

playtesting sessions" by players who are already familiar with the game. And worse, with the anxious designer hovering over their shoulders "explaining" everything.

Games have to be finished, then playtested by bright, independent people who have never seen the game. And the game designer should be locked up in another room. All those willing to pay a few pence more to cover these costs, please write to your favourite game publisher.

Here I must confess that when I faced this multi-game I had to decide on one of two review strategies — either skim through all the games, or concentrate on one. Right or wrong, I elected to concentrate on one. I picked at random Crusader: Dash to the Wire. It was the game I *didn't* want to study because it looked to me like a static siege of Tobruk. I am elated to report that the designers were much more crafty than I expected. If all the games and scenarios are typical of this one, then all are first rate.

There is a siege of Tobruk, but the Axis don't win a single victory point even if they overrun the fortress. The main battle takes place in the open desert where allied relief columns are attempting to push through. The Axis win points for destroying and/or cutting supply to allied units. The allies also receive points for destroying the enemy but their big payoff is for reaching Tobruk.

Tobruk is in the upper left hand corner of the map, surrounded by Italians who must keep the feisty Tobruk garrison penned up. To be sure they do, the Axis player must assign the Italians a backbone of German units that he can ill spare. The main concentration of German power is massed in the desert about forty miles southeast of Tobruk. The allies are confronting this strong force with a line stretching in a semi-circle from the south to the seacoast in the north. On the far right is another pocket of Germans defending Bardia. This is a weak but constant threat to the British "corridor" running to the coast. Everybody is almost surrounded by everybody else. A fascinating game situation.

For the allies the best approach to Tobruk is along the coast. But how much strength can they afford to commit there and still contain the panzers in the south?

On the other hand, should the Axis try to push their panzers along the south, joining with Bardia and cutting supply to the allies in the north, or should they switch their strength to the north to meet the allied advance head on? They certainly cannot afford to have their northern front sandwiched between the allied relief column and the Tobruk defenders. Yet they have got to guard their southerly supply lines against a swift allied strike. It is a delicate situation for both sides and meanwhile those Italians around Tobruk keep tangling with the garrison and screaming for reinforcements. On the other hand, Tobruk cannot hold out indefinitely. Really intriguing!

If the other games and scenarios are half as good, then North Africa Quadrigame is going to be popular for a long time.

British Subscribers to S&T

BY BRAD HESSEL SPI

The following comparison between SPI's British and American customers is based exclusively on the Feedback results for S&T 59, for which the SPUK results have just recently been processed.

One's preconception of the British wargamer may reasonably include pipe and middle-age paunch. This, however, is not a very accurate profile of the British S&T feedback respondents. 53% of the Britons who sent in FB cards were 21 or younger (33% under 18) as compared to 41% of the American audience (24% under 18). Generally, the Briton had less education (55% with no college compared to 43% American), had subscribed for a shorter time span (45% were in their first year compared to 31% for the Americans) and had been in the hobby for a much shorter period (3.89 years to 5.60 years on the average). They owned a lot fewer games (65% of the Britons had fewer than 31 games, 47% of them fewer than 21 games, compared to 45% and 28% on this side of the Atlantic; 13% of our boys have over eighty games while only 4% of the Britons are so inclined). And, 4-day week or not, they played their fewer games somewhat less than the Americans played their games (1-9 hours — 31% of the Britons, 27% of the Americans; 10-20 hours — 40% of the Britons, 37% of the Americans; 20+ — 29% of the Britons, 36% of the Americans). The Britons like slightly more complex games on balance (6.24 average for Britain, 6.15 for America), though the tendency to bunch towards the middle that is evident in America (only 8% total answer "1", "2", "3" or "4" and only 5% answer "9") is even more pronounced in Britain (only 3% answered "1", "2", "3" or "4" and only 2% answered "9"). That may be a function of the smaller sample, however. As to preferred periods for game subjects, the British were generally more enthusiastic about older periods. When asked to name their favourites, 12% picked Ancient (7% American), 10% picked Middle Ages (5% American), 6% picked pre-Napoleonic (5% American) and 8% Napoleonic (7% American). Americans favoured the somewhat chauvinistic "Civil War" 8% to 5% over the Britons, but both samples were equally enthusiastic over World War I (8%).

