

The Same All Over in Metal?

Was it being bored in the office? Or being frustrated doing the weekly paperclip inventory? Or simply thinking about redesigning an original, but out-of-print game with different materials? At least the author Tony Boydell admits to having been inspired by the Japanese STRING RAILWAY (cp. Spielbox 1/11) during his creation of PAPERCLIP RAILWAYS.

The bare table serves as our game area. It is staked out with three or four or five small station cards. The players' hometowns are placed in between, at the imaginary game board margin. In the center, the main station is installed. Access is fully hampered by four "obstacles", cardboard pieces with lakes and mountains printed on them. These are placed in the wider environment around the center. Finally, a watercourse is running right across the terrain, a river made up from 32 interlinked paperclips.

Office utensils as central element

Paperclips are, as we have already suspected from the title, the central gaming element in PAPERCLIP RAILWAYS. Not only do they mark the river, but they also form the railroad tracks of the individual players. For this purpose, each player is allocated 60 paperclips in his or her favorite color. Checking the number is however advisable, as the amount delivered out is not more than a rough estimate. These paperclips replace the strings of the Japanese original, while at the same time allowing a more differentiated game play.

Here, too, stations need to be connected. However, they are not drawn blindly from a

facedown stack, but played from your hand, which leaves you with multiple choices. In addition, track laying has to be paid for, by cards from your hand, too, which are thus not only employed as stations, but double act as money. A section made up of three clips will cost you one card. To create a scarceness of construction funds, a hand card limit

is in place.

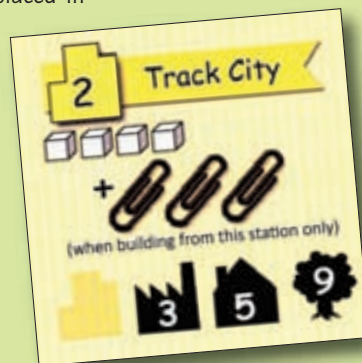
Four different station types can be distinguished. Not every type may be connected to every other one. And when connections are legitimate, they have to be of a certain minimum length. The unambiguous symbolism on the station cards makes it easy to recognize these facts. Slightly more complex is the answer to the question if a station still has free capacities. Existing connections are shown by small cubes of the connecting players,

and these are placed on the card exactly where the information for the maximum number of connections can be found.

Not deadly serious

Any completed connection will immediately gain you victory points. What counts are the start and the destination station (each station has a printed-on point value) as well as the length of the track. If the track touches terrain or the river, this income is lessened; also when other players' tracks have to be crossed – which does benefit them.

Many stations generate additional points, different gaming possibilities, further functions. Tony Boydell quite clearly really enjoyed himself when he was integrating numerous special features here. There is for example, an "Over-Complicated Town", which gains you +4/3/2 points, when there are already 1/2/3 players present there, and +3/2/1 points, when 0/1/2+ dice are on this card. There is another station that will bring joy to the hearts of senior citizens: It will grant one point to each player over 40 years and two for everyone over 60. Which leads to the following conclusion: PAPERCLIP RAILWAYS is not meant to be a deadly serious railroad game. It demands,



however, a minimum amount of attention, especially when played with four or five players.

As with many other games of a similar kind, one rule also holds good for PAPERCLIP RAILWAYS: Your own network needs to be linked together. The interconnected stations should therefore always offer sufficient scope for further expansion. Some tracks, meanwhile, lead directly up a blind alley. The gaming material includes more than 140 station cards, only two thirds of which are entered in the game. A card shuffled into the deck near the bottom triggers the game end – unless you run out of paperclips beforehand. The game is rounded off by a massive point counting, as many stations feature special scorings at the end. Circling the scoring board several times is not rare.

No smooth setup

Anybody who knows STRING RAILWAY from their own experience will testify to the fact that the initially mentioned "inspiration" is in fact quite substantial. Apart from the gaming material, the English edition seems like a plus, a professional or expert version of the original game. It is however exactly this material, which made the introduction of construction costs possible in the first place, which

is at the same time the biggest handicap of the game.

The description of the setup alone fills half of the 12-page rulebook. Starting from the main station in the middle of the table, the distance of the game area corners 3, 4 and 5 is measured with 12 or 16 links of the paperclip river. And the margin always remains an imaginary thing. How much easier is the setup with the strings, which are simply laid out on the table without the use of a measuring tape or any

other aids. And track designing with the paperclips is somewhat tedious. Granted: When you do not know the Japanese game – and this will be the case for most players, as STRING RAILWAY was sold out in no time – you are unable to draw these comparisons and will not be affected by this shortcoming. What works in favor of PAPERCLIP RAILWAYS is in any case the idea to pay with hand cards for the track laying, even though this gaming idea is not entirely original.

Talking about sold out: The second edition of PAPERCLIP RAILWAYS – a total of 300 copies – is already gone, too. However, as we were informed by Alan Paull of Surprised Stare Games, they are already working on the third one.



In Essen, you got a freebie when buying the game, the "Freight Expansion". It consists of one freight card per player, which is shuffled into the deck. When such a card is turned over, each player gets to transport one of his small dice into another town: the further away, the better. Interestingly, the author of STRING RAILWAY has also presented a freight version of his game in Essen this year. But it comes as an independent game and therefore merits an article of its own (see page 57). KMW/cs



Title: Paperclip Railways Express Edition
 Publisher: Surprised Stare Games
 Designer: Tony Boydell
 Artist: T. Boydell, Charlie Paull
 Players: 2–5
 Age: about 10 and up
 Duration: about 45 minutes
 Price: about 30 €

Reviewer	Playing appeal
KMW.....	6
Matthias Hardel*	7
Alan How	6

* The setup is indeed tedious, but hardly less tedious than the Japanese knitting material. The presence of hand cards opens tactical possibilities, and for me is the real attraction of the game.