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All about
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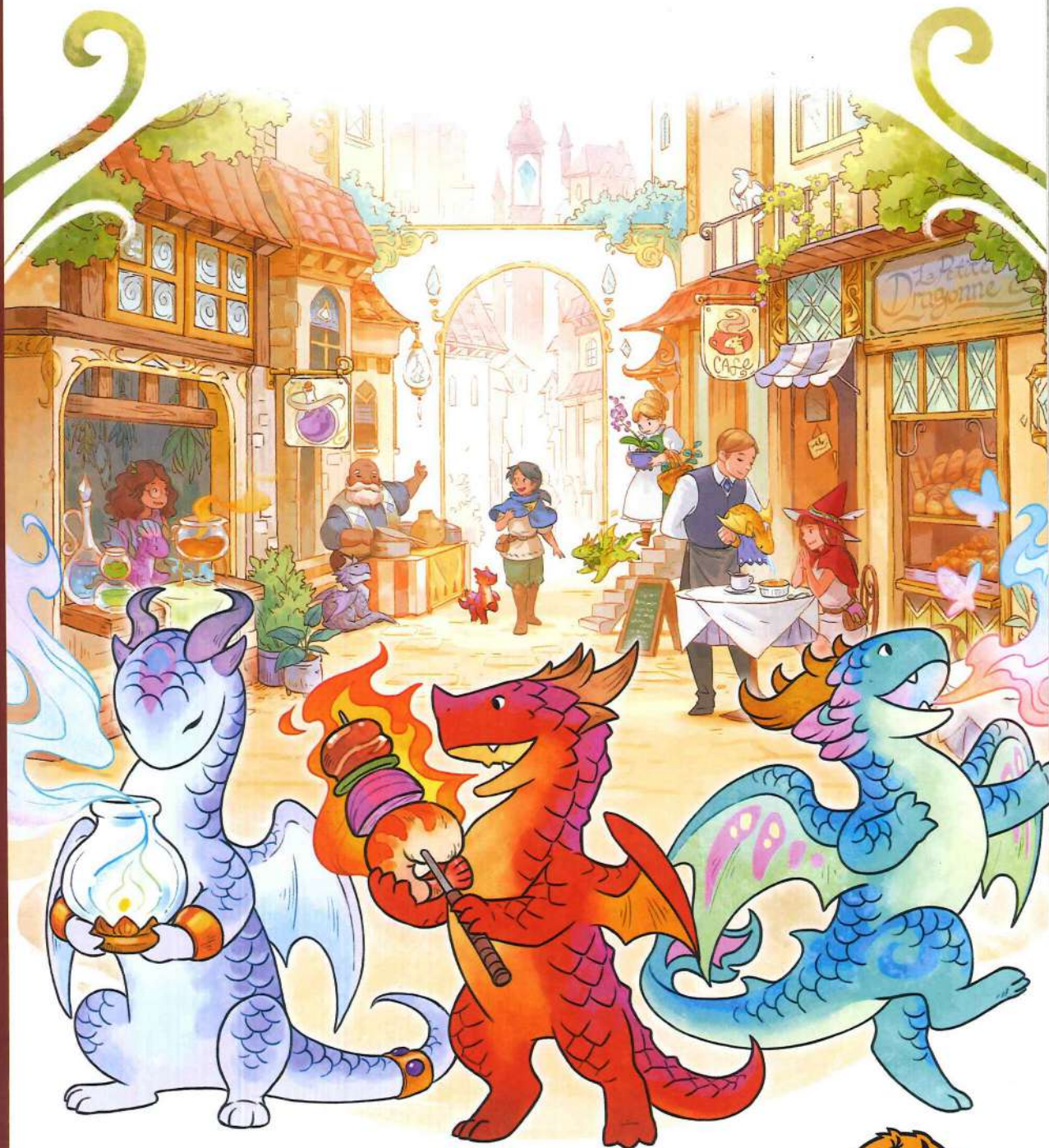
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Flamecraft



Sort and Collect

Decades ago, a popular Ravensburger game was on the market for a long time and since it is unavailable here the price for a used copy now significantly exceeds the original one. We are talking about the number card sorting game RACKO. The first person to rearrange their randomly received cards in numerical ascending order in the plastic rack in front of them is the winner. The parallels to OLD LONDON BRIDGE are unmistakable.