World War II (19% British/22% American), Post-WW II (11% British/13% American) and Future (21% British/ 25% American) were less popular in Britain than America, although they were still elected by 51% of the British audience overall (as compared with 60% of the Americans).

Finally, one preconception was buttressed, as more of the Britons wanted letters in S&T (55% yes; 29% maybe; 17% no) than Americans, (49% yes, 32% maybe, 20% no).

In rating things, the British generally liked games better and were more critical of writing. For example, the issue game (Plot) was rated 6.45 by the British and 6.02 by the Americans, while the Britons gave lower ratings to the two main articles (6.34 for Plot and 6.35 for the Russo-Japanese War compared to 6.42 and 6.74 respectively) than the Americans. Similarly, OGM (6.41 British/6.71 American), Briefings (6.26/6.40) and FYEO (6.77/ 7.01) did worse in the British eyes than Americans. They also gave a lower opinion of the format (question 26) — 6.32 compared to the American rating of 6.61. Nevertheless, the British rating for issue overall was just about the same as the American. I guess they lower their standards for Americans writing English. (The figures were 6.59 for the British and 6.51 for the Americans).

Games, on the other hand, as I mentioned above, were received more generously by the Britons. 46 games were rated in issue 59 (not counting Plot). Of these, 15 received fewer than ten votes from the British sample and were thrown out. Of the remaining 31 games, 21 were rated between .15 and 1.0+ higher than the American sample had rated them, 3 were about the same and the Britons panned (relatively) 7 games. However, many of the British results were based on scanty results and it is quite likely that the pattern which we have noticed in analysing FB data here (namely, that game ratings tend to go down the larger the sample) is in operation. Of the 5 games rated by more than 30% of the total British sample, 2 were higher, 2 were lower and 1 was a standoff.

FEEDBACK RESULTS PHOENIX 7

During the period April/May 1977, SPUK service was rated at 6.88. This is higher than the previous two month period with 27.06% saying that we are improving and 65.02% saying we are steady. Customer service got a rating of 6.56, again an improvement on the previous two months. 22.81% felt this service was improving whilst 74.56% felt it was steady.

No non-SPI games were feedbacked in this issue, indeed such questions have met with so negative a response to date that I am discontinuing them with immediate effect.

Starsoldier got an overall rating of 7.24 for physical quality. The following table gives details of your reaction to the game.

	Map	Frontsheet	Rules book
Worse than SPI	6.06%	18.18%	6.06%
Level with SPI	75.76%	75.76%	87.88%
Better than SPI	18.18%	6.06%	6.06%

96.88% said that the physical quality would encourage them to buy UK produced games again. It is interesting and not too surprising to note that the Rules Book and Frontsheet, both of which were taken from our Wigan printer and given to the Stockport printer who already produces the Maps, got the least positive reception. I do not think that the figures above are anything to be ashamed of, however we will continue to strive for improvement.

48.91% of those who returned the Phoenix 7 Feedback also sent in that from Phoenix 6.

81.07% said they would subscribe to Phoenix, 24.62% purely on merit and 67.48% on both merit and desire to support a UK magazine.

Issue 7 was rated 6.28 overall, 66.34% said was better than the previous issue (which was rated 6.5) and 74.59% said they wanted more articles on boardgaming basics.

There is a continual calling for such articles but no one ever seems to come forward with the right kind of material. How about it you veteran gamers? Send us articles that can help beginners get into the hobby.

Finally, 86.92% of you said that, given the number of SPI games on the market, Phoenix is not SPI orientated.

S&T 61 Feedback Results	
Rate October War (Simulation)(1-9)	7.04
Rate October War (Article) (1-9)	6.99
Rate Arnheim (Article)(1-9)	6.31
Rate Outgoing Mail (1-9)	6.45
Rate Briefings (1-9)	6.08
Rate 'For Your Eyes Only (1-9)	6.45
Rate This issue overall (1-9)	6.95
Was this issue better than the last?	
No opinion	6.01%
Yes	74.05%
No	19.94%