

= Diamond Trust of London =

Diamond Trust of London is a turn @-@ based strategy video game by Jason Rohrer , with music by Tom Bailey . Following a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter the game was published by indiePub and released for the Nintendo DS on August 28 , 2012 . The game has been placed in the public domain and is hosted on SourceForge .

Inspired by German @-@ style board games , Diamond Trust of London is played between two players , each controlling a diamond trading company . The game is set in 2000 , before the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to curb the blood diamond trade , and the player 's aim is to extract diamonds from Angola over the nine turns which comprise a game . To extract the most diamonds and win , players resort to a combination of bribery and deception .

First pitched in 2009 , Diamond Trust of London went through a protracted development process , going through two publishers and taking over three years to reach the market . To raise capital for the game 's manufacture , Rohrer launched a Kickstarter campaign , where it became the first successfully crowdfunded Nintendo DS game . Critics had reservations about the amount of content on offer and the game 's user interface , but were appreciative of the psychological gameplay and the themes explored .

= = Gameplay = =

Players control one of two diamond trading companies : the eponymous Diamond Trust of London or an unnamed Antwerp @-@ based competitor . The game is set in 2000 and the aim is to extract diamonds from Angola before the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is put in place . The winner is the one who finishes the game with the most diamonds after nine turns . Each turn , players decide where to send their three agents . They can be sent to six different Angolan regions to extract diamonds , or recalled to the player 's headquarters to deposit extracted diamonds . Players make decisions in secret , and both sets of decisions are resolved on the game board simultaneously .

The competitors must decide how much to pay each agent , and how much to pay the local guide in that region . If there are competing offers for the same guide in a particular region , the highest offer receives all of that region 's diamonds in an all @-@ pay auction . Competing agents can be bribed to reveal inside information regarding the competitor 's decisions . Complicating matters further is the UN inspector , who moves at random between regions on each turn . The inspector blocks all diamond extraction from the region in which he is present , and can confiscate diamonds from agents within that region . Like other agents though , the inspector can be bribed and directed to regions of a player 's choice .

In single @-@ player mode , the player competes against an AI opponent available at various difficulty levels . Multiplayer gameplay includes support for DS Download Play , allowing an entire group of players to play from only one game card .

= = Development = =

Jason Rohrer was inspired by German @-@ style board games to build a turn @-@ based strategy game . He wanted to harness the unique qualities that a video game could bring to a board game , and so focused on their ability to deliver different views of the board to each player . He wanted to create a game which explored " knowledge chains " , where the player must not only be aware of his knowledge and movements on the board , but also how much of that has been exposed to the opponent . In March 2009 , he was invited by publisher Majesco to pitch an idea for a Nintendo DS game , and keeping these mechanics in mind , he pitched a game called Deception . In Deception , two players would play one half of a married couple , with the aim to gather as much damaging evidence regarding their spouse 's infidelities as ammunition for a forthcoming divorce case . Majesco rejected this concept as being " too sensitive a subject for the DS market " .

Rohrer later transferred the themes of Deception onto a framework around corporate espionage

and the blood diamond trade . Though not particularly concerned about blood diamonds , and wary of the game being perceived as a finger @-@ wagging exercise , he felt that the setting would give an " extra oomph to the game 's seedy mechanics " . Instead of being an overt protest against the blood diamond trade , the game would explore the psychology of the industry through its game mechanics , causing players to reflect after a game on their decisions made within it . Majesco greenlit this , and in July 2009 , a publishing contract was signed . Rohrer began work on Diamond Trust of London as a pen and paper prototype to iron out the design before committing to code . By December , the game was in a fully playable state , lacking only the soundtrack and tutorial . Majesco , however , decided to back away from a physical cartridge release , and pushed instead for a DSiWare download version . Rohrer disagreed , believing that the smaller DSiWare market would limit the game 's audience ; Majesco , on the other hand , was not willing to invest in the manufacturing of cartridges without strong pre @-@ order numbers . The company made the game available to GameStop to gauge pre @-@ order interest , stating that 3 @,@ 000 pre @-@ orders would be necessary for a cartridge release . Diamond Trust generated only 23 pre @-@ orders , and in 2010 , the Majesco agreement was terminated .

