

App-tastic Board Gaming with Mansions of Madness

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It's not every day you run into a game that manages to answer all your concerns, no matter which ones come up.

I present Mansions of Madness (MoM): Second Edition, a Lovecraftian-themed cooperative adventure game filled with horror and mystery.

What concerns did I have when I had first heard about this game and took into account the issues the 1st edition had?

When you have one player be the bad guy and the rest as the protagonists, it's a weird issue of wanting to give them a good challenge and beat them, but if you do beat them, it can feel quite frustrating and pointless after having spent all that time playing. And, for a story-based game, it becomes doubly frustrating not getting the satisfaction of seeing how things end and play out.

This game seems to have a lot of miniatures and pieces and maps and clues and on and on. As a parent, I can barely etch out an hour here or there to play a board game; I loathe to have to spend that entire hour just setting up the game.

I want a fun story-centric epic game with emergent gameplay, but (cough cough parent cough), I have so little time to get through some of the longer campaigns that, while those offer the most theme and impact, are also impossible to pull off in a single, short setting.

Guess what? MoM answers all these questions in one fell swoop: they introduced an app.

This is still relatively new territory, companioning board games with apps, but XCOM pulled it off pretty darn well, and Fantasy Flight Games have taken things up a notch since then with this game's app. It handles everything for you.

MoM App: *"Hey Ahmad, worried about being the bad guy and balancing out the gameplay and fun? Here, let me take care of that for you. I'll be the dungeon master. You guys just enjoy the game!"*

Ahmad: *"Thanks MoM! Oh man, what about the setup? This is going to take forev-"*

"Shh, there there. Don't worry about it. You just pick the scenario and characters, hit start on me and I will whisk you away to a magical, narrative wonderland-, er, well technically nightmare (this is a Lovecraft game after all). Anyways, no crazy setup required. Just put down a couple tiles here and there and we'll add more as the story requires."

"Dang, that's really sweet of you MoM. How long will this campaign take? It says it could be a couple hours here on the box. Maybe even longer? What if we can't finish the game tonight?"

"Psst, just look at this button right here: Save. Yes, crazy, right? You can save your progress, pack everything up and then just pick things up again another night, right from where you left off."

"Wow. Just, wow."

I haven't even explained to you what this game is about yet. In a nutshell, this game has you playing as investigators and working together to solve spooky, eerie mysteries. Dripping with theme, most actions you perform are narrated by the app, providing flavor text, sound effects and a soundtrack to boot. Meanwhile, even if you manage to not get physically killed by the monsters you're bound to fight along the way, you'll be lucky if the horrors you face don't actually cause at least one of your characters to go insane.

The best part about all this? With an app, it's going to be so easy for them to give us new stories and scenarios. The replayability is so promising and full of potential. Get this game now!