

## WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

<b>Pavlov's House</b>	★★★★☆
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<b>Period</b>	WW2	<b>Publisher</b>	Dan Verssen Games
<b>Conflict/Battle</b>	Stalingrad	<b>Designer</b>	David Thompson
<b>Force Size</b>	Coy-Bn, plus 1-2 SAGs	<b>Date</b>	2018
<b>Mvr Units</b>	Abstracted for Wehrmacht Individuals for Soviets	<b>Grid Size</b>	Topological, feet in the house, 100s of yds around, few miles outside
<b>DOWNness</b>	1DOWN, rest abstract	<b>Map Size</b>	Three different map scales: - The house - The area immediately around the house, ~100s of yds - The area both sides of the Volga
<b>Players</b>	1-3 (Solo/Co-Op)	<b>Turn Dur.</b>	~3 days (represents ~ 2mo total)
<b>Player Roles</b>	Cmdr of tps in House Cmdr of Sov Army in area	<b>Playing Time</b>	~3 hrs. States 60-75min but have ~120 cards to get through, plus ~180 house actions!

### Introduction

<b>Subject of the game</b>	The “valiant” defence of Pavlov’s House in Stalingrad by a small group of Soviet soldiers against waves of Wehrmacht.
<b>Scope</b>	Uses a very innovative 3 tier concept where the battle is played out by the tactical moves in the house against Wehrmacht moving on trackers towards house, and in a support context provided by the third map of the Volga area close to the house.
<b>Components</b>	~A1 board showing the three maps. 31pp rules booklet. 3 QRS. ~180 counters and tokens, ~100 cards in base game, optional 40 cards.
<b>Presentation</b>	<p><b>Good:</b> Looks good. All high quality components and reasonable well laid out rule book and QRS. Clear cards.</p> <p><b>Bad:</b> Since the Wehrmacht map represents the area around the house, and the mapping of tracks to house sides is absolutely critical it would have been better to have one main map with house and tracks, and then the second with the context map.</p>
<b>Designer's focus/objectives</b>	<p>No designer notes but the designer has been interviewed frequently on his “valiant/desperate defence” games. It is described as a “tactical and operational strongpoint defence game”.</p> <p>“My primary motivation with my wargame designs is to properly capture and evoke the feeling of the engagement depicted in the game,”</p> <p>“During my research I realized that the defenders of Pavlov’s House were only successful because of significant operational-level support in the form of artillery, air defenses, communications, logistics, etc. Those aspects were eventually integrated into the game, which gives it its unique combination of operational and tactical-level elements,”</p>

	<p><a href="https://medium.com/theuglymonster/the-weekend-wargamer-vol-iii-an-interview-with-game-designer-david-thompson-ec3c2f90070f">https://medium.com/theuglymonster/the-weekend-wargamer-vol-iii-an-interview-with-game-designer-david-thompson-ec3c2f90070f</a></p> <p>Also</p> <p><a href="https://theplayersaid.com/2021/01/12/best-3-games-with-designer-david-thompson/">https://theplayersaid.com/2021/01/12/best-3-games-with-designer-david-thompson/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk3FzENYZPc&amp;ab_channel=BeyondSolitaire">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk3FzENYZPc&amp;ab_channel=BeyondSolitaire</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.awargamersneedfulthings.co.uk/2018/10/interview-with-games-designer-david.html">https://www.awargamersneedfulthings.co.uk/2018/10/interview-with-games-designer-david.html</a></p> <p>£13.50 for the Designer's Notes! <a href="https://www.bgextras.co.uk/pavlov-s-house-companion-book-i4063.htm">https://www.bgextras.co.uk/pavlov-s-house-companion-book-i4063.htm</a></p>
<b>Overall system description</b>	<p>This is a "tower defence" game there the defender must marshal resources in order to defeat waves of attackers. Each turn has three phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Soviet operational support actions around the Volga to help the house, including sending resupplies and reinforcements and making artillery available</li> <li>- Wehrmacht placement, advancement and attack along the tracks, and dive bombing around the Volga</li> <li>- Soviet individual actions in the house to try and defend it</li> </ul>
<b>Real Battle Notes</b>	<p>"Pavlov's House (Russian: дом Павлова tr. Dom Pavlova) was a fortified apartment building which Red Army defenders held for 60 days against the Wehrmacht offensive during the Battle of Stalingrad. The siege lasted from 27 September to 25 November 1942 and eventually the Red Army managed to relieve it from the siege. It gained its popular name from Sergeant Yakov Pavlov, who commanded the platoon that seized the building and defended it during the long battle" - Wikipedia</p>

