

# Universal Head

Design That Works.

Exceptional graphic design for boardgames.

# Design That Works.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER PETER GIFFORD has worked on a huge range of exciting projects for clients all over the world.

Clients appreciate my design because it works. While great graphic design is creative, its main purpose is to communicate with people.

Today it's essential to have an experienced and skilled designer on your team, to create exceptional designs that speak to your clients.

I deliver design on time, to budget, and with care, intelligence and creativity.

My personal passion is tabletop gaming, so I bring an extra level of experience to my design for publishers in this field.

Let me show you some examples in the pages that follow.

# Selected clients.

## **Tabletop Game Publishers**

Academy Games (US)  
Ares Games (Italy)  
Chaosium Inc (US)  
Crosscut Games (USA)  
Elephant Laboratories (US)  
Elf Creek Games (US)  
Greebbrier Games (US)  
Mythic Games (France)  
Petersen Games (US)  
Profantasy Software (UK)  
Restoration Games (US)  
Stone Blade Entertainment (US)  
Tabletop Tycoon (US)  
Valley Games (US)  
Wizkids (US)  
WorldWorks Games (Canada)  
Z-Man Games (USA)

## **Video Games & Entertainment**

GotGame Entertainment (US) /  
Omni Adventures (US) / Fairfax  
Digital / Stargames / Ubi Soft  
Interactive (US)

## **Commercial**

Kimberly-Clark / News Interactive  
Optus / Telstra / ShowTime

## **Cultural**

Act2 / Australian National Theatre /  
Bangarra Dance Theatre / Charles  
Darwin University / Real Play Media

## **Design & Marketing**

AWA Entertainment / GroupM  
/ Hothouse Interactive / Roger  
Sansom Productions (HK)

## **Education**

The Australian Museum / Charles  
Darwin University / Queensland  
STEM Education / Uni of Melbourne

## **Financial Services**

Allianz / Blake Dawson Waldron /  
Coopers & Lybrand / St Andrew's  
Insurance / Southern Cross Health  
/ MLC Life / Westpac / Tower  
Insurance / SunSuper / Suncorp

## **Government**

Australia Post / NZ Inland Revenue

## **Technology**

Adimex / Cochlear / Digistor /  
Dolby / Honeywell HNS (UK) / Jands

## **Tourism**

Australian Tourist Board / Chandra  
Luxury Bali Villas



# Stunning logos.

**THIS IS WHERE IT ALL STARTS:** the perfect logo for your boardgame. A logo that inspires, excites and communicates the essence of its theme. As you can see, every logo here was designed to tell customers at a glance about the subject of the game and to draw them into the game's world.

**Tales of the Arabian Nights.** Custom typography based on a 1912 edition of the Tales.

**Scalawag!** A decorative piratical font with a slight flag wave to it and a cracked wooden board texture.

**Kodachi.** Hand drawn letter forms using an authentic calligraphy brush and ink.

**Inkognito.** A lush Venecian feel with a subtle texture and stunning colours.

**Aztlán.** A monolithic stone texture photographed by the designer at the ruins of Chichen Itza.

**Atlantis Rising.** Bigger than Ben-Hur, with a cracked stone texture and light rising from below.

**Masters of the Night.** Influenced by classic-era monster movie titles.





# Tales of the Arabian Nights.

TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS can safely be called a classic, and it's in no small part due to the gorgeous look and feel I created for this definitive redesign of the 80s game by Z-Man Games.

From the start, I was excited and inspired by the theme, going so far as to purchase several copies of the book (including a rare 1912 first edition with beautiful illustrations by René Bull).

Everything about the design glitters with precious metals and sparkling gems. I built up the amazingly detailed map from countless antique map elements and textures. Every one of the hundreds of cards were individually designed with care.

Perhaps the most challenging element, however, was the 300 page *Book of Tales*, carefully designed to be as readable as possible. This is where my long typographical experience was invaluable.

The end result is a visually stunning and immersive game that does justice to the rich source material, and has remained a favourite among gamers for over a dozen years.





# Ninjato.

AFTER *TALES*, I moved from ancient Arabia to 12th century feudal Japan, for the design of an exciting boardgame by Crosscut Games.

I designed the board layout and created all the visuals apart from the illustrations. And this was a huge project, involving many versions that had to be designed, re-designed, tweaked and proofed until the result perfectly blended clear communication and immersive aesthetics.

It involved extensive research, icon design, rulebook layout, and many card designs. I even sourced a bamboo placemat to use as a key texture, and created hand-drawn type to match the theme using an authentic Japanese calligraphy brush and black ink!

“Peter is fantastic to work with. He is professional, thoughtful, detailed and fast—everything you could want in a graphic artist. The finished design was more than we imagined. I highly recommend him.”

Adam West Crosscut Games





# Inkognito.

ARES GAMES came to me with an interesting challenge: revamp the 80s favourite *Inkognito* with a stronger and more visually arresting theme, but keep the original watercolour illustrations.

This led to a beautiful design that balances the rich decorative elements of Renaissance Venice with turn-of-the 20th century spy shenanigans!

One of the more interesting elements was the player screen design, on which I built up a collage using watercolour illustrations from the original small cards, and added original elements in the same style to make a unified image.

"It has been a pleasure to work with Peter Gifford. Our company does not normally outsource the graphic design of its games, but we choose Universal Head for this project due to the combination of Peter's deep understanding of games and his high professionalism as a graphic designer. [This] proved to be the right choice for us, as Peter was able to deliver in a timely manner an excellent design, adapting his style to the graphic 'signature' of our company when needed, but at the same time showing clearly through the design choices his creativeness and skill."

