Wombattle

Designer: Andrea Szilágyi, Judit Maróthy
Publisher: A-Games
3-10 players  30 minutes  ages 10+
MSRP $30

Written by: Stephen Conway
THE CONCEPT

Somewhere in the universe, wombats gather in parties to find a champion. All creatures are welcome, facing challenges ridiculous and sublime. In fact every time they play, the challenges will change since the players themselves shape them. A word, a memory, a drawing, a gesture, even a song could be the key to unlock the heart of the judge.

Wombattle is a wacktastic party game driven by an unexpected dexterity element and whimsically weird art.

THE COMPONENTS

There are two key elements to Wombattle: the throwing board and wombat cards

The throwing board is actually the game box with an insert covered with colored holes. The lid of the box is nested vertically behind and serves as a backboard/backstop.
The 16 double sided wombat cards will inspire each challenge during the game.

Each card depicts a wombat and other friendly animals engaged in various activities. The wombat might be doing mundane tasks like grocery shopping and hanging pictures. Then again, the wombat might be cliff diving or landing on the moon. Packed with little details, each card has a Richard Scarry-esque quality to it, inviting the viewer to look again to discover new parts of the scene. It's impossible to overstate the how the whimsy and charm of the artwork helps create the world of the game.
THE MECHANICS

Each round in Wombattle, players will face a challenge set by the judge (a fellow player). The shape of the challenge is set by a feat of dexterity, a wombat card, and the imagination of the judge.

The feat of dexterity determines the category for the round. The judge bounces a marble off the backstop and into the grid on the throwing board. The hole where the marble comes to rest has a color and the color of the hole determines the category: Arts, Movement, Bravery, and Me-me-me.

Once you have the category, the judge selects a wombat card. The wombat card and the category will now combine in the mind of the judge to create a challenge.

The judge presents the card to the group and, based on the category and some aspect of the scene shown on the card, crafts a challenge that connects the two.

Each player will do his or her best to face the challenge and the judge will select a winner. That player will place an obstacle cone in the throwing board.

Then the players vote for the solution they enjoyed the most. These votes will be tallied at the end.

The game continues with a new player serving as judge each round until one player has placed all his or her obstacle tokens into the board.

WHAT SETS THIS GAME APART

The general insanity and collective sense of fun Wombattle creates makes the game a wonderful experience.

The categories themselves are a mix of standard party game fare (drawing or gestures) and elements that are fresh. Bravery? Come up with something memorable or daring. Me-me-me? A challenge that relates to the judge in some way.

Players themselves set the boundaries of the game from round to round; it's a negotiation, a dance that creates a safe space for everyone to have fun. It's an unexpected and wonderful risk - to leave so much room in the game for players to explore and define the limits of the game.

And in some ways, this makes Wombattle more activity than game.

But that's ok.

Wombattle is focused on fun, first and forever. It's an arena for laughter and silliness.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Wombattle embodies an essential element that inspires the Major Fun Award: the simple joy of play. This joy is open to everyone. Any time, anywhere. Wombattle gives us permission to be playful. And it deflects attention away from winning. If you're playing to win Wombattle, you should be playing a different game. Wombattle is a vehicle for laughter and fun and a reminder to not take yourself or the game too seriously.
To this end, each player writes down a reward they will give (a high five?, a compliment?, a cookie?, a hug?) and places it in the box. The winner will draw one and the player with the most votes will, too. It might not be a paragon of sophisticated game design but Wombattle is a work of demented genius. It soars because it is a source for the creative semi-structured joy we discover through play.

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