

FEEDING, LAYING EGGS, FIGHT

EVO**THE HARD LIFE OF DINOSAURS**

EVO was initially published by the French Company Jeux Descartes in 2001. It was probably addressed more to families as the graphics were very "naïf" and colored. Then in 2011 Croc, a very well known French Role Play gamer and game designer (many RPG and, recently, Age des Dieux et Claustrophobia) decided to re-edit some games of the now dead Descartes range with his new Company "Studio Descartes", and he started with a new edition of EVO.

The following review will compare the two editions of this game trying to explain to the readers the main differences: we will refer to "E1" for the first edition and to "E2" for the second.

Let's start from the box: the happy group of brightly colored smiling "cartoon like dinosaurs" of E1 has been changed in E2 with a beautiful paint that showed the deadly duel between a Tyrannosaurus Rex and a flying Pterosaur.

The map of E1 is composed of TWO double sided half-boards that could be composed in 4 different ways (front 1+ front 2, front 1 + back 1, etc.) in order to have a different map to use with 3-4-5 players. E2 has two complete double-sided maps: board 1 is larger and is used for 4 (front) or 5 (back) players, while board 2 is smaller and is used to play with 2 (front) or 3 (back) players. Of course the "zones" inside the maps are of the same types ("yellow" beaches, "green"

plains, "brown" hills and "white" mountains) but their number is different in the two editions. Some "white stars" indicate the starting areas in both games, but in E1 only one dinosaur is placed on the map at the beginning, while in E2 players start with 2 beasts. E1 has also 5 small rectangular identical boards, one for each player, to be used to improve your dinos with the "genes" that you will gain during the game. E2 has 5 large and beautiful boards, each depicting a different beast: of course also these boards are used to show your new "genes".

The betting tables (called "biology laboratory") of E1 and E2 are very similar, but E2 has better graphics. Each table shows 6 columns (for betting) and a player order track. The climatic tables are completely different: E1 has a rectangular board with arrows connecting a climatic zone to the others and shows the dice numbers necessary order to make the change. E2 has a wheel (circular board with moving arrows) and shows the consequences of the different climates using colored circles (see more details later): the passage from one kind of climate to another is done with special tokens revealed at the beginning of each turn (and not with a die).

Finally E1 has 50 wooden disks (10 in each color) to be used as "dinosaurs", 5 wooden cylinders (1 for each player and color), five colored cubes to mark the Victory Points

(VP), 62 small rectangular tiles (the "genes"), 1 black disk for the climatic table, one gray disk for the meteorite that will end the game, 26 "event" cards, one D6 die and a black bag (for the gene tiles). E2 has 40 wooden dinos (8 in each color), 5 colored cylinders, 13 round "climate" tokens (one of which is the "meteorite"), 36 "normal genes" tiles, 12 "special genes" tiles, 88 PM markers (used to mark VP and to pay the bets during the Mutation phase), 15 "event" cards, a special D6 die for the combats and a black bag. Let's look now at the game's flow: I will use

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An attractive game on majorities, all in all more streamlined and interesting than the first edition

E2 rules and I will make notes when E1 is different.

After selecting the right board for the number of players, each get his 8 dinos (10 in E1), his bidding marker (colored cylinder), the personal board and 6 PM. Each "beast" starts the game with two fixed "genetic" characteristics: 2 "legs" and 1 "egg". This means that you may use TWO moves each turn (moving one dino two areas or two dinos one area) and that you may have one "baby" per turn. During the game you will get extra "genes" that will mutate your beast (more legs, more eggs, horns for combat, fur layers to survive in cold zones, thermoregulation layers for hot zones, and a certain number of special "genes" that will give extra capacities). E1 does not have the "special genes" but had "tail genes" (not included in E2), used to determine the first player in each turn, but it has also some special capacities acquired with the event cards. Before starting, take 3 climate and the "meteorite" tokens and mix them together be-



fore placing them (face-down) on the table: then add to the pile the other 9 tokens (also face-down). The game will immediately end the moment the "meteorite" appears, so a game of EVO may last from 9 to 13 turns. In E1 you have a specific "track" and you start throwing dice to determine the end of the game after 9 turns: the more you advance the more likely that the meteorite arrives.