Roberto Di Meglio Ares Games

ILLUSTRATOR: DREW BAKER





# Atlantis Rising.

THIS BEAUTIFUL 2ND EDITION REDESIGN of the popular boardgame *Atlantis Rising* gave me the opportunity to work with Elf Creek Games and well-known illustrator Vincent Dutrait to create something very special indeed.

One of the challenges in this design was preparing the unique star-shaped board and its all-important icons. And as a unifying element, I also used large typographical designs as graphics, showing off the letterforms and giving the design an epic feel.

I also created special 'sketched' versions of the Dutrait component illustrations to indicate that a component was yet to be constructed.

After a successful Kickstarter campaign, the final product received a 10/10 review from Zee Garcia of industry-leading boardgame review site **The Dice Tower**, who said:

*"... the aesthetics here are truly stunning ... the artwork is unbelievable ... a lovingly produced game and I think that shows".*

Elf Creek Games later got me to work on the game's expansion, *Monstrosities*.





# Empire of the Stars.

I'VE WORKED ON SEVERAL GAMES for Crosscut Games over the years, but for this 4X scifi empire-building game I wanted to do something very different.

I began with an remarkably bold and striking box cover, and this confident approach was continued throughout, with flat, bright colours, big angular shapes and a gorgeous, colourful board.

There wasn't much illustration available for this project, but these striking graphics carry the load, and the chunky scifi font is the graphic starting point for the whole look and feel.

Another interesting aspect of this project was creating a set of abstracted space empire icons, designed to give each faction a distinctive feel without illustrations.

And finally, I came up with the title of the game too!





# Masters of the Night.

ARES GAMES had a great game, but the original design studio hadn't given it a distinctive enough look and feel. It was my job to create a strong visual theme for this game about a vampire family moving to the big city and infiltrating it by night.

Using design cues from the illustrations, I grounded the game in 1940's film noir and classic horror movies, creating fake newspapers, halftone print textures, and liberal blood splatters (the 3 stages of event decks get more splattered as the stage increases!)

Instead of just naming the card decks, they are identified by newspaper reports—even the player boards are done in the same style, with crucial information circled by the 'reader'!

Each vampire player needs to keep track of their 'kill count', so I designed diamond-shaped cuts in the player boards for the counters to fit into to indicate the current level.



# Rulebooks.

**YOUR RULEBOOK** is the most important part of your game. Without a clearly written and well-designed rulebook, people can't play your game properly, and you'll waste time and money answering questions and perhaps even reprinting the entire thing! So why do publishers so often end up with rulebooks that don't do the job properly?

Well, it's because it takes professional writers, editors and designers to make rulebooks that work. I have decades of experience in all three fields. After playing games and being a professional designer all my working life, and summarising more than 440 rulebooks, there are very few people more knowledgeable about what makes them work.

Whether you need me to simply consult on your existing rulebook and give you some writing and design advice to take it to the next level, or you need the entire thing rewritten from your draft and designed, ready for print, I'm here to make sure your players get the most out of your game.

Unlike boardgame design, I offer set prices for the average sized rulebook. Get in touch with your details and I can confirm these prices are appropriate for the size of your project.

**Sample work:** *Evil High Priest* by Petersen Games, *Nemo's War Ultimate Edition* by Victory Point Games, *Zpocalypse* by Greenbrier Games, *Freedom: The Underground Railway* by Academy Games.

## **RULEBOOK CONSULTATION**

**US \$500**

Comprehensive, practical advice on structure, writing style, and layout design.

## **RULEBOOK EDITING**

**US \$950**

Rewriting and proofing your final rules draft to make it clear, clean, and comprehensible.

## **RULEBOOK EDIT AND DESIGN**

**US \$1,950**

Editing as above, plus professional rulebook design and layout, ready for print.



# NOT JUST ANOTHER BOARDGAME CHANNEL

**THE ESOTERIC ORDER OF GAMERS** (EOG) is a very special website and YouTube channel with loyal followers who love a wide range of tabletop games.

I passionately play and talk about thematic, immersive, imaginative games. But I do more than review and promote them—I make them easier to learn!

I've been making my industry-leading **RULES & REFERENCE** sheets for almost 20 years, and the EOG has been online for a decade. Not many channels have that kind of record, and now you can take advantage of it!

Please see my separate **Esoteric Order of Gamers PDF** for more details and a list of my promotional services for tabletop game publishers.



"Thanks again for everything you do in creating fun, engaging and informative content AND your fantastic rules summaries ... they're always my go-to recommendation, for the board game community, and for covering our games ... it's a real pleasure working with you, and I look forward to continuing to do so in the new year."

Libby Montague-Brown Gale Force Nine



# Peter Gifford.

Steadfastly independent and a firm believer in a personal connection with clients, Peter brings an obsessive attention to detail to every aspect of his visual communication work at **Universal Head**.

Peter's respect for quality design lies at the heart of everything he does. His mantra is that no matter the medium, no matter the solution, great design is **design that works**.

Oh, and the name Universal Head? It came from a little doodle Peter made back when he was getting his BA (Visual Communication) from Sydney College of the Arts; a doodle of a head looking simultaneously forward and in profile. He immediately thought it would be a great name for his own company one day.

Peter has lived and worked in the UK, USA, and Australia. He now lives on the south island of New Zealand with his partner Carol, a cat called Drusilla, and a constantly-growing tabletop game collection.

Please contact Peter to  
discuss your project.

For a comprehensive portfolio, visit

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