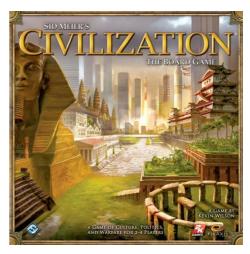# First Impressions (2)

Pevans tries out a new *Civilization*

Now, as far as I'm concerned, there is only game called *Civilization*. It comes in a long, shallow, pale blue, rectangular box, was designed by Francis Tresham and was published by Hartland Trefoil in 1980 (says BGG, though I thought it was a couple of years earlier). Accept no substitute! Then there was *Sid Meier's Civilization*, which was – spit! – a computer game. Eagle turned this into a board game in 2002: *Sid Meier's Civilization: the Boardgame*. And now Fantasy Flight has entered the fray with *Sid Meier's Civilization: the Board Game*. This is, I'm told, a new game, based on the computer game.

Anyway, when a copy of *Sid Meier's Civilization: the Board Game* was on the table at Swiggers games club, I was happy to give it a go. Now, if I thought there was a lot going on in *Ora & Labora*, there is an awful lot going on in this game! And you need plenty of space on the table to set everything out. You start with a card for your civilization that gives your special abilities. To this is attached a dial with two pointers to show trade points and cash. The board is made up of a number of square terrain tiles (divided into squares), depending on how many are playing. Each player gets a specific starting tile on which they place their capital and a city.

Players also get army markers – plastic flags – and scouts – covered wagon models that make it look like this should be a Wild West game! The strengths of their units are given by their current unit cards. These are square, divided into four diagonally, with the current strength indicated by the uppermost edge. The strength of the units is limited by the player's current technologies.

Technologies are shown by cards that players can lay in front of them (each player has their own set to draw on) and provide the ability to construct particular buildings, military units, types of government and other things. There are five levels of technology and, apart from any other restriction, players can only place a level 2 card if there are two level 1 cards to 'support' it. A level 3 needs two level 2s and so on. One way to win the game is to be first to build the sole level 5 technology.

Then there are the building tiles, Wonders, event cards and other bits and pieces. Phew! Cities produce stuff from the squares around them. Buildings and wonders go onto these squares, changing what the city produces. Thus, while adding buildings is usually better for you, you do need to think about what they are replacing and look to maintain the level of production you need. Production is at the start of the turn and players can then trade between themselves. This didn't happen much in my (three-player) game.

The rest of the game turn involves moving your armies and scouts, initially exploring the terrain tiles, which start the game face down. This can, of course, provoke a battle with opposing players' armies or cities (though it takes a while before enough of the

Fantasy Flight's promotional image from their website

board has been explored to reach another player's domain). It also gives players access to more resources and the space to found another city.

Each turn ends with players discovering a new technology, if they can. I've already mentioned one way of winning the game. Players can also win by being the most 'Cultured' civilization (that is, having lots of arty stuff), by being the richest (by gaining the right number of coins) or by conquering another player's Capital. Hence, the way to win is to concentrate your efforts on one aspect of your Civilization so that you hit your chosen target before anybody else reaches theirs.

My overriding feeling about *Sid Meier's Civilization: the Board Game* on playing it for the first time is that it is very complex. There are an awful lot of things that you have to keep track of. I suspect this is because of its translation from a computer game: in a board game you don't have a computer taking care of the bookkeeping. This gives the players a fair amount of work before they can start to worry about the mechanics of playing the game, let along strategy and tactics.

I did enjoy the game, but it clearly needs a lot of time to understand all the options and how all the elements work with each other. However, I don't think that's an effort I'll be making when there are so many other games around that don't need such an investment of time and work to learn. Besides, I'm still struggling to get to grips with *Through the Ages* (which has some similarities) and I've been playing that for a couple of years now. I give my first playing 7/10 on my highly subjective scale.

Sid Meier's Civilization: the Board Game was designed by Kevin Wilson and published by Fantasy Flight Games. It is a strategy board game for 2-4 players, aged 13+, and takes about 3 hours to play.