## The Game System

<b>Principal areas of reality represented in the game</b>	The fight for the house. The need to have supplies and active soldiers to face each wave of attack. Husbanding local resources and effort, and also how the wider context supports what is being done.
<b>Important abstractions</b>	Combat and unit representation on the German side is very simple. No difference in the avenues of approach. Only one room and storey.
<b>Types of decisions required</b>	Which Army actions to take to help the house, esp sending supplies (which), reinforcements (which), ensuring Arty and Engr support, and then also manning AD to stop Stukas. In the house which soldiers and esp kit to place on each wall. When soldiers are suppressed or exhausted which to revive first. How many suppression actions to take when resource limited. When to fire heavy weapons which are effectively then out for the next turn.

<b>Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making</b>	<p>Army level draw 4 cards, each 2 options, only 3 cards can be used, one option per card.</p> <p>In house one 3 moves and 3 actions per turn, and heavy weapons take 2 actions.</p> <p>Random Wehrmacht deck means player never knows where next pressure point will be- although there are indications from mass.</p>
<b>Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)</b>	<p>Very slick game once you get into it, just drawing cards and rolling dice. Simple mechanics, almost don't need QRS by end.</p> <p>Good Wehrmacht card actions.</p>
<b>Contributions to the wargaming state of the art</b>	<p>The tiered maps/mini-games (although in reality its 2 not 3)</p> <p>An excellent implementation of the tower defence game to wargaming, used subsequently by Thompson and others.</p>
<b>Deficiencies</b>	None really
<b>Improvements? (beyond fixing above)</b>	<p>Just merging the two maps to remove a step of mental gymnastics.</p> <p>Possibly having different tracks/locations represent different cover etc</p>
<b>Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals</b>	Seems to meet it very well as a fun and engaging game immersing the player in the defence of the house.

### Overall Evaluation

<b>Evaluation of the player's experience</b>	In some ways its draw a card, think a bit, respond, maybe roll the dice. All decisions are very focussed, no looking at a big board and deciding what to do next, some in some ways quite relaxing as a game.
<b>Does the game work? Is it a good (enjoyable) game (Veracity)</b>	Yes, very well, very slick
<b>Does it have real world validity?/Insights? Is it useful game?</b>	Probably not beyond an introduction to the history of Pavlov's House and the sort of onslaughts that the German's went though and the Soviets had to defend against.
<b>Replay value</b>	Some, trying to find the optimum strategy in order to stay alive and beat a highest score.
<b>Who would be most interested in the game?</b>	Anyone interested in Stalingrad. A good introduction to wargaming, and Thompson has said that's he's a fan of Waro/Weuro (Wargame-Euro hybrid) games.
<b>Is the game good value?</b>	£60. Possibly on the pricey side since there is basically only the one scenario, but typical of modern games

## MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

(include Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play)

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	By choice from random cards
Comms	No
UxV	Na
CEMA	Na
Other ISR	Na
Movement	Topological, 1 link
Damage	Suppressed then killed
Direct Fire	nD6 > defence
Assault	nD6 > defence
Indirect Fire	nD6 > defence
IEDs	Na
Morale	Na
Opinion	Na
Victory Condition	Defenders left vs attackers deployed + successful storm raids
UTZs	No
Building Damage	Each wall has a PV which reduces as bombarded, making soldiers more vulnerable
Civilians	No
Subterranean	No
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	Wider context provided by the Army level actions

*[Per scenario/run through]*

<b>Date</b>	13 Oct 23	<b>Scenario</b>	Base game
<b>Players</b>	DB	<b>Constraints</b>	None

### SET-UP

As per standard

### HOW IT PLAYED

Thought that I was going to be over-run about just over half way through but combination of defence works and artillery support and the odd anti-tank shot was enough to save the day, although Wehrmacht artillery was quite devastating towards the end killing men in the house.

In theory I actually lost the game about 2/3 through as I had no feed to feed anyone when it was required!

### RESULTS

Minor Soviet victory, but I'd led no Storm Group attacks which lost points and still a lot of Germans on the board, and 2-3 soviets killed in last turn brough survivor numbers down.

### THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN, only for subsequent plays)

A fun and slick game, great to play on a wet Sunday afternoon (in the mess?), and apart from a very general introduction to the history and some basic representation of urban not a lot to learn from. But a great design which could (and has) been reskinned to other settings.

IMAGES



Pavlov's House



STARTEX



Mid Game



ENDEX