION SYSTEM - GABIS

### STRUCTURE

Each game review also features an evaluation which can help you to find the game that best suits your tastes. The color accompanying each game title represents the USER Group. The headline also contains icons for age and number of players. The BAR in the evaluation box displays color codes for up to 10 features of a game.

### USER GROUP

We have defined 4 target groups (color accompanying the headline)

#### Kinder:

Games for children and educational games. Adults can play in a guiding function.

#### Familien:

Children and parents play together, all have the same chance to win and have fun.

#### Freunde:

Young people and adults play together as equals

#### Experten:

Games with special demands on rules and playing time. Especially for game geeks

Please note for the user groups Children, Family and Friends: Children who love to play can be ahead of their peers! Please note that our target group "families" does not imply the classical concept of "family games"! Furthermore, our user groups can overlap. The choice of suitable games always depends on your playing partners and your fun with games! Games that are especially eligible for Solo play or for 2 players or Large groups of players are marked with an icon.

### FEATURES

Each game targets preferences for different features in a player, therefore each game is not suitable for each player. We have listed 10 features players note when deciding on a game. Only if a player finds his preferred features in a game he will enjoy the game. The color code marks the dominant features. Educational games train the highlighted preference.

Empty boxes: This feature is not detectable or not present  
One colored box: This feature is present, but not essential  
Two colored boxes: This feature is present and important in the game  
Three colored boxes: This feature is dominant and essential

#### Chance:

The game is influenced by dice, cards or any other form of random generator

#### Tactics:

Take decision, short-term planning, planning based on one move

#### Strategy:

Think ahead, long-term planning, planning for several moves

#### Creativity:

The player has to provide words, phrases, images and other creative efforts

#### Knowledge:

Cultural and educational knowledge, long-term memory

#### Memory:

Remember, learn by heart, short-time memory

#### Communication:

Talk to each other, negotiate, inform

#### Interaction:

Influencing each other, bluffing, auction

#### Dexterity:

Motor skills

#### Action:

Body movement, balance and reaction

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Version: The edition of the game on which the review is based

Rules: This lists the languages in which rules are available or are included in the game, often even more translations can be found on the web.

In-game text: A YES marks a game with language-dependent components that cannot be played without translation or knowledge of the language