Randomly place the player markers (colored cylinders) in the turn order spaces inside the biology laboratory to determine the first turn order. Place the 36 genes in the bag and randomly add 8 specials (discard the remaining 4 specials without looking at them). Finally mix the event cards and place them near the board.

Each player places two of his dinos on the board, on the white stars (only one on E1). The first player may now start turn 1. Each turn is divided into 5 phases:

In Phase 1 (Climate) you reveal the first climate token and you adjust the wheel accordingly, turning it 1 or 2 positions clockwise or anti-clockwise as depicted on the token. The wheel now shows which is the "ideal" terrain on this turn (nothing happens to the dinos), and which are the "hot" terrains (you need thermoregulation genes to survive there), the "cold" terrains (you need fur layers genes to survive) and the lethal terrains (nobody may survive there). For example at start the wheel shows the beaches as ideal, plains as "cold" and hills and mountains as "lethal".

Here we have a major difference to E1 as it used 1D6 to change climate every turn and you could move forward only ONE section per turn (with 3-4-5-6) or backwards (with 1) while with a "2" there was no difference. Climate changes in E1 had a more regular cycle (torrid, temperate, cool, cold, cool, temperate, torrid) and you were able to better program the moves of your beasts.

In Phase 2 (Mutation) some genes are extracted from the bag and put on the biology laboratory (one per player and one in each column, and they must be all different). In E1 this operation was done at the end of each turn. Starting with the first player, in turn, everybody may bet a certain number of PM on one column of the laboratory to get one of the exposed genes. If someone bets higher on your column you have to move your marker in a different column: betting proceeds likewise until there is only 1 marker per column. Players then pay the PM they bid and take the gene: the turn order is rearranged using the column orders (i.e. the player who won the gene of column 1 will be first, etc.). Please note that column 1 does not give you any "gene" but only the opportunity to take an event card

(that may give you some advantages during the game or penalties to your opponents). Finally the number of dinos on the map is counted and the players with most beasts move backwards on the turn order.

In Phase 3 (Movement) we finally set our animals free to explore the map: you may move as many zones as you have "legs" on your personal table and it is up to you to decide if you will move one beast for more than one zone or different beasts just one zone each. With the movement you may transfer your dinos from one dangerous area to a safer one (always keep an eye at the climate wheel in order to understand where to put your dinosaurs, if you want them to survive). One beast per area is the maximum allowed and you cannot cross an occupied area. If you wish to enter an area occupied by another player's beast you must fight and try to push it out.

Combats are decided with the special die and only 5 results are possible:

- One of six faces shows a "cross" - the attacker lost the fight.
- One of six shows an automatic victory symbol.
- One of six shows that you win if you have the same number of horns as the defender
- Two of six shows that you win if you have at least one horn more than the defender
- One of six shows that you win if you have at least two horns more than the defender

If the attacker wins it enters the zone and the defender is eliminated: if the defender wins both beasts remain in their areas and none will die. If you still have some movement points available you may attack again in the same area.

In E1 combats were more deadly and depended on 1D6 die and the number of horns of each player: for example if you attacked with the same number of horns you could win with a "1" or a "2"; with 2 horns more than the defender you could win with "1-5", etc. The loser was ALWAYS eliminated. In Phase 4 (Birth) your beast will enjoy new "children" (one per "egg" on your personal table) and these babies are placed in zones adjacent to your dinosaurs. In E2 you may also place a new baby near a newborn one (thus forming a sort of chain, if you wish) and you will usually take this opportunity to "cut off" vital zones for your opponents who sometimes will not be able to safely put new babies on the board (thus the importance of the turn order). In E1 the babies could be placed only adjacent to their parents.

In Phase 5 (Survival) players must check if some of their dinos die: you look at the different areas and you check the climate wheel. In ideal terrain all the animals survive,

in hot terrain only those that have thermoregulation, in cold terrain only those with fur layers, and every beast die in the lethal terrains. The same system was valid for E1.

