

## New releases

2:40: Member Question, Antigone Mendenhall: I would ask him if we will start seeing regular new releases from them again?

For a while the factory in Germany was owned by a gentleman who is now 97. The factory was sold to new owners at the end of February. Before that we were outselling what the factory could make, so I made the decision to keep the existing colours on the shelves rather than try to produce new ones, as keeping up with demand for current stock is crucial from a business perspective. This is the entire reason we haven't come out with new colours over the past 2.5 years. However, the new owners have increased the production of existing colours, allowing us to come out with new colours this year. We wanted to get something out and show people that we are interested in doing new things, it's just that we haven't had the capacity to get them made.

We certainly have been working on new colours, and we have some that I think are pretty good - the test colours released this year were only a few of them. We have a lot of other ideas, prototypes, tests etc. which are really cool - I can't share the details as they are not finalised yet - but I think a couple of them are truly unique. One has a glow in the dark effect that has never been seen before which I think is super cool. When coming up with new colours I sit around with the colours person at the factory and we just try out a bunch of different things. Sometimes we get a new base colour to work with. This was the case with the green oxi-copper pigment which was developed about 1-1.5 years ago. We have been numbering the test sets since 2006/7. Our most recent test is number 1277. Water Lily was test colour number 207 - I've had it around for 7-8 years, but I just never really went ahead with producing it. This one was very popular. Sunburst was test colour number 297, first made about a year after water lily. So there is a lot of potential colours out there, it's just that we've had a capacity issue until now.

Recent update: 4 of the test colors from last year will be available in a general release next March. Two other colors never before seen or tested at shows will be released at the same time.

7:30: About the 10 test sets. Will they be released 6 new menagerie #10?

The menagerie is a mixture of different design types (i.e. a release of just Vortex sets would not be a menagerie). Some of the test sets will be released, yes. I will not do the Vortex Navy Blue nor the Vortex Violet because they're too close to other colours (Phantom Teal and Festive Violet). The Vortex Ice Blue... sometimes the final product looks very different to the samples we get, and the Vortex Ice Blue samples were far nicer than what was produced on a larger scale. Because of this we probably won't release it as it's not that great a colour, it's a bit like Mother of Pearl Blue. But the other ones: the Sunburst with red ink, the Oxi-copper, the Pop Art and the Water Lily will definitely be released, as well as eventually the Translucent Navy Blue. I'm personally not a big fan of the translucent, but it sold well at the shows. We also want to do a translucent Pink, and we are thinking about doing another lighter, brighter blue translucent. We don't know if the translucents will be part of a menagerie or a separate release or something else, but we definitely have the four mentioned colours which we will be releasing. We also have another colour which we did not have the time to make, which I'm also pretty certain would do well. So that's a total of 5 colours, and we want to have a total of 6 new colours - we're well on the way to achieving that.

10:27: Member Question, Ashley Ranea: Can we get new sets of speckled dice. (Funfeti hint hint)

I have recently visited Kasper at the Speckled factory. We definitely want new Speckled colours. We want the Funfetti, but we couldn't get it made in time for Spiel. We made a few test colours, maybe one or two of which are okay. We definitely want to make new Speckled colours as nothing has been done since 2004, which was because Jørgen really didn't want to do any new colours. But there are some colours currently in the range, which I think are not very good and we would be looking to have them replaced. After I do this show and Lucca [comic book & gaming convention held in Lucca, Italy] I will be visiting the Speckled factory again and mixing a few new colours.

12:12: Menagerie #11 speckled?

Menagerie #10 would include only non-speckled dice, like Oxi-copper and Pop Art. I want to keep Speckled separate from the signature designs. We could potentially release a menagerie including a few Speckled, Translucent and Opaque designs - it would never be Speckled only, as menagerie needs to include a mix of lines.

13:08: People want new Borealis. Yellow for example. Are new planned?

