

# **'OGRE' - the original edition reprint**

## **From Steve Jackson Games**

### **£2.99 / \$2.95**

### **Review by Jonathan Aird**

This has been a very exciting time for long-time fans of the boardgame OGRE. Last year, a very special, huge edition of the game was released by Steve Jackson Games (SJG) via a crowd funding Kickstarter campaign. This came in a massive box and contained parts to make up all the counters of the game as three-dimensional "flat" models



using the press out card technology familiar from games such as *Pirates of the Caribbean* and various Star Wars spin-offs. And, this year, SJG went to the other end of the spectrum and did a surprise reissue of the original first edition micro-game, at a very generous low price -- yes, it was \$2.95 in 1977 and here it is again in 2014 at \$2.95. *OGRE*, by Metagaming and later continued by SJG, was the original microgame -- a boardgame style that had a relatively brief vogue in the late 1970s and through most of the 1980s. They were the antidote to the ever huger mega-games that had been increasingly the fashion with their multiple game maps and thousands of counters and rulebooks thicker and more complicated than the Apollo spacecraft's -- fun games on small maps produced at minimum cost (to save money, counter sheets were not die-cut, for example) and generally aimed to be playable in a lunch hour. The last became a bit ambitious as time went on and it was found that despite the small playing area the games could become more complex, but the idea was sound for the originator and one of the finest examples of the concept of *OGRE*.

In *Ogre*, one player represents the ground forces of the pan-European alliance with squads of powered infantry, heavy tanks, flitting hovercraft light armoured vehicles (called Ground Effect Vehicles -- or GEVs), huge artillery pieces and small tactical missile crawler tanks. These were used to protect a Command Post isolated in a wasteland of massive craters and piles of rubble. The other player, representing an alliance called the Combine, is given one counter which represents an OGRE -- a huge cybernetic tank, more like a land battleship than anything else, with multiple gun turrets and missile launchers and able to absorb huge levels of damage. It was very much an even match!

Scenarios were designed with different, ever more powerful, OGREs -- the Mark III was the initial version, the Mark V was considerably more powerful. There were options to build forces with both sides having OGREs.

The game was in some ways a beautifully designed "chess problem" -- what was the right balance of troops and what were the best deployment positions in order to counter the super-powerful OGRE? The OGRE could ram smaller vehicles to destroy them -- but took damage itself for doing so -- when was the right time to start doing this? An OGRE stranded too far

from the CP to shoot at it would lose the game, but an OGRE with no weapons left would also struggle to make the objective as all fire switched to its motive ability. There was at least one near infallible defence (all defences, of course, are vulnerable to bad dice luck!), but this didn't ruin the game as players turned game designers to produce new scenarios effectively rebalancing the situation. OGRE was a fun game. It was more than that though -- it had just the right level of pseudo-historical background to intrigue the players. There was the fascinating thought of -- what would a Mark I or Mark II OGRE be like? How would it be if the missile tanks were more powerful? What would a faster but even lighter GEV be able to achieve? It was a lot of thought for a small financial investment -- and it was this, no doubt, that caught the imagination. There were expansion sets, new maps, another game (GEV) with bigger maps and new terrain. A set of miniatures rules and miniatures were available for a while and there was -- unbelievably -- a spin-off Role Playing Game. And deluxe versions (at least two of these) and the aforementioned super-deluxe version of last year. It all came from the very modest looking original game.

I admit, this was a nostalgia purchase -- I already had the second edition of the game, which was already the proud possessor of a colour cover, from many years ago. This, the original two-colour cover original edition had eluded me until now. This facsimile, at a real bargain price, is good enough for me. There's a new introduction from Steve Jackson and a few other modern inserts -- presumably to ensure it isn't passed off as the original -- but otherwise it is very close in feel to that first Metagaming release, although the rules have been tweaked to reflect the most up-to-date edition. And this time around the pieces are die-cut! If you know and love OGRE, then you might want to play the original just for fun. If you've heard of OGRE and wondered what all the fuss was about, then there'll surely never be a cheaper way to find out. It's a piece of gaming history -- and it's still a great game. Buy one. Buy two, and treat a friend.

