

# THE GANG

The Cooperative Poker Game

For 3-6 players, ages 10 and up

PLAY  
WITHOUT  
READING  
THE RULES!



For an animated tutorial explaining the rules of this game, scan the QR code above to download the free Kosmos Helper App. See the app store for details.

You are **THE GANG** — a group of professional thieves ready to commit a series of heists! The success of these heists hangs on The Gang's perfect coordination. To win the game, you'll have to work together to crack three vaults without tripping the alarm three times. And how exactly will you do it? You'll play **poker ... cooperatively!**

**KOSMOS**

# THE GANG

## The Cooperative Poker Game

### Poker

*The Gang* is based on *poker* — more specifically on the poker variant *Texas Hold 'em*. If you already know the rules for *Texas Hold 'em*, it will be easier for you to learn and play *The Gang*. However, in our many playtests, we have found that even absolute poker beginners can easily pick up *The Gang* and have a lot of fun! It can help, of course, if you watch an instructional video for *Texas Hold 'em* before you play.



Not all of the rules for *Texas Hold 'em* are necessary for *The Gang* and a few new rules have been added in their place.

### Cooperative

You win or lose together. You can only win the game if you correctly evaluate your fellow players' cards. NOTE: Contrary to normal poker, you absolutely do not want to bluff!

### Communicative

An important rule of *The Gang* is that you are not allowed to freely discuss the cards in your hand. You are not allowed to show, say, or hint which cards you have in your hand to the other players. Additionally, if you know something about another player's hand only because you know your own hand, you also cannot disclose that information.

There is, however, an opportunity for communication in the form of chips. Pay attention to who takes which chip in each round and how the chips change among you.



**Note:** The **difficulty level** of this game is determined not only by the cards, but by the number of players: **The more players there are, the more difficult the game becomes.**

If you are playing a three-player game with experienced poker players, the game may seem too easy depending on the distribution of the cards.

We recommend playing a complete “basic game” before deciding if you want to **adjust the difficulty level** by changing the number of players or trying Advanced, Professional, or Master Thief Mode.

# GAME MATERIALS

## 90 Cards



52 Playing cards



3 Vault cards



3 Alarm cards



6 "Gameplay" overview cards  
6 "Hand Ranking" overview cards



10 Challenge cards



10 Specialist cards

## 24 Chips



6 White chips  
(1 to 6 stars)  
for **Round 1**



6 Yellow chips  
(1 to 6 stars)  
for **Round 2**



6 Orange chips  
(1 to 6 stars)  
for **Round 3**



6 Red chips  
(1 to 6 stars)  
for **Round 4**

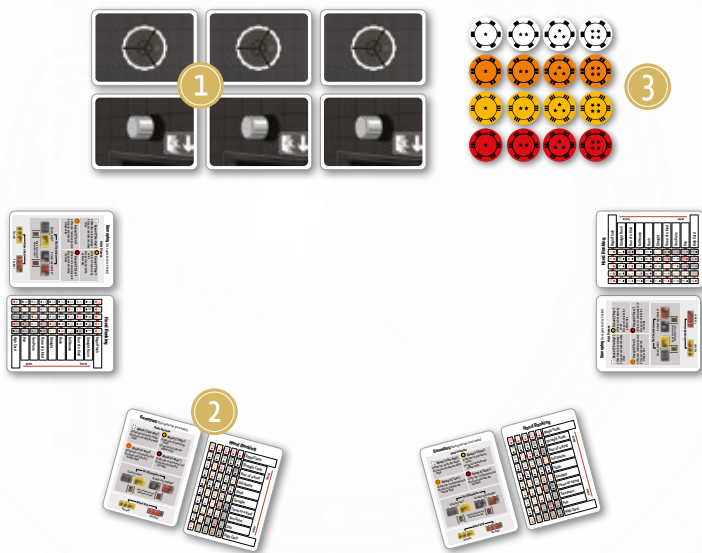
# GAME SETUP

The following are the rules for the basic game. Leave the challenge cards and specialist cards in the box, as they are not needed for now. When you are an experienced gang, you can switch to Advanced, Professional, or Master Thief Mode (see pg. 14).

