

Worker placement with Arrosto

3M was founded thirty-two years ago in the Italian town of Modena by a group of players. This of course does not mean the US games publisher, but a club called TreEmme (Modellisti Militari Modenesi) dedicated to wargames and strategy games. One year later the club published the first issue of a 'zine (with the "imaginative" name of WAR) with reviews of new games, some new scenarios, tactical suggestions, and some sort of long-term postal tournament which succeeded in attracting a few hundred gamers from all of Peninsula. Quickly, most of those gamers started to push for a sort of national meeting and finally succeeded finding a suitable place at Pavia's University in September 1983: A couple of hundred players finally met and played for an entire week-end on the tables of the drawing room of the University.

In the beginning this Italian Convention, like a traveling circus, moved every year between Padova, Modena, Roma, Verona, etc. to finally stop in Modena, with the name of ModCon, where the local club, Club TreEmme, was the able to enlist more than 100 members to prepare the tables, organize the events, book the hotels, etc.

From it's beginning at the University a lot of time passed and the Convention moved to the Modena Fair halls in 2008, where players have now more than 18,000 square meters available. The name of this meeting has now changed to PLAY: Festival del Gioco (PLAY: The Games Festival) and it hosts all kinds of games. War games are still played, of course, but most of the space is now dedicated to the boardgames, roleplaying games, video games, miniatures, children games, old fashion games (what we call grandparents games), etc.

The biggest Italian associations collaborate in this event with demo tables



where the club members are always ready to explain the available games.

Italian Producers/Importers are also present in PLAY and they have their own

testing space and tables. As most of the available modern games are produced in Germany, US, France, UK, Poland, Czech Republic, etc. it is very important that an "official" translation of the rules be available to the potential players, and having an "official" importer is extremely important to develop our hobby.

PLAY is also the place where all the Italian gamers go to check out new releases and test new games, so not-yet-translated novelties and prototypes are really welcome. PLAY could also be the right place for



foreign publishers to explore the Italian market and the big Italian gamers community.

The organizers also decided to invite some very well known game designer every year, so ModCon and then PLAY hosted in the past personalities like

William Attia, Andreas Seyfarth, Gary Gygax, Jervis Jonson, Reiner Knizia, Friedman Friese, Christophe Bøelinger, etc. PLAY 2012 was the year of Martin Wallace,

Walther Mac Gerdts, and Ignacy Trzewiczek, to name a few. We gamers tend to idealize the game designers as VIP persons of a superior dimension so we are always pleased to see that they are mostly real gamers, always ready to share their ideas with us, keen to show their prototypes to test them, and ready to consider our suggestions to improve their "babies".

I Meet and greet on Friday

On Friday afternoon, while the stands and the tables were still laid in the big halls of Fiera di Modena, the Producers, Importers and game Designers shared a large meeting room and passed a few hours chatting, showing their games and prototypes, giving gadgets or signing copies of the games to the players. It was entertaining to see Martin, Mac and Ignacy side by side, discussing gaming



and being shyly approached by some visitors who were warmly welcomed and who left the tables smiling with their "precious" game signed by the designer.

Saturday morning opened with the usual herd – crowds of visitors attacking the entrance of the Fiera loaded with games, boxes, models, miniatures, children, and a plethora of accessories for their activities.

The stands were assaulted by hordes of players searching for new games to bring back home or to immediately play with their friends. Normal players, Napoleonic and Star Wars soldiers, Vampires, Fairies,

Trolls and Orcs were all mixed together in this haunting phase. At noon things started to settle down and all the tables of the three halls were filled with players.

When the first gaming day was over and many local restaurants and pizzerias hosted hungry players, any non-gaming patrons would have



been surprised to hear strange phrases like "worker placement", "colored cubes", "ah, if I had another turn I should win", instead of the usual *lasagna*, *arrosto*, or *gnocco e tigelle*.

Sunday morning is different: A few visitors are already in front of the main entrance at 9 a.m. These are the irreducibles of PLAY, those strange creatures that planned to spend every single minute inside the convention and therefore they are the first to enter (the instant the doors are opened) and the last to leave (when they are "kindly" pushed out of the halls by some gorilla-like attendants). The other players arrive in small

groups and from their faces you may immediately classify

them as "those of the PUERTO Rico tournament a little late on the schedule and therefore obliged to play until 3 a.m." or "the ones who said, 'just one more game of 7 WONDERS' and played another dozen of rounds thereafter" or "the live

RP fans who wished to try their vampire attitude with real citizens in Modena" and so on.

But by 10 a.m. the halls are again filled with happy players everywhere. Families enter PLAY and children immediately spread at LEGO's or HABA's tables while their parents try to recall them (impossible mission indeed!).

PLAY cannot be compared with Essen, of course, and not only for the number of visitors that usually attend the two exhibitions, but mainly for the different approach that was selected. PLAY, in effect, is mainly a gaming event organized by players for the players: Every



effort is focused on giving everybody the opportunity to play their favorite games, to always find a free table to set-up and immediately play with friends or other visitors. The problem is that the exhibition is still growing and the available space probably will not be enough in the coming years. This year, for example, static miniatures were left out because of lack of space and their place was taken by LEGO, HABA and a multitude of associations showing "old style" ability or manual games.

Club TreEmme can be proud of organizing an event that was attended by more than 20,000 visitors in 2012. A new interesting initiative was to invite schools to attend the exhibition on Saturday morning. So a good number of school classes arrived, lead by the teachers, and were introduced to educational and traditional games together with modern board games. We are proud to play our part in creating a new generation of gamers. The initiative was a success and the next year this will be done in a more systematic way including PLAY in the options from which teachers can choose at the beginning of the year.

Pietro Cremona, Andrea Ligabue

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