Then a new turn starts and you look at the following climate token, adjusting the wheel, and so on until the meteorite appears: when this happens the game stops immediately and the player with most PM win.

Some personal considerations about the differences in "playing" the two games:

(1) - Having 2 dinosaurs less E2 becomes a more strategic game: you need to keep your beasts well positioned in zones where you may easily reach the "ideal" terrain or zones that you may use with thermoregulation and/or furs. E1 was a more "crowded" game and thus more aggressive and tactical: you really "needed" to attack other beasts in order to gain a good terrain.

(2) - The "special genes" of E2 are very important and some of them may be very strong if you get them: for example "KILLER BABY" gives you the possibility to put a new baby in a zone with an opponent's dinosaur, with 60% chance to kill him; "WINGS" allows one of your beasts to move 2 zones paying only 1 point, and you may fly over a zone with another dino; "LARGE HORN" give you 2 extra points in combat, etc. Betting for the strongest genes is an important characteristic of the E2 game: E1 had no special genes but you could have in the biology laboratory two or more genes of the same type (not allowed in E2).

(3) - Betting becomes more difficult in E2: if you are displaced from a column you cannot bet immediately for the same column again, but you have to search a new one. So if you desperately need a particular gene you cannot bet too low ("0" or "1") because you risk to be overbid and lose the opportunity: in effect you may be unable to go back to that column if nobody attacks you again. In game E1 immediate overbid on the same column was allowed.

(4) - In E2 it is possible that the climate may change of two zones in a single turn and this is the most shocking difference, and it may happens that a very bad climate will kill most of your dinosaurs because they are unable to move to safe zones in just one turn. I do not know if this change was made on purpose or not, but we do not like this rule: therefore I suggest avoiding it and moving the wheel only one space even if the two spaces token is turned.

(5) - Event cards have been completely reconsidered: E1 had 26 very powerful cards that often gave a chaotic feeling to the game and a sense of frustration to the players (unable to counter some nasty at-

tacks). E2 has only 15 "more gentle" cards and some of the powers of the old cards have been transferred to the "special genes". This allows the players to decide if they really need or want a special power, but they must bet high to get it, thus losing VP.

In summary the new game is really more attractive, more refined and more interesting. Play is quite different in the two editions: in E1, with more dinosaurs that had to search for safe terrains every turn there was a lot of bitter attacks and the losers were always eliminated (remember that in E2 only defenders are killed if they lose a combat). As a consequence the situation on the map changed quickly from turn to turn and sometimes alliances were really a necessity: a sort of "kingmaker effect" was also possible. E2 is less bloody and invite to better program your strategy, moving your dinosaurs with tactical order to try to have the maximum of safe zones at your reach on the following turn.

The only rule that we do not like on E2 is the "two climatic zones" change because we think that it may have a too high impact on a otherwise very well balanced game: but "house rules" are there to be used, isn't?

Pietro Cremona & Davide Genestreti

INFORMATION

Designer: Philippe Keyaerts

Artist: S. Poinsonet, S. Gantier

Price: ca. 32 Euro

Publisher: Studio Descartes 2011

www.de.asmodee.com

PLAYERS:

2-5

AGE:

12+

TIME:

90+

EVALUATION

Placement and bidding game
With friends
Version: de
Rules: de en es fr
In-game text: no

Comments:

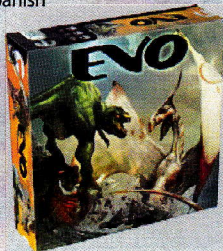
Fantastic graphics * Rules changed in comparison to the first edition * Changes are nearly all improvements * Topic and mechanisms go very well together

Compares to:

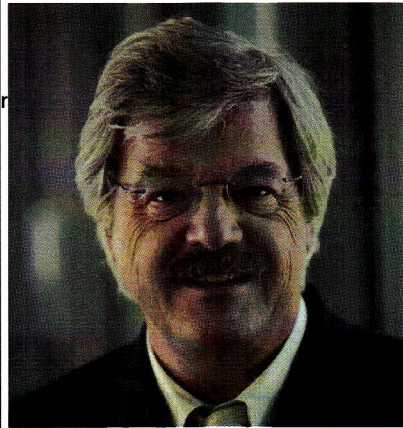
Evo

Other editions:

Asmodee editions in English, French and Spanish



My rating:



Axel Meffert Passed Away - Kosmos Verlag Stuttgart mourns his long-time CEO

On March 13, 2012, Axel Meffert, the long-time CEO of Kosmos Verlag, Stuttgart, has passed away due to a severe illness. He was sixty-four years old and had been a member of the Executive Board of both Kosmos and Belsler Verlag since 1995.

Axel Meffert was born on 27th of September 1947 at Bad Harzburg, studied Biology at TU Braunschweig from 1966 to 1971 and followed this up directly after obtaining his Biology Diploma with a course in Sociology at Göttingen University. Over a period of then 10 years Axel Meffert devoted himself as a teacher, an instructor of teachers, as a scientific assistant and editor-in-charge of the monthly publication "Unterricht Biologie" to the manifold didactic options for formatting and preparing scientific topics. It must have been during those times that Axel Meffert discovered not only his passion for relaying knowledge, but for being a mover, a doer and a publisher.

In 1987 he accepted the position of Program Manager of the Books department, followed this up a few years later with two years working for the Meister Verlag in Munich and returned to Kosmos in 1993 in the position as Publishing Manager. Since 1995 he was CEO of Kosmos. This appointment turned out to be an exceedingly felicitous choice for all areas of the Kosmos portfolio – for Books as well as for the Experimental Kits and Board Games.

Axel Meffert turned out to be the nearly perfect entrepreneur and publisher: Matter-of-fact and result-oriented in all matters of company economics, passionate and open for innovation in all matters of program development for all branches of Kosmos.

In the Book Department the turnover has more than doubled during Axel Meffert's aegis. He intensified and broadened the thematic range of the guidebook program as well as partnerships and cooperations and

the expansion of the program of Children's Books, spearheaded by „Die drei ???“.

With a keen sense for new didactic and thematic challenges Axel Meffert has guided the urgently needed re-launch and expansion of the Kosmos Experimental Kit range. The classic experimental kits for physics and chemistry were augmented under his aegis with products featuring latest technological developments and catering to the new demands from children and parents as regards to educative toys. In the Technology range the new experimental kits introduced photovoltaic, solar energy and, especially spectacular, fuel cell technology to children and adolescents. At the same time Axel Meffert sped up the development of a number of budget-priced introductory experimental kits with a high experience level. As a patient and exact observer and listener Axel Meffert had realized that market demand was for products enabling children to try out different subjects with a rather low financial demand to find out their fields of interest, always keeping an eye on keeping up the fun.

Both the standard guidebook program and range of books on nature as well as the leading experimental kits were familiar terrain for Meffert, the scientist. Entirely new for him in 1995 was the world of board games. That his crowning achievement as a publisher happened in this area tells a lot about his entrepreneurial zeal and ingenuousness. In his seventeen years as CEO of Kosmos the publishing house grew from an economically rather unimportant small company into one of the leading game publishers in Germany. This was only possible because Axel Meffert had the rare talent to again and again create in himself, as well as in his employees, new innovative fun and enterprising spirit. Again and again Kosmos started new successful developments: The "Settlers of Catan" published by Kosmos introduced the winning concept of "Games Family", out of the legendary Kosmos range of "Games for Two" grew an entirely new type of board games and with great enthusiasm and zest Axel Meffert furthered the alliance of Literature and Games which over a long period remained a nearly exclusive domain of Kosmos.

How did this man, how did Axel Meffert manage to do all this? Books, experimental kits, games! And besides all that still have time to listen, time to discuss, time to be patient? Very easily? Yes, very easily, and therefore so rare: Axel Meffert wanted to be enthusiastic and could be enthusiastic – for everything that he did. He was a publisher body and soul and very successful!

Fritz Gruber