- 1 Lay the **three alarm cards** and the **three vault cards** with the **gray sides** up at the edge of the playing area.
- 2 Each of you should receive **one “Gameplay” overview card** and **one “Hand Ranking” overview card**. Place the remaining overview cards in the box.
- 3 Next, sort out any **chips** with a higher star value than the number of players in the gang, and place them back in the box.

*Example: You are playing with four players. You therefore need the 1-, 2-, 3-, and 4-star chips in each color. Put the 5- and 6-star chips back into the box.*

Place the remaining **chips sorted by color** on the edge of the playing surface with the light side facing up. The dark side is not used for the basic game.



## GAME OVERVIEW

A full game of *The Gang* consists of three to five “heists.” Each heist consists of four rounds. At the end of each heist, you will see if you were successful or not. You win the game if three heists are successful. You lose if you fail three times.



# GAMEPLAY

## Heist process

Each heist consists of four rounds, which proceed in the following manner:

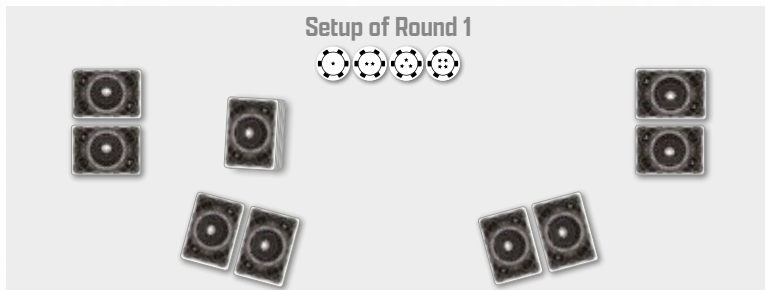
### Round 1 (“Pre-Flop”)

#### a) Deal two cards to each player

Shuffle the 52 playing cards and deal **two cards face down** to each player. These are the “pocket cards.” You can look at your own **pocket cards** at any time. Place the rest of the deck face down in the center of the table. Leave enough free space next to it for five cards.

#### b) Lay out and take the white chips

Lay out the **white chips** in the center of the table.



The chips show an increasing number of stars, which **indicate the strength** of the chips. They are the method through which you communicate your estimation of the strength of your own **hand (pocket cards + community cards)** relative to the other players. If you take the chip with the most stars, you are signaling that you believe you currently have the strongest hand at the table. If you take the 1-star chip, you believe that you have the weakest hand.

There is no turn order. You all play **at the same time** according to the following rules:

- You can take **any chip from the current round at any time** and place it in front of you. This can be a chip **from the center of the table**, or it can be a chip that is **already in front of another player**.
- You may **never have more than one chip** of the same color in front of you.
- You are allowed to put a chip from the current round that is in front of you **back in the center of the table**. You may never place a chip in front of another player.

As soon as everyone has a chip in front of them, Round 1 ends.



## Round 2 ["The Flop"]

### a) Reveal three community cards

One of you draws **three cards** from the deck and places them **face up in the center of the table**. Face-up cards in the center of the table are called **community cards**.

### b) Lay out and take the yellow chips

Lay out the **yellow chips** in the center of the table.



Each of you takes one of the yellow chips, as in the first round. The chips from previous rounds are not part of the current round. You should, however, place them neatly in front of you in a row, so that the other players can see how your evaluations have changed over the course of the rounds.

### End of Round 2



### Round 3 ["The Turn"]

#### a) Reveal one community card

One of you draws **one card** from the deck and lays it face up next to the three other community cards.

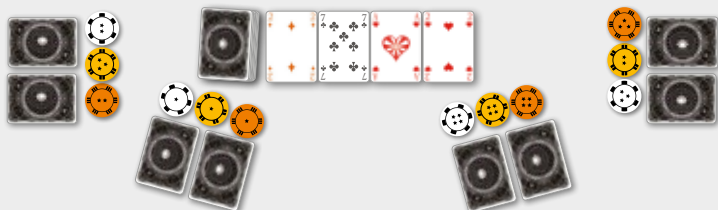
#### b) Lay out and take the orange chips

Lay out the **orange chips** in center of the table. Each of you takes a chip as usual.