Eww, yellow, I don't know! I'm not sure how well that would sell... Are you aware of what happened with the Borealis material? [the difficulty with using original glitter due to it becoming a controlled substance used in Euro currency] More recently, the factory in Germany was for a while not making any Borealis, because they were having trouble getting the base colours. Because of this for a while here in America we were out of stock on 6 of the 7 colours, finally in the last two months we were able to get them back on the shelves. The base colours should be identical between production runs; sometimes the company that mixes the colours puts a slightly different chemical mix into the base material. This can result in a slight but noticeably different look of the dice. It is also hard to control the percentages of the mix. The factory is usually pretty good at controlling the variation, but it does sometimes occur. I know especially in some Speckled dice, like Earth, Fire and Lotus, from one decade to the next the dice can look very different. Another example is Scarab Royal Blue, if they don't have the right mix, it can look too blue. The factory tries as hard as they can to keep it the same, but from time to time it can change. Now of course the difference between new and old Borealis is very obvious in many cases. In Sky Blue they did a very good job. It looks almost the same, but on a lot of colours like Teal or Light Green the differences are large. Personally I think the Royal Purple looks better in the new version.

[On Aquerple] I thought it was a really nice colour but unfortunately we can't get the material anymore. I think on my insistence the company bought about a 3 year supply of the pigment, so we had these for 3 years longer than we should have. Looking back I wish I had asked for even more than that! That material was expensive, if memory serves me right I think it was about 2400 EUR per litre. Interesting story about that - in the mass produced aquerple, the glitter content was about 0.1%. When the factory got a small sample of the material originally, they made some tests with glitter content of around

8-10%... they were gorgeous! But then we checked what the price would be and it worked out at 40 EUR per die! (laughing) It's very important to know the cost of the material before you start experimenting with it.

18:17: About the change of powder: Are there plans to bring back the old look of Borealis?

The material is just not available. But people are always developing new materials. We are hoping someone will look back at this and make it, although I don't have much hope for this. I think if it was going to happen somebody would have done it already; by now people in other industries have kind of forgotten about it so there is not as much perceived demand for it. We are always looking for it. There is a plastic moulding trade show called Fakuma which I go to every year. All the colour making companies are there, and we're always making rounds asking people if they've made any new borealis-style powder. We're searching, and always looking for a better option, but nothing has come up yet, and nothing Borealis-related was there at the show that we saw.

19:20: Member Question, Nicole Potter: Will the test releases from those conventions become available to the general public (please I'm just a humble Australian I want Water Lily).

We are not selling the test sets online at the moment, because we want people to go to shows. We also wanted to make sure that we have enough to sell at the shows. Lucca is the last show we're doing this year, and afterwards we might start selling the remaining sets online (the ones which we are not going to release). As mentioned earlier, Water Lily will be available next year. We are shooting for a March release.

20:50: Member Question, Kat Tyler: I'd like to know what prompts specific color combinations, and how they decide which line they want to expand? For example, we haven't seen new Gemini or speckled sets in a while, but the test sets included festives and vortexes.

Speckled - hopefully we will come up with new colours soon as mentioned. It's a little bit more difficult with speckled because the powder material comes straight from the factory, and most of the colours that are made are not very bright or spectacular. There's many shades of ivory! This is because the powder is originally made for things like toilet seats, switchplates, and many things which are not meant to come in interesting colours. But hopefully they will produce some new colours soon. When you get the powder you can't alter the colour - so you're limited in the number of colour combinations and possible effects. But we definitely want to make more colours of Speckled.

Gemini - the Gemini machines are far behind in producing the dice. We are more out of stock on Gemini than any other lines, which is why we are not releasing new Gemini colours at the moment. We will revisit this once we've built up the stock a bit. The factory is getting caught up and I hope to have something out by the summer.

22:56: Member Question, Jacob Padilla: Will they ever do rainbow or collage sets. Like a 7 set with different color Gemini for each die.

No. We used to do that in the Speckled range - we would offer a Kaleidoscope set (25399), one each in 7 different colours. It didn't sell! We thought people would like it because when you start playing DnD

it might be easier to figure out which die to roll (“roll a blue die” rather than “roll a d12”), but it just did not sell.

23:43: Member Question, Jacob Padilla: Jumbo sets?

