



All about  
Games in a Box

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# Three unusual suspects

Who would have thought that one of the best children's games of the year was coming from publishers Hans im Glück? And who would have suspected that Abacusspiele would be competing with them for the blue Kinderspiel des Jahres pawn? And when thinking about Gigamic, children's games will also not automatically come to mind. But in France this specialist for abstract brain games is a full-range provider who also has plenty of children's games in the program. In direct competition with the establishment, all three above mentioned publishers bet on the safe bank of the profession: the memory principle.

## Stone Age Junior

**H**ans im Glück additionally placed their bet on a designer who comes with references and experience. As early as 2009, Marco Teubner had adapted one of their successful titles for younger players: My First CAR-

CASSONNE. Now he's given **STONE AGE** the same treatment, with the junior version still focusing heavily on resource acquisition and hut building.

Martin the mammoth delivers a child-friendly introduction into a world of 10,000 years ago. The children Jono and Jada and their wolfhound Guff are our role model time travelers in this age of hunters and gatherers. Starting from their hut village, they are guided on a round trip to find mammoth teeth, arrow heads, fish, and forest berries; they can also try their hand at modeling clay pots. But basically their main target is to build huts as quickly as possible with the majority of them costing three different or two identical resources. To reach this aim, it is always a good idea to keep Guff close as the dog serves as a wild card for all resources. Also helpful in those moneyless days is bartering, which does, however, not come free, as it is allowed on one square only.



The first player to build three huts around their fireplace wins the game, usually after just over a quarter of an hour.

14 face-down forest tiles are the engine of the game. Six of them show dice spots, the other eight correspond to a space on the board. If, for example, a player flips over a 3, they may move three spaces, or if a player turns over an arrow head, they jump directly to the arrow head space to gain the corresponding resource.

Face-up tiles remain open until one of the children reaches the building site. During the following hiding action two tiles are interchanged so that the focus is less on the memorizing. But if you have remembered Guff's position, you will in most cases jump there directly, to obtain one of the two joker tiles. If they run out, you are allowed to steal from your fellow players. Other than that, the hut space is of central importance as it is the only place you are allowed to build.

**STONE AGE JUNIOR** already works fantastically well with children from five and upwards, even though they collect randomly rather than tactically, but still have a lot of fun with the game and the great components. Elementary-school kids start to jockey specifically for the dog and also memorize, for the most part, the building spaces. For me, **STONE AGE JUNIOR** is one of the best games that Marco Teubner has ever developed and an awesome children's game from the publishers Hans im Glück.

**STONE AGE JUNIOR** (Hans im Glück)  
by Marco Teubner; for 2-4 children,  
about 5+ years; duration: about  
15-30 minutes; price: about 28 €.

## Leo muss zum Frisör

**I**n a similar league plays Leo by Leo Colovini. The lion Leo looks great, but it seems he has swallowed a particularly potent hair restorer as his mane just keeps growing and growing; you can hardly recognize him under all that hair.

His inevitable path to the jungle barber, Bobo, leads him across 30 jungle spaces where zebras, rhinos, crocodiles,

parrots, and Leo's mane-less spouse await him. A little chat here, a little treasure there – all of this takes an awfully long time.

As a precaution, Leo sets his alarm clock for 8 a.m. even though Bobo's salon only closes at 8 p.m. Leopoldine herself holds up her husband for five hours every time. If the lion arrives at the barber

during after hours, he is allowed to try again the next day, but not indefinitely.

Is Leo going to succeed in scaling Bobo's barber chair within five days? This really exciting question is asked again and again by the team of no more than five children from six years and up. To accomplish the task, they get 20 movement cards that lead the lion between



colors. If the color or the number of the movement card matches the animal on the flipped jungle card, Leo is not held up. Otherwise, Leo forgot the time while chatting and the hands of the clock are ruthlessly moving towards closing time.

During the first round all players are blindly groping around the jungle. There is a high probability that Leo will

by one hair jigsaw piece – Leo's proceedings are more focused. The children will safely remember at least some of the jungle cards, and with the corresponding movement cards they make more progress. With a full complement of five it will still be difficult to tame the mane. The smaller the number of children involved, the larger the choice of cards, enabling a targeted approach of the right jungles spaces. On the other hand, more children will remember more spaces, and that is why this tricky memory task proves fun in any constellation, even with adults joining in.

**LEO (ABACUSSPIELE)** by Leo Colovini; for 2–5 children, about 6+ years; duration: about 20 minutes; price: about 20 €.

1 and 4 spaces closer to Bobo. Just like all the animals, these cards come in five

not arrive at Bobo's. But already the very next day – the lion's mane has now grown

## El Capitan

The graphic designer Charlotte Fillonneau has also skillfully employed the memory principle. In **EL CAPITAN**, her first publication, she demands enormous memory skills from all participants. The stuff that Gigamic has packed into the small game box is very pretty. Other publishers would at least use double or even triple the size of this box. For six children there are 72 sturdy, square pirate cards, 27 captains cards of the same size, but slightly thinner, three placement cards and one big treasure chest filled with 130 coins, in addition to 26 appealing pirate ships and a really big sand timer.

All children have a set of picture cards in front of them. They depict classical pirate iconography, canons, sabers, the parrot, treasure chests, and mermaids are also there. Nothing new here, but to memorize the position of 12 pictures is very demanding,

even for children with a good memory, and particularly when a merciless sand timer only grants them precious little time. There are only 16 captain cards in the game, with three of them being special cards.

Gameplay is easy: a captain card is turned over, and then all players place

their pirate ship onto the hopefully fitting card in their display, before hitting the captain's deck with their hands. If a hand lies below and the child has not made a mistake, they will gain three gold coins. All other children apart from the last one gain correspondingly less. For a wrong guess, one gold coin has to be paid. The three special cards whirl the display around good and proper, but also allow players to check the position of individual cards. As soon as all the captain cards have been turned over, roughly after 20 minutes, the child with the most gold coins wins the game.

The rulebook may be printed in a slightly too small font, but still **EL CAPITAN** manages to convince with its great material, and mainly with the successful and sophisticated memory idea. The beautiful pirate ships introduce elementary-school children neatly to the subject and the game really challenges them. A pirate battle where parents will you go down without mercy, but they should not begrudge their children the fun.

*Wieland Herold/cs*



**EL CAPITAN (Gigamic)** by Charlotte Fillonneau; for 2– children, about 6+ years; duration: about 20 minutes; price: about 20 €.