
world war ii games Best World War II ETO strategy game?

Posted by Frodo Baggins - 2008/09/14 22:33

Hi, I am trying to figure out which game to buy to recreate the European Theater of Operations during World War II. I want something that is not whoppingly complex and I don't want something that takes much more than 10 hours to play.

I also want it to simply be a fun game with lots of interesting decisions to be made. I've come down to 3 choices

1. Axis and Allies Europe. This seems to be a real simple game that can be played quickly. My hesitation is that it may be too simple. I really want something that does a decent job of at least making you feel like the game is a semi-historical simulation. Is this game so simple that it feel more like playing with toys than recreating WWII?
2. Barbarossa to Berlin. I really like PoG so this has strong appeal. The mix of cards and chits makes for a fun game but also a decent simulation. The problem appears to be that the cards play make gameplay conform to history and thus removes some fun but ahistorical options. Also I really wanted a game that didn't skip the beginning of the war (which A&AE also does I believe)
3. Europe Engulfed. I like the Columbia Block games fairly well so this one has draw. It covers the whole war which is good. However I don't know much more about it. One complaint I have heard is that there aren't that many interesting decision so game play is a bit bland.
4. Totaler Krieg. I know I said I had 3 choices but wanted to include this one because it offers a number of things I like. It does the whole war and has a really nice planning/diplomacy component with the card play. The problem is that it is too complicated and takes too long to play. I actually own Krieg and it is still fairly complex and definitely too long. It would be worth considering if they made Totaler Krieg Lite.

So, any words of wisdom about any of these games? Thanks, Mark

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Posted by Dweeb - 2008/09/14 22:33

2. Barbarossa to Berlin. I really like PoG so this has strong appeal. The mix of cards and chits makes for a fun game but also a decent simulation. The problem appears to be that the cards play make gameplay conform to history and thus removes some fun but ahistorical options. No more so than PoG does, I think. I can't comment on the other games yet (Although EE is getting good press generally), but if you really like PoG I think you should at least try BtB.

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Posted by Erich Schneider - 2008/09/14 22:33

2. Barbarossa to Berlin. I really like PoG so this has strong appeal. The mix of cards and chits makes for a fun game but also a decent simulation. The problem appears to be that the cards play make gameplay conform to history and thus removes some fun but ahistorical options. Also I really wanted a game that didn't skip the beginning of the war (which A&AE also does I believe) I've only played one game (and that one I conceded halfway through) but I'm not so sure about the bit about conforming to history. If anything, there are cards that let you do stuff that was considered but rejected historically. (For example, you can do an Axis invasion of Malta to get full supply to Africa for the Axis, but it permanently removes one of your valuable 5 operations cards.) Also, I have read complaints about the cardplay making certain things quite ahistorical; for example, clearing the Axis out of Africa is not required for the invasion of Sicily - you just play Husky and an army appears on the beach. IMHO, if anything the conforming to history business is more enforced by the June 1941 start time and the victory conditions. If the Axis are going to win they've got to invade Russia and try to grab as much of it as they can. The can vary the parameters of how they do that, or neglect it somewhat to focus more on Africa. The Allies have to hang on until the US shows up and then start beating up on the Axis. But strange stuff can still happen - in the game I conceded last night, the Allies did Operation Sledgehammer, invaded Norway, and, because I didn't take the threat seriously enough, conqeured it, jumped over to Denmark, and had an American army in Hamburg before I knew what had happened. So the crux of the matter is how much complexity modeling the beginning of the war will add. I think I am with Krieg's designers here - there was a lot of really wacky stuff diplomatically and politically in the early war and modeling that is going to require a lot of special cases no matter what you do. (I'm thinking of things like the situation with France after the surrender, the coup that got Hitler to invade Yugoslavia, and the whole Italy/Greece mess. The rules for Vichy seem to be messy in most ETO games.) Also, designers have to make judgement calls as to how possible some of the ahistorical stuff could have been (there are arguments to be made that Sea Lion had no hope of succeeding, ever). That said, I have not found a WW2 ETO strategy game I wholeheartedly like yet, having tried A3R, Krieg, Totaler Krieg, the Columbia Front series, and now Barbarossa to Berlin. My wargame partner and I are going to try BtB again next week. My main difficulty with BtB is with figuring out how to do basic things effectively, like maintaining an advancing continuous front, within the game system.

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Posted by SK - 2008/09/14 22:33

and it is still fairly complex and definitely too long. It would be worth considering if they made Totaler Krieg Lite. So, any words of wisdom about any of these games? Thanks, Mark

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Posted by jonathan - 2008/09/14 22:33

You might be interested in expanding your 3 choices to 5 (!) with the old Avalon Hill game Hitler's War. You can take a look at my PC port here: <http://homepage.eircom.net/~monalisa/HitlersWar/index.html> Jonathan.

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Posted by Christian Schulzke - 2008/09/14 22:33

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Posted by Christian Schulzke - 2008/09/14 22:33

My main difficulty with BtB is with figuring out how to do basic things effectively, like maintaining an advancing continuous front, within the game system. Well, you can't. You will have to pause every once in a while to bring up forces from the rear. This concept is a bit difficult for traditional wargamers to warm up to since they are used to games where you move every unit its maximum movement rate every single turn, however, it is more historically accurate with respect to fighting on the Eastern front.

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My main difficulty with BtB is with figuring out how to do basic things effectively, like maintaining an advancing continuous front, within the game system. Well, you can't. You will have to pause every once in a while to bring up forces from the rear. This concept is a bit difficult for traditional wargamers to warm up to since they are used to games where you move every unit its maximum movement rate every single turn, however, it is more historically accurate with respect to fighting on the Eastern front. I'm willing to accept that, but just to clarify, I was thinking more along the lines of I want to advance my front (or possibly retreat it) without leaving gaping holes in my lines. Perhaps I'm just too paranoid about that sort of thing, after having played several years with gamers who couldn't resist sending a small unit or two through any hole you left, just to force you to stop your advance and deal with it.

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Posted by AlfonzoS - 2008/09/14 22:33

Hitler's War was originally released by Metagaming. You may also want to consider Europe at War by Jedko Games

Alfonzo Smith

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Posted by Drazen Kramaric - 2008/09/14 22:33

3. Europe Engulfed. I like the Columbia Block games fairly well so this one has draw. It covers the whole war which is good. However I don't know much more about it. One complaint I have heard is that there aren't that many interesting decision so game play is a bit bland. I reccomend it. It's the most recent game, it has been playtested by the design team for 13 years, it has excellent support from designers on the Consimworld, it is an optimal trade off between historical simulation and fun game. There are enough interesting decisions to make for all the parties involved. Drax remove NOSPAM for reply

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