
Software Review

Inexpensive Gift for Old-Style Board Gamer

by Stan Horwitz

Product: Hoyle Puzzle and Board Games #1

Company: Encore

<http://www.encoreusa.com/>

List Price: \$19.99

System Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.10 and later and any Mac from a G3 on up

Test system: Second generation

MacBook Pro with Mac OS X 10.6.2

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INEXPENSIVE GIFT for a Mac user who enjoys playing old style board and puzzle games, consider Hoyle Puzzle and Board Games. This suite of games includes a huge set of traditional board and puzzle games such as Parcheesi, Chinese Checkers, regular checkers, Chess, and Mahjong. Each game is brought into the modern era by making it playable on a computer. Also included are some mind games such as Sudoku and card games such as Solitaire. In fact, there are so many games that if I played them all, I would never have time to write this review.

Installing this software is easy. Just slide the CD into your Mac and double-click on the installer icon. At the end of the installation process, you will be prompted to register the software via a form that asks several demographic questions such as your age, occupation, hobbies, income, etc. At the end of the registration process, a coupon code is displayed that takes 20% off your next purchase at Broderbund.com.

The user interface is easy to use. A full set of rules is included with each game. I am sure I will play more of the games, but for purposes of this interview, I played Mahjong, Dominoes, and Fallacy. You start out by telling the software your name and the name of your opponent if you are playing someone else instead of the computer. Each game has a help button, and you see the basic rules when you start each respective game. In many games, there's a button to click to get a hint and another button to undo the previous move. You can also save games and come back to them at

a later point.

The first game I played was Mahjong. In fact, I purchased this game CD on impulse when I was at the Apple store just to play its Mahjong game. The other games on the CD are bonuses for me. Mahjong is an ancient Chinese tile game. The game involves matching individual pairs of tiles, each of which has an exotic oriental symbol printed on it. You keep matching pairs of tiles until the board is clear. This may sound easy, but it is quite difficult. Mahjong involves considerable strategy and thought. I have no idea why, but I find this game addicting. I have played several different Mahjong games on the computer and this rendition ranks up with the best of them in the way it challenges me to think.

Fallacy is a brain game that involves posing situations and then categorizing them into different moral categories. For example, one situation might be, "Tommy hits Andy, and Andy hits Bobby." The category this situation would fall into is "two wrongs don't make a right." This game is interesting, but nowhere near as captivating as Mahjong. It is a good game for adolescents to play because it gives them an opportunity to practice critical thinking. I then went on and played dominoes.

Hoyle's Dominoes is your basic dominoes game. You select a set of tiles, as does the computer and you compete against each other. You can also play against a human opponent. In fact, many of the Hoyle games can be played against human opponents.

There is a carrot and stick reward system in this set of games. You earn points by winning games. You lose points when you lose games. You and an opponent can compete against each other in a quest to earn more points. Hoyle only supports two human players though, but it can be fun for siblings or spouses to compete against one another, or if you're single like me, you can compete entirely against the computer.

For a modest \$20, you get dozens of entertaining games that are great for exercising one's mind. These games are also a superb way to pass the time on a rainy day or during a long flight.

Rating 5 out of 5 Apples

