



With pencils sharpened, dice jangling and nerves taut, all eyes are on the board as our Lange & Söhne Sketch & Journey Game commences.

James Gurney

A Far From Trivial Pursuit

One of the main charms of Lange & Söhne is that being so tightly focused on a very narrow segment of the watch-making spectrum, the company never finds itself trying to be all things to all men and while it is possible to detect a certain Richemont (the parent company) veneer to their marketing and press communications, it is no more than skin deep.

With Lange it can sometimes feel that actual communication to the outside world is probably a Richemont imposition in itself and left to their own devices, the company would prefer that the communication would be better limited to vetted applicants.

They would of course deny this strenuously, and it can be quite charming to see them cope patiently and politely with journalists failing to display an adequate horological appreciation of their work. The company's splendidly didactic press releases have a character all of their own - and only part of that can be attributed to actually having some substance to communicate.





SO WITH COMPETITORS, A SUITABLE VENUE AND SUFFICIENT SUSTENANCE, WE TACKLED THE GAME...

It does, after all take more than horological seriousness to conceive and produce an advent calendar featuring members of the manufacture behind each window, each with their own improving text.

Question Time

So it was with a certain interest that I returned from my last visit to Dresden with a large box containing not a watch alas, but a board game. Beautifully produced, it hardly needs saying, the conceit of the game is to test the players knowledge of watch-making in general and Lange & Söhne in particular. Briefly, the players have to answer questions in order to progress around the board whose layout reflects the logic of the company's manufacture in Glashütte.

Unsure whether to regard this in terms of Hesse's *Glass Bead Game* or as a horological *Hollywood Dominoes*, clearly the only way forward was going to be to round up willing victims, or players as they described in the rules, and have a go.

So with a field of expert competitors including two QP contributors, a suitable venue and sufficient sustenance, we tackled the game. The basic concept is simple, each player or team has to answer questions from the cards provided and make their way round the board. Some of the questions take the form of drawing a component well enough for others to identify, while others are simple multiple-choice.



THE ENCYCLOPAEDIC MASTERY OF HOROLOGY THAT THE QUESTIONS CHALLENGE MEANS PROGRESS IS GLACIAL...



As far as game play goes, the encyclopaedic mastery of horology in general and Lange's history in particular that the questions challenge mean that progress is glacial. Even with teams that boasted an impressive knowledge and plenty of journalistic experience the going was unexpectedly tough. Trying to gauge exactly how tough the game was,

one player suggested that if Dominoes was the equivalent of the standard three-minute pop song then this game was the Ring cycle, complete and unabridged.

That might be a little harsh, but I would almost certainly have been disappointed with anything less - Lange, after all, is the purists choice. Not being sufficiently

respectful or possessed of bottomless craft-knowledge, we leavened the game by mixing in cards from *Worst-case Scenario*, which at least ensured everyone made it to the first corner. We eventually left with only one team having reached the annex stage and came to the conclusion that *Sony* and *Nintendo* were unlikely to be releasing digital versions anytime soon.



With some of the questions being so wilfully obscure as to be impossible to answer without accessing the Lange web-site and others simply bizarre, the question inevitably came up: had we just fallen for a species of German humour simply beyond our ken or were the natives of Glashütte in deadly earnest? I took the latter view - it is this single-mindedness and seriousness that make Lange the nonpareils they are and that command our total respect. So whatever the game might lack as a horological alternative to Hollywood Dominoes now that the credit-crunch has made staying in the new going out, as a statement about Lange's dedication to their craft the *Sketch and Journey Game* is through finissage and final inspection with top marks.

Now to find another team of players / experimentees. 🕒



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