Lacking a publisher for Diamond Trust of London , Rohrer moved onto other projects such as Inside a Star @-@ Filled Sky and Sleep is Death . He also took on work at Gun , a video games consultancy firm , and there he made contact with Mark Seremet , CEO of Zoo Publishing . Zoo was interested in pursuing Diamond Trust of London as a limited physical release on their indiePub label , and so work on the game resumed . To provide the game 's soundtrack , Rohrer approached his friend and former band @-@ mate , Tom Bailey . This was the first time that Rohrer had collaborated with others on his games . He cited this collaboration as helping to " restore [ his ] creative momentum " for the project . To avoid hearing exactly the same music every time the game is played , Rohrer developed a music generation engine which would arrange Bailey @-@ composed loops procedurally depending on the game 's state . If the lid of the Nintendo DS is closed with headphones plugged in while the game is still running , it will act as a random music generator . Rohrer 's previous project , Inside a Star Filled Sky , had used entirely computer generated music , but he felt that the thematic demands of Diamond Trust of London required Bailey 's handcrafted compositions and musicianship .

By July 2011 , Rohrer had submitted a beta version of the game for Nintendo approval . This was followed up with the master version in October . An issue raised during the approval process was Rohrer 's desire to credit Bailey on the game 's cover , which Nintendo rejected . He got around this by officially naming the game Jason Rohrer with Music by Tom Bailey : Diamond Trust of London . In May 2012 , the game was ready for manufacturing . However , due to changing market conditions , Zoo Publishing was no longer able to afford the manufacturing of cartridges given the large minimum order of 6 @,@ 000 units that Nintendo required , and so , Rohrer turned to the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter .

Rohrer launched the Kickstarter campaign on May 9 , 2012 , looking to raise \$ 78 @,@ 715 ; the campaign closed on May 26 , 2012 , after raising \$ 90 @,@ 118 from 1 @,@ 305 backers . This allowed manufacturing to proceed , and Diamond Trust of London became the first successfully crowdfunded Nintendo DS game . By mid @-@ July , the 6 @,@ 000 cartridges had been manufactured by Nintendo in Japan , and in August , they arrived at Rohrer 's home in California . As he was packaging the cartridges personally , it allowed him to release a special signed and numbered limited edition of 1000 copies , bundled with mystery bonuses . The game was released on August 28 , 2012 , and as customers received their copies , they revealed the contents of the limited edition . Jason Cipriano at MTV Multiplayer received , alongside his limited edition , postage stamps and a coin from countries featured in the game , and four actual diamonds .

= = Reception = =

Diamond Trust of London received few reviews , and they were generally mixed . Critics enjoyed the gameplay , but found that the game required a human opponent for it to shine , with the single @-@ player element acting merely as a practice mode . Nintendo Gamer found the game " mind

@-@ bending " , likening its cycle of bluffs and double @-@ bluffs to the Ouroboros . GamesTM enjoyed the experience of " trying to outwit and deceive a friend " , but found achieving victory over @-@ reliant on control of the UN inspector . Paste praised the support for DS Download Play functionality as generous , and described games of Diamond Trust of London as " fabulous palate cleansers " in between board game sessions . They also observed that during these games , much of a player 's personality would be expressed through the moves they made .

Commenting on a preview build , Nintendo World Report highlighted the game 's music , describing it as a " wonderfully eclectic mix " , and " a constantly evolving ambient soundscape " . MTV Multiplayer , while finding the music " a little out of place " , still found it " really good " , and believed that players would find themselves " zoning out , enjoying the music without even realizing it " as they waited for their next turn .

GamesTM felt that the game did not have sufficient content to justify a full @-@ price retail release , being more suited instead to a budget @-@ priced app . The publication described Diamond Trust of London as " a fantastic iOS strategy game . On the DS . " Similarly , Nintendo Gamer called it a " worthwhile , if insubstantial game " . The user interface was described as confusing by Nintendo Gamer , and while Edge felt that the interface was " simple to the point of crudity " , it could also be " opaque and cluttered , making a reasonably complex game seem even more so " . Edge concluded that if the player can get through these issues , there is " an acute psychological game to be played " .

Molleindustria named Diamond Trust of London as one of their top games of 2012 , describing it as Rohrer 's " most elegantly designed game to date " . They highlighted how it critiques the blood diamond trade by using game mechanics that present " the world from the cynical , detached perspective of the Homo economicus " , rather than by lecturing the player . Paste echoed these thoughts , stating that the game offered " no overt judgments " on the diamond trade , but had mechanics that paint it as " one that encourages and maybe even requires misdeeds " . Reflecting on the game 's unlikely journey in becoming a physical product , Paste declared Diamond Trust of London to be " not just a success in design , but also one of creation " .