Beyond Opaque, Probably not. At larger sizes, the dice become really expensive. We have 34mm d20s for Speckled and Opaque, with retail price of about \$3. I’ve calculated that the same size die of e.g. Scarab Jade would cost about \$16-18! This is just too high. They would be nice, but I don’t think I could sell many of them. There might be a possibility of doing jumbo speckled sets but, again, cost could be prohibitive.

24:40: Member Question, Jacob Padilla: Non-speckled jumbo d20’s?

As in the previous question. We have been thinking about 34mm countdown d20s in Speckled and Opaque, but it’d be too expensive to do this in “marble” colours (Gemini and Signature dice). I would like to - I think it looks nice. We do have the 50mm pipped d6s, but we don’t actually sell them wholesale to shops. When we sell them ourselves at the shows we make a couple of dollars per die, and that’s about it. They retail at about \$12-15 in the US, the price should be more like \$25 based on their cost but I know nobody is going to pay that much for them so we consider them more of a loss leader.

26:04: Member Question, Karro Pe: Also will they hop on this layered trend?

The factory doesn’t have the capacity to do this. I think the layered dice look very nice, but it’s just not something the factory can do. They do injection moulding and compression moulding, with large amount of heat and pressures, whereas the layers have to be poured in and allowed to set and we just can’t do that.

26:34: Member Question, Haley Hayes: How long does it usually take from the time they start planning a new color/style to the time they do samples?

A colour like Vortex Bright Green, which we brought out around 2012, was actually about 6-8 years in “development.” This was because we didn’t like the look in 2004 but then in going over old color samples years later, we decided to bring it out. Generally every year we go to the factory, do a few new mixes, see if we like anything - if we get a colour we like, we do variations to try and improve upon it. It’s a constant, long process, and like with any creative process you will go through periods of time when you produce nothing that looks nice, and then sometimes suddenly you’ll get a bunch of good new ideas. And sometimes also things just pop up randomly! Like Jade Scarab, I was trying to do something else completely and this came out, entirely different to what I was trying to produce but man, that’s a nice colour!

29:26: Member Question, Haley Hayes: And how long from planning the color/style to its debut at the cons?

If I go to the factory and describe a colour I want them to try, it only takes about 3-5 days to get a prototype sample. Then from that to actual production, I would say 4 months is fast, usually about 5 months for us to receive the final product. When you make dice, there’s many steps: mixing of the

colour, extruding, mixing the extruding material with the base colour of the die, moulding, tumbling to get rid of the mould marks, painting, stripping of the paint from the die, polishing... there's many steps before you get the die, absolutely fastest you can get a die made is in about a week, but in practical reality it usually takes about 3 weeks. Of course they're making a bunch of dice at the same time, but that's about how long it takes per batch.

31:11: Member Question, Haley Hayes: How long before Gen Con do you decide what will become test market sets?

This year we kind of did a rush deal, we made the decision in May so 2.5-3 months before. Personally I would prefer not to have test colours at all, I would far prefer just to make the dice, get it out into the marketplace and sell it. But because the factory hasn't had the production capacity for a long time I wanted to get some sets out and show that we're not comatose, we're still making new stuff.

32:09: Member Question, Haley Hayes: Do you decide all the colors styles at once or a little at a time and having the sets that are on sale at the cons made as you go?

Generally we don't make the decisions all at once, we make the decisions as we go. The sales at the shows are very important in what we decide to bring out in the end. So for example Vortex Ice Blue sold okay at the shows but not that great, and because it's not what we wanted it to look like it won't be released. What we received in our initial order for Festive Green looks nothing like the sample we were shown originally, but we had all these dice and went with it anyway and it has been a good seller for the past decade or so. So sometimes you just can't really know what will work.

34:00: Member Question, Haley Hayes: Do you have a back stock of maybes from past years that you take out and reconsider?

Yeah. We've reconsidered Nebula Flame for example many times. We like the colour but the problem with Nebula Flame is that you get too many clear dice, and we don't really have the time to pull all those out as they're made. But yes we've definitely considered bringing some colours back. As you know colours come in and out of style all the time, but in general once it's gone it's gone for a reason. I can't think of any that we did actually ever bring back. Though of course, if we ever found a material that was close to Aquerple, or even Confetti, or Clear Borealis we would definitely try and bring those back.

