

Stopgap

Playing games can be educational. My grandmother used to always pick games for me "where the boy could learn something". LAKOTA would have filled her heart with joy. Little did I know that this was the name of a North American Indian tribe, at least, according to the introduction in the rule-book. So I checked with Wikipedia. And indeed there they are. The Lakota are closely related to the Dakota. Both belong to the Sioux. One tribe of the Lakota is called Oglala. And these are old acquaintances from the similarly named card game by Rudi Hoffmann. It's a small world.

But this doesn't really matter. The game might not even be of American Indian origin. It shouldn't actually be of interest to us anyway. The box comes with a round cardboard platform, slightly larger than a single record – the older folk will know what I mean – as well as 60 little wooden sticks. The diminutive is an understatement: the wooden sticks are 5 centimeters long and have a solid cross section of one by one centimeter.

All those mini beams are distributed among the players. In your turn, you place a stick onto the platform. In the beginning, there are no other possibilities. With the game board filling up, there will soon be an opportunity to place a beam on top of another one, and thus connect two pieces of wood. As a reward, you may immediately place another one. The aim

of the game – as clever readers may have guessed long ago – is to get rid of all your sticks first. That's already it regarding rules, except for a few more details.

Bridge Building

The point of the game is obvious: When placing my own stick, I should not provide the next player with an opportunity to build across in the next turn. This doesn't pose a problem in the beginning, but will quickly become impossible as the platform fills up. When the beam density increases, bridge building will start. However, there should never be more than one stick on another. Short chain reactions will therefore only happen when, after the first bridge, another connection is created

on the third or fourth level. If something collapses during the building process, the next player in line will be pleased; he or she may hand over one of their sticks to the culprit.

The restriction that every beam may only be built upon once leads to fewer possible bridges than initially thought. Towards the end it becomes increasingly difficult to find any gaps at all where a piece can be placed. That's when a steady hand, dexterity and a sense of proportion are called for. LAKOTA is a fast game with appealing material, which can be readily



Anzeige



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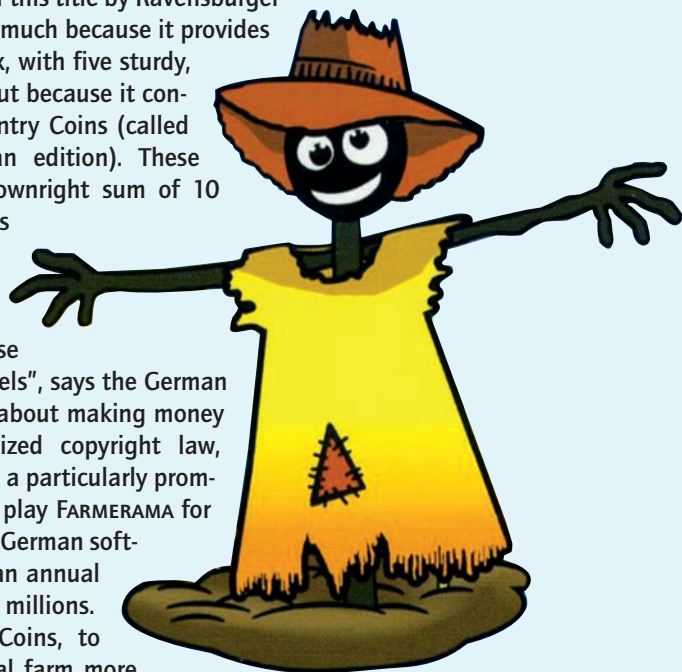
**Komm,
spiel mit!**





Heap of Pixels Turned Into Cardboard

The price-performance ratio of this title by Ravensburger can hardly be topped. Not so much because it provides for a stuffed and weighty box, with five sturdy, round game boards overall, but because it contains a voucher for 300 Country Coins (called Tulip Guilder in the German edition). These would individually cost a downright sum of 10 Euro. Country Coins? That's the currency in the computer game FARMERAMA, which can be played on the internet. What do I get for these Country Coins? "Heaps of pixels", says the German weekly *Die Zeit*. In a feature about making money in the times of a jeopardized copyright law, FARMERAMA was mentioned as a particularly promising example. Everyone may play FARMERAMA for free online – nevertheless the German software company Bigpoint has an annual turnover in the three-digit millions. Mostly by selling Country Coins, to make your stay on the virtual farm more pleasant by adding decorative heaps of pixels. The superstars of the music industry these days do something similar. The illegal copying of their music leaves them rather cold as they earn many times over that amount by selling T-shirts, concert tickets and similar accessories.



and merrily played. While it works with any number of players it gets quite crowded around the small game board with five or six playing.

LAKOTA will be happily put on the table often, even when the original invitation is not explicitly for a games evening. The game was invented by Philippe Proux, a French country doctor, who first self-published it under the title Tasso. In his small self-publishing house Ludarden, Proux offers two additional tactical games of skill.

KMW/cs



Title: **Lakota**
 Publisher: **Kosmos**
 Designer: **Philippe Proux**
 Artist: **Karl-Otto Homes**
 Players: **2-6 (zu zweit: ↗)**
 Age: **about 8 and up**
 Duration: **about 30 minutes**
 Price: **about 23 €**

Reviewer	Playing appeal
KMW.....	7
Udo Bartsch.....	5
Christwart Conrad*.....	7
L. U. Dikus**.....	7
Wieland Herold.....	6
Edwin Ruschitzka.....	6

* Unintended assistance from the player to your right can be a problem. Therefore, best with two.
 ** But only for two.

So, is FARMERAMA as a board game merely the sophisticated product of a novel exploitation chain, designed to lever out the for-free mentality on the web? Is FARMERAMA nothing more than a heap of pixels turned into cardboard?

The straight answer is: No. Ravensburger has spared no expenses to hire a real board game designer and they got the absolute expert for farming and animal husbandry on board: Uwe Rosenberg, master of the entire range – from simple bean cultivation to a complex AGRICOLA existence.

Just one glance at the board game and the comparison with the browser game already shows: The analog Rosenberg version wins. The digital sowing and harvesting with subsequent selling or feeding is a rather mindless sequence of actions. Even though they are not quite happening in real time, they are nevertheless occurring in painful slowness. "FARMERAMA is

mainly played by women over 40 who have a lot of time on their hands during the day", said the above-mentioned weekly paper somewhat disparagingly.

A passion for the time wheel

Although the FARMERAMA board game may deal with sowing, harvesting and feeding, too, there is more of a thematic similarity. The mechanism does not reveal that the board game was inspired by a comparatively banal browser game. Rosenberg presents a game with an elaborate roundel mechanism. In an interview with *spielbox* (issue 1/2012), he explained that the wheel was his passion and he was planning to "use it across the board in all its variants". With FARMERAMA, it would be a time wheel "that is turned down until you can 'harvest' something".