By **CHRISTWART CONRAD**

The similarities? The houses in OLD LONDON BRIDGE are numbered from 1 to 60. The building cards are also placed vertically but are visible to all. Each round, everyone acquires a building and puts it on their bridge from left to right. The condition now is that the house numbers are placed in descending order. If none of the five offered buildings fit, you either place a numberless park to start a new sequence of numbers in the following round, or you take a building with a house number that is too high, with the consequence that you have to demolish an already constructed building in order to insert the new one into the sequence.

Before the buildings are acquired, you place a bid with a face-down character card from your hand. The player with the highest number has the first right of selection and places their pawn on an empty space on the rotating rondel in the center. This, on the one hand, indicates the amount of money you receive immediately when choosing a building,

and on the other hand points to an adjacent building stack. Four of the six stacks grant a specific action, the strength of which depends on how many crests of the same color are displayed on the buildings you have collected so far. For example, if you have three identical crests additionally to the one just acquired, you get the reward four times. Depending on the type, this can be money, character cards, or advancement on certain tracks. The tracks bring advantages: the position on the Chapel Track resolves all ties and provides money as you advance; on the Bridge Gate, there is a bonus tile on every third space which allows you to not have to discard a character card, but instead take it back into your hand or to share a space with another player's pawn on the rondel.

After twelve rounds, we score. In the standard version of the game, you get bonus points depending on your position on the tracks, the most valuable hand cards and the most buildings. Empty building slots are penalized. In the end, the richest wins.



Getting into the game is not difficult. From the beginning, it is clear that starting with a high card is of advantage as it provides you with the most options. Which character card is worth playing for this is a tricky question. Here it is important to assess your competitors well. There are already indications of this in the first round, and they become stronger as the round progresses. If you can do something with a certain number range on your own you will have an advantage over those that compete over the same

building. You should also take into account possible space bonuses, the hierarchy during ties and the building crests. It is not uncommon to be faced with the question of whether to forego a small advantage in order to really screw over a fellow player. This is interaction at its best. The information is not overly complex, but interesting enough to give you something to think about.

Of course, chance also plays a role, depending on which house numbers appear in connection with certain buildings or crests. But even if a coup is unsuccessful, you still get your piece of the cake on almost every move.

The material—cardboard and wood with complete absence of plastic—is generous. Even if a simple laying out of the cards would have done, the effort was worth it to gain the three-dimensional effect of the buildings on the bridges. All components fit back into the game box without having to be disassembled—which, unfortunately is not a given these days. The instructions are clearly structured, complete and without frills.

Experienced players have the option of choosing from 16 alternatives for the four final scores. A game takes on a whole new focus when a certain category suddenly promises a significantly higher scoring potential. I prefer—even for the

first few games—the tile that scores the longest row of buildings uninterrupted by a park, because on the one hand it rewards the careful selection of house numbers, which is already intriguing in itself, and on the other hand it simultaneously replaces the scoring of building quantity, which corresponds closely with the penalty points for vacancy.

OLD LONDON BRIDGE belongs in the game category "Family Plus" with classic Eurogame elements like needing to assess your opponents, which, without dominating tactical decisions, provides some exciting interactions. (dm) ♣



Title: Old London Bridge
 Designer: Gabriele Bubola, Leo Colovini
 Illustration: Markus Erdt, Patricia Limberger
 Publisher: Queen Games
 Players: 2-4
 Age: about 10+ years
 Duration: about 45-75 minutes
 Price: about 50 euros

Reviewer	Playing appeal
Christwart Conrad	8
Udo Bartsch	6
Andreas Becker	7
Stefan Ducksch	7
Gerhard Göldenitz	6
Gerald Rüscher	7
Stephan Zerlik	8



Photos: Becker, Conrad, Queen Games

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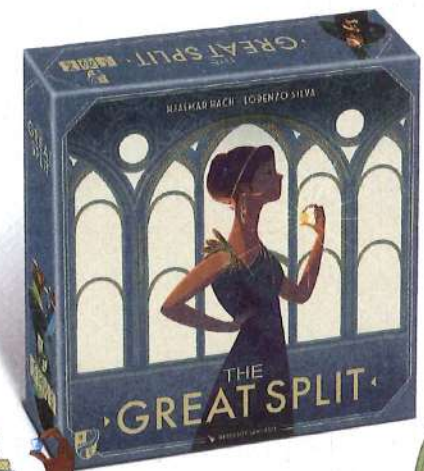
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