Homepage & co

35:28: Member Question, Nick Quaderer: Do they plan to revamp their website at all? Being able to order direct from them without using email would be great.

This takes us back to the issue of production capacity at the factory. Right or wrong, I've been kind of using the fact that we have a non-existing webpage to help hold down the sales. At the moment the worst thing to happen would be for us to have a great webpage, great social media presence and suddenly increase our sales by 20% - because I don't want to piss off our customers by not having the required stock available when it's being ordered. I've been a distributor and a retailer in the past and I know what a pain it is not to be able to get the stock that you need or "could sell". Our inventory is computerised. We know what we have on the shelves. We need to take some pictures, but we have

an e-business package and it wouldn't take that long to set up a new webpage, it's just that at the moment we don't have the capacity to increase sales. I know it sounds terrible, but that's the reality.

37:15: Member Question, Meggie Hinson: Will they at least update the website so people don't try to order dice that they no longer have?

Business is a very fragile thing, you can go out of business very easily, and some of the ways this happens is if you overspend on staff, infrastructure, online presence, packaging etc. We have been playing catch up with our customers as we've had increases every single year since 2009, and the website is one of the casualties of this - we just haven't had the time to update it. I would like to have an archive which shows all the discontinued colours, a little online museum, and maybe add some anecdotes with interesting facts about the colours.

39:46: Member Question, Jim Watts: A webshop would be wonderful and popular...

As above.

39:56: Are there plans to have a social media presence? Facebook / Instagram

We would definitely like to do it, but again as above, we want to be able to support this with product before we set it up and are met with increased demand. We've had another increase this year, which is great, but we're a small business and when you haven't necessarily been planning for this sort of increase, it's usually the manager or the owner who picks up the slack. I want to do a lot more promotional items - I did manage to get the pens, sharpies and tapestries done - but there's a whole range of other things I would love to do! I have the contacts, it's just a matter of sitting down, getting the artwork and the pictures done, approving it and so on. I spend well over an hour each day going over what the factory has produced that day and how I need the dice shipped to the USA via air or other means, to try to keep us in stock of the sets we offer, I could spend that hour on promotional materials, but because of the expansion we have so much work there's no one else to do this, and it's not the main priority of the business. There's so many various things that need work, for example we didn't use to have the barcodes on our products, we finally managed to roll them out in America, we will also be getting them out to Europe soon. It took us this long because 1. we just didn't have the time to do this, and 2. we knew that it would increase sales and since we were already outselling the factory we did not want that. So as you can see, a lot of it goes back to the fact that we're trying to balance our supply and our demand as much as we can.

General

46:20: Chessex UK moved to France?

Because of Brexit, we decided to move now rather than leave it for later as most of our business in Europe is on the continent.

46:37: DMC Mod Question, Joss Hevel: I'd really like to know what Chessex thinks of the DMC, in particular the weird influx of strange requests like old glitter borealis and "less mixed" scarab sets.

I view the DMC as our fans, and everybody likes fans! The way I see this... The factories that make the dice are often originally jewelry factories. The German factory started making dice on the side in the late 50s or early 60s, and now pretty much all they make is dice and no plastic jewelry. Personally I think we've developed some colours which are better than any I've seen on plastic jewelry - I think those colours could have applications in other markets! I got involved with making dice because when I played I had this one set which had a nice marble effect to it and I liked using that one more than any other. So I made contact with the people in Denmark and Germany and suggested some designs I liked which I thought other people might also like - sometimes you get this right, sometimes you get this wrong. So coming back to the question, I really appreciate that there's other people who agree with me on that, who like what we've produced. Thank you for the recognition.

As for Scarab sets etc... I really bug the factory about these colours, especially the Royal Blue and Scarlet. The Scarlet is sometimes washed out. A slight change of the pigment that the colour factory sends to the dice factory can change the overall effect, same with temperature and so on. I am constantly trying to get the factory to adjust the production. Vortex Burgundy is another set that has some colour issues - it's a very difficult colour to make, too much red or any other pigment can really throw it off. It is difficult, especially on the Royal Blue - if it's done right it's a great colour, but sometimes it just looks... blue. If I could be there when they do the moulding it probably wouldn't happen as much. But you can't really see the colour properly until it's polished at the end. We're really sorry about that, but we're trying!

