

# fun and games

AS THE COOLER WEATHER STARTS TO BRING US INDOORS, LET THE FUN AND GAMES CONTINUE IN THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME.

By the middle of the 19th Century, civilisation witnessed change in the form of increased industrialisation and urbanisation, providing society's well-off more leisure time than previous generations. As a result, parlour games were encouraged, and allowed these ladies and gentlemen to retreat to their living rooms and entertain guests at small parties with games such as chess, backgammon and poker. During this period, leisure remained an occupation of the middle and upper classes only, thus upholding the already set precedent that parlour games were only common among the wealthy.

Such is the extent of parlour games' association with affluence, that Hollywood frequently uses these games to signify a character's wealth and success. In Ian Fleming's 1961 novel *Thunderball*, later adapted into film as part of the James Bond series, Count Lippe encapsulates the charm of a typical man of wealth and prosperity – good at backgammon, polo and winning over women. Backgammon was the game of the 1960s and 1970s that represented a new world of wealth. More recently, pop culture continues to use gaming as an indicator of power and the luxury sector, as seen on *The Sopranos* in Tony Soprano's poker nights, or through a game of croquet in the backyard reminiscent of *Heathers*.

Nowadays table games are still commonly associated with education and are designed for self-improvement, with many of them involving logic or word play. While they are usually competitive, cumulative scores are often not kept and the main reward for winning a round is the admiration of one's peers. It is a challenge for powerful people to be put in a situation in which they do not have complete control. In terms of games such as poker, people's motivation is not always purely monetary; they are generally enthused by the association with affluence that comes hand-in-hand with the game.

Culture, history and stature have long been linked to a knowledge and skill of card and board games. It is no coincidence that there is a common thread which connects the likes of Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*, James Cameron's *Titanic*, and Garry Marshall's *Beaches*; all three effectively establish prosperous characters by incorporating scenes where affluent members of society are playing parlour games. While these examples are undeniably interpretations of real life, it is a fact that is universally accepted that indoor gaming is associated with society's upper class.

Often played in a parlour during the Victorian era, the aptly named 'parlour games' have been repeatedly linked to people who are considered to be "high rollers". Since Henry VII's reign of England in the 16th Century, gaming has incessantly been associated with the elite. During that time it was believed that, when played by the lower classes, gambling led to idleness and crime, so parliament passed a law prohibiting servants and apprentices from games, particularly dicing and playing cards.



Even in today's digitally saturated world, luxury consumers are still looking to traditional methods of fun for entertainment and the luxury market has started to cater to these wants. Whether it be Tiffany & Co.'s Playing Cards, Cartier's Poker Box or Gucci's Backgammon Set, there is no shortage of modern day supply in this arena. French brand Pinel & Pinel has also recently introduced the ultimate games trunk in order to accommodate the most dedicated of gamers. The trunk, made from brass, wood and calfskin, is comprised of forty games from various periods of time, including the traditional dominoes, Yahtzee and chess and the more modern games of Nintendo DS and Trivial Pursuit.

Zontik, a US based luxury games company, directs its high-end gaming products candidly towards the elite. Classic games like Monopoly, invented in 1935 by Charles Darrow, have been reinvented and cater to the desires of the bountiful market. A custom crafted leather board, which is available with a sterling silver finish, uses the finest quality leathers and fabrics to bring together games that represent excellence in the indoor gaming world.

From investment bankers to princes of parlours, luxury brands are recreating the most popular games from around the globe and making them chic. After all, parlour games have proven to be timeless and as long as the demand continues the luxury market will continue to satisfy these needs, as Zontik says, "When it comes to gaming, extravagance is the best strategy."

#### BOX BRIEF

**BINGO** ■ After years on the party circuit Robbie Williams now enjoys hosting regular game nights and he once invited Mika over to play Bingo

**SHOWDOWN** ■ Ben Affleck, Don Cheadle and Jason Alexander have appeared on tv ratings winner *Celebrity Poker Showdown*

**PASTIME** ■ In her downtime Beyonce enjoys playing Connect 4 and Guess Who

**PRESIDENT** ■ US President Barack Obama taught his children how to play Scrabble, Twister and Taboo