Gold Town Pre-Review

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I will be straight up and say this review is based only on reading the rules and printing the game components on paper with a colour printer. As soon as I have a chance to play the game I hope to write more. The reason behind this unplayed review is that I was intrigued by the game but alas BGG had no mention of it so I hope this brings this game to the attention of the board game community. Having said that, I am an Australian resident who has over 150 board games at home and I have no connection what so ever with the publisher of this game Eric Hotz. This is also my first review but nonetheless I hope it proves to be useful to many.

I have never before downloaded a game from the Internet, for one, I am rather partial to nice looking game components e.g. Days of Wonder's Pirate's Cove is pretty cool. I am also rather partial to anything western so with nothing on BGG to use as a reference I decided to take a chance.

The Components

Rules: A 40-page PDF file, a 4 page quick reference PDF, and a 2 page bibliography PDF.

Components: 11 PDF files that cover building cards, game markers, gold cards, town money, player roster cards, task cards, and town characters.

Optional Components: 4 PDF files that cover character cards, playing pieces, special cards, and bases for miniatures. Obviously these are all totally optional.

The rules are written in clear reasonably large text with plenty of examples. There are several black and white photos of mining towns and miners which is a nice touch. There are also some black and white photos of the game in progress both with the downloadable game components and with the optional Whitewash City buildings that can be purchased and downloaded separately from the publisher. I didn't

mind this little piece of advertising as the buildings do look very cool and certainly add flavour to the rule pages. There are also several tables. All of this is summarised on the 4 page "cheat sheet" or quick reference that I am confident will be all that is needed once you have a few games under your belt.

While a 40 page rulebook may seem excessive to some, I should point out this includes a title page, 3 pages providing background on mining towns which was an interesting read and clarifies the reasoning behind why some of the game rules are used, 27 pages of actual rules, 1 page of optional rules, 7 pages of Designer Notes and FAQ, and finally an index. While 27 pages may still seem large, especially those used to "German" games, they do cover plenty of examples, go into great detail so there is little room for doubt as to the reading of a rule, and once you are familiar, I am sure only the 4 page summary sheet will ever be required. It does not appear to be an overly complex game.

The building and character cards are well illustrated with good use of colour and would look pretty nice when printed on card stock. The gold cards look like photos of real gold nuggets and are impressive. The town money when printed on colour paper looks as good as any monopoly money which you could use if you desired. The player roster cards seem well thought out and look good. Finally the task and special cards are quite adequate. If they were larger and had some background colour they would certainly look better but this only adds to the cost to produce so I think they are perfectly fine as they are.

I am fortunate enough to have a colour printer, but all the components could be printed in black and white and would still look good. So far I think $10 has been very well spent.

The Game

You and from 1 to 7 other players are miners each working their own mine sites which surround the nearby town known as Whitewash City. The goal of the game is to finish as the wealthiest miner when the gold finally runs out. To manage this, you hope to get lucky while digging for gold, and staying away from various

vices when you wander into town attempting to achieve assigned tasks.

Initially Whitewash City is set up. The game comes with a cemetery card and 47 building cards. It is recommended that a town consist of 12 to 26 buildings, chosen from the 47 available. Some of the buildings are compulsory, others are recommended, but otherwise there is scope for variety in different games by choosing different buildings.

Next everyone digs for gold, which means randomly drawing gold cards from a deck hoping to strike it rich. The total number of gold cards used in a game is chosen at the start and as the game ends when the gold runs out, the game length can be varied. You then draw a task card from a deck of 120 cards. An example might be, "Go into Whitewash City to buy a new axe handle".

Now the more interesting part of the game takes place. Starting at the east of town, players role 2 dice, choose one, and move that chosen die number of buildings in a clockwise direction. They then must interact with that building as specified on the building card. It might be a laundry where you can hire some workers to help you work your mine. It might be a saloon where you might be tempted to gamble or buy some drinks. Or it might be a hardware store where you can finally buy that axe handle and get back to what you are supposed to be doing, digging for gold.

Further spice is added to the game with the addition of town characters some of which also move about the town, while others remain at their assigned buildings. When you end a move on a building with a town character, you must also interact with that character first. Example characters are the sheriff, the town ruffian, or maybe a buffalo hunter.

If you mange fulfill your assigned task you can go back to your mine, but otherwise you have to go through town a second time, trying to avoid all those vices all over again. Not only do vices eat away at your money, the consumption of alcohol affects your characters behavior and he may even end up arrested if he doesn't sleep it off in a hotel first. The second time around town you add/subtract 1 from the roll which

makes things easier and there is an optional rule, "Third Time Lucky", where a player doesn't have to move exactly onto a building that will allow him to fulfill his task, he simply needs to get there or past it. I think this is a rule I will likely use so the game doesn't drag on.

Back at his mine, the player again randomly draws some gold cards, a task card, and its back to Whitewash City. When the last gold card is drawn, the game is over and the winner is the player with the most money (paper and gold both count).

I am really looking forward to trying this game out. Eric Hotz is clearly fond of the American Old West theme and the amount of thought, and I imagine time, that has gone into producing this product is very evident. Every component has just the right amount of detail applied to give them appeal, while still taking into consideration the amount of printing required to make the game components. The components I have made certainly look great in my view.

As far as game play goes, without having actually played, this is harder to judge. There is a fair amount of dice and definitely a large dose of luck. The rules at 27 pages may appear intimidating but remember there is a lot of detail there, several tables and examples, and the bottom line is that it really fairly simple. I am sure games will only get faster the more often people play.

Sure this won't be everyone's cup of tea, it's no strategy fest or mind bender. I think it will make a good family game, and also a game for non-gamers that gamers will also enjoy. As I mentioned you can also buy downloadable western buildings from the Whitewash City website, as well as a nice felt playing area. While these would certainly add to the appearance they are by no means necessary. I hope my review helps clarify how this game may or may not appeal to you. I myself am very much looking forward to the chance to imagine and play the life of a miner in the American Old West. For me, $10 well spent.