51:20: Member Question, Aree Mady: How big is his personal collection?

I don't really have a personal collection! It's like when somebody works in a chocolate factory, or an ice cream factory - they don't end up eating much chocolate or ice cream at all, because they're around it all the time. Sometimes you get some Vortex dice, which look particularly cool, so I have a few dice but not really a collection.

51:49: Member Question, Aree Mady: Does he have a white whale set that even he does not own?

No. We don't actually have a good archive, we haven't kept many of the old sets, but I don't personally have a white whale. I used to collect coins when I was a kid - it was fun, but I moved too many times to want to move a whole collection. At the company, we have a dice board where we glued one die of each of the colours to as a reference, but we haven't really maintained it so there are some gaps there. I can send you a picture of it. I think it hasn't been updated since Nebula (around 2002).

53:27: Member Question, Attacus Umbra: Will oop sets ever be brought back into rotation?

Answered previously.

53:34: Member Question, Alice Read: Are there any other dice companies he admires or ever takes inspiration from?

Not really! I'm always amazed at how many different dice Koplow have, cause that's a heck of a lot of moulding. Moulding ain't cheap, so they must spend a lot of money on it. I think in some respects for a long time there was no one else doing what I was doing. Some of the colours I see coming out of China are nice, but I think they're very different and not really comparable.

54:26: Member Question, Alice Read: How do they feel about other companies taking inspiration from their sought after oop sets?

Dice International (D&G) have their own line of Borealis style dice, and if they find their own material we can't really stop them. I don't really mind, and I don't really have the time to worry about it - we can't stop people doing this. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but I haven't really seen too much in terms of really interesting colours. I have considered, assuming we had the capacity, making a whole collector's series dice - a limited amount of test colours. Then if some of them sold well we could release them properly, but the initial series would be distinguished by the labels marked as the first run. I'm always afraid of flooding the market, but I'd rather flood the market myself than watch others do it! (laughter) I think by now I can make a pretty good guess as to what people will like, but I've been wrong so many times in the past it's still often hard to tell. In talking with the factory in Germany, I think we will be doing something along these lines in 2019. So, everyone may see a lot of colors coming out in a limited supply next year.

59:06: Member Question, Heather Stern: What got him interested in dice as a personal fascination?

I don't really have that much of a personal fascination with dice. I know that dice hate me - when I used to play Backgammon, and it always felt like I was getting the worst possible roll at the worst possible time! If there was a 35 to 1 long shot I would always roll it, whereas this never happened to some of the other people. But when playing I would notice some of the nicer dice, nicer doubling cubes and I thought that maybe other players would like cool dice too.

60:11: Member Question, Heather Stern: Does anything else fascinate him more?

Well, waking up in the morning in good health! I still keep up with what's happening in the chess world and such. I like weizenbier! [wheat beer] (laughter). Like I said, it's not the dice that really fascinated me in the first place, it was more the production of interesting colours, and dice are a medium for that. I like dice, of course, but it's more about the colours!

61:22: Member Question, Beau Dameron: What happened to the missing CHX 274xx (signature line) polyset numbers?

We set the stock numbers loosely based on the colour of the die. 1 is white, 2 is yellow, 3 is orange, 4 is red, 5 is green, 6 is blue, 7 is purple, 8 is black, 9-0 is usually reserved for brown and off-white colours but both can also be used for odd colours, like teal for example. But we came up with so many colours that we started running out of numbers. We also tried to use the numbers in such a way as to group the lines, so all 2743 would be Vortex, 2748 was going to be Phantom, 2749 Lustrous, 2740 Frosted, etc. But then we wouldn't make as many yellow dice as say, red, because yellow isn't a very popular colour so there wasn't a lot of 274x2 (for yellow). This is where the missing numbers come

from, it's just colours we haven't made. In some ways it helps - you can know that if the last number is 7, you're probably getting a purple die. So the numbers aren't really sequential. The Gemini on the other hand were sequential and we just went in numerical order because you can't really determine the "main" colour of a two-tone die. In Opaque the last number indicates die colour and the second to last number is sequential.

