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Anglo-American Duo Take Kiwi-Designed Games to Melbourne

Auckland, New Zealand – February 27, 2013 - When Julia Schiller asked her friend, Amanda Milne, “Mandy, we like games so much, why don’t we invent one?” she never imagined that two years later they’d be on the brink of attending an international event to showcase not just one, but three titles of their own invention.

The two women started meeting to play Euro-style games when both were at a career crossroads in early 2011. Says Milne: “Once we got started the momentum just seemed to snowball. Playing the games with strangers and realising they were working and that folk were really enjoying them was almost as big a buzz as designing them. That was when we knew we were onto something good and decided to set up the company.”

They christened their company SchilMil Games, using a piece of each of their surnames. Although Milne originally hails from London and Schiller from Baltimore, Maryland, they consider their company 100% Kiwi, having lived a combined total of over 30 years in New Zealand.

The duo began by developing an idea for a game requiring players to fence off portions of a variable board to enclose exotic animals. Early prototypes proved unwieldy until Milne was inspired to cut the board into 3 x 3 tiles. Meanwhile, Schiller took the lead in developing “the perfect card game – one where your fate isn’t sealed by the initial deal-out”.

“It was great having two games to work on initially; we each had one to midwife through design, testing and production,” says Schiller of the games that became Komodo and Raid the Pantry, released in May of 2012. The company decided to handle its own distribution in New Zealand and has now built a nationwide retailer network consisting of over 50 outlets. Over a dozen are in the Auckland area and include three Toyworld stores, the Whitcoulls Kids Stores, ToyCo and Mainly Toys.

Their first year in business saw the introduction of a third title, Kenakalan, a set-collection game based in Bali where monkey cards are a random element that can help or hinder players with their mischief. (Kenakalan means mischief in Indonesian.) Komodo also garnered two awards from the New Zealand Games Association and an enthusiastic review from Tom Vasel of the Dice Tower, who said, “I played this game with kids and they just went bonkers.”

Expanding their market abroad is the next logical step toward building a sustainable business, so the women will attend the Melbourne Toy Fair, which runs from March 3-6. “We’re very proud of our games and excited to be presenting them to Australian retailers and distributors at the Fair,” says Milne.

You can learn more about SchilMil Games at www.schilmilgames.com where you’ll also find links to each game’s website, which contains overview videos, reviews and game play details.

Contact:

Julia Schiller

julia@schilmilgames.com

09 575 2012 / 021 905 110

Amanda Milne

amanda@schilmilgames.com

09 480 7010 / 021 408 032

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