65:00: Member Question, Alice Read: OHH! I was told by someone that the entire Borealis Line was going to be retired. Is this true? If so will there be a new glitter line reboot?

I provide a production priority list for the factory. On June 18th I had Borealis Sky Blue as the first or second highest priority, and it didn't get made until October! It took 3-4 months to make the dice on top of the list. So as I said, for a while we were out of the 6 of the 7 Borealis colours, which made it look like we were discontinuing it but that was not the case. It's just because the factory was missing some material.

66:11: Member Question, Karro Pe: What do they feel about creators using their dice as molds?

We can't stop it. The fonts are very old, they are not ours - Jorgen at the factory had them, we asked if we can use them. I sometimes feel like people try to sell their dice as our dice when they're using molds like this, confusing the market, but there's not much I can do about it. Especially if it's just for personal use, I don't care at all. As for Etsy stores, it's not a big deal either. I'm more annoyed about large scale Chinese factories making their moulds very close to ours in shape, but again I can't stop it.

67:55: Member Question, Karro Pe: Would the consider releasing a set of mold dice, to prevent creators from using their original dice?

Never really thought about that! We're not in the mould making business. I have been many things in the past: a retailer, a distributor, a publisher, a manufacturer etc. The whole reason we're doing custom dice is because I thought it would be a cool idea to try it and we decided to give it a go, see if anybody else likes it and people do! In the past we've done a lot of things across the board, but now in my old age I'm trying to just focus on one thing. The old saying is that the three words of real estate are location, location, location - the three words of business are focus, focus, focus, so I'm trying to keep myself focused on what we're doing.

0:28: Member Question, Haley Tucker: As a longtime veteran of the dice market, what impactful changes has he seen in the last 10 years? In the last 5?

I would like to do this one first, because I think it will tie into many of my other answers. It's both the same answer regardless of timeline - and it's all about the overall expansion of the market. The market is so much bigger than it was 10 years ago. I'm happy to see this. When I started in the field in 1979-1980, all of these kind of games [RPGs] were cool and I was very surprised that the average person in the mass market didn't know about them. So I wanted to be one of these crusaders early on to try and spread the word and to "convert" other people to gaming. It was a very slow process, but it kind of started taking hold around 2008-2009 - right about the time of the financial crisis, but also around the time that board game companies started making tabletop versions of computer games. People

playing video games started playing board games and realising “hey, these are also good!”, and that created a route for gamers back into the board game world. So we’re selling way more dice than we were before. It’s good, but it also has certain challenges involved with it -supply issues, the logistics of getting things shipped out, keeping them on the shelves and so on. But the sheer increase in the market has probably been the most impactful change.

69:05: Member Question, Haley Tucker: How have those changes influenced how Chessex does business?

The sheer volume we need to produce has increased so much, and general interest has risen. What we do is really quite simple: we have a factory, we make a product, we put it in a box and then ship it out to the customers. But at the certain volume, you can’t just do it yourself. Over time you develop this very intricate system to get everything done. A long time ago I could just place an order with the factory, wait 8-9 months and then have enough stock not to have to worry about it for a while. Now we’re at a point where we’re outselling what the factory can make, and the factory isn’t really that large, and we need to manage what we make in what order, there’s more testing requirements on material, more paperwork and so on.

In the US when we do Dragon Con or Gen Con, we generate a stack of paperwork about 4-6cm tall for each stall, so four stacks like that. This is all for things we’re checking, inventory, sales etc. all for our computerised system. It seems like every-thing is so much more effort than it used to, but without it we couldn’t track which colours sell best, what we have left or any such. It helps us anticipate the needs, get things back on the shelves when they’re needed - it’s very useful. I’m happy to see the growth, of course, but all the profits have been going to two places - taxes and increasing inventory. It works well for growth year on year, but as I tell people: I’m dice rich, and cash poor!