### Setup of Round 3



### End of Round 3



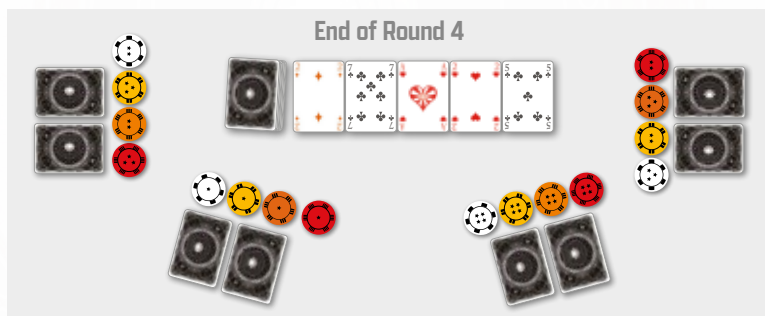
## Round 4 ["The River"]

### a) Reveal one community card

One of you draws **one card** from the deck and lays it face up next to the four other community cards.

### b) Lay out and take the red chips

Lay out the **red chips** in center of the table. Each of you takes a chip as usual.



After **Round 4**, proceed to the showdown.

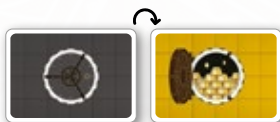
## The Showdown

Now we come to the moment of truth. The only chips that matter now are the red ones you took in **Round 4**!

Beginning with the player with the red 1-star chip, reveal your hands in ascending order (1-star chip, 2-star chip, and so on) and declare your **best possible poker hand made up of exactly five cards**.

## All correct?

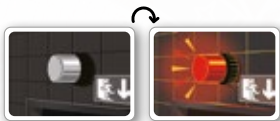
If you all reveal **equally strong or stronger hands** one after another without a mistake, the heist is successful. You may flip a **vault card to the gold side**.



*Vault card is flipped to gold side.*

## At least one mistake?

If one of you reveals a **weaker hand** than one that was previously revealed, you made a mistake in the order of the chips. This heist fails because you organized yourselves incorrectly. In this case, flip an **alarm card to the red side**.



*Alarm card is flipped to red side.*

The Showdown ends the current heist. Begin the next heist with **Round 1**.

# GAME END

The game can end in two ways, depending on which condition happens first:

- Either you **win** if you succeed in flipping **three vault cards** to the **gold side**.
- Or you **lose** if you must flip **three alarm cards** to the **red side**.

# RANKING OF HANDS

It is extremely important to know the following hand rankings well in order to evaluate your own hand in comparison to others. If you know the rules for *Texas Hold 'em* you can skip this section of the rulebook. !

Important: You must build the **best possible hand** made up of **exactly five cards** from your seven available cards (2 pocket cards + 5 community cards)!

There are ten different rankings. Each hand can be placed in one of these rankings. Use the Hand Ranking overview card to help you remember the ranking order.

Hand Ranking	
	Royal Flush
	Straight Flush
	Four of a Kind
	Full House
	Flush
	Straight
	Three of a Kind
	Two Pairs
	Pair
	High Card

*Hand Ranking overview card*

## GROUND RULES: THE VALUES OF INDIVIDUAL CARDS

The highest card is the A (ace) followed by K (king), Q (queen), J (jack), and then the number values in descending order: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, and 2. Cards of different suits have the same value (e.g. the ace of spades is equal to the ace of hearts).



← weak card

→ strong card

## THE CARD COMBINATIONS IN DETAIL (FROM WEAK TO STRONG)



**High Card**

If someone doesn't even have a pair, their highest card counts. If multiple players have the same high card, first compare the highest *kicker card* (see the box on the next page for an explanation of the term *kicker card*). If these cards also have the same value, compare the second-highest *kicker card*. If these are also the same, compare the third and then the fourth-highest *kicker card*.



**Pair**

A pair is made up of two cards of the same value. If more than one player has a pair, the pair with the higher card value is stronger. If more than one player has the same pair, compare the highest *kicker card*. If these also have the same value, compare the second-highest *kicker card*. If these are also the same, compare the third-highest *kicker card*.



**Two Pair**

Two pair is a hand that has two cards of the same value and two cards of another value. If more than one player has two pair, the respective higher-valued pairs are compared. If these are of the same value, the respective lower-valued pairs are compared. If these are also the same, the fifth card decides (→ *Kicker Card*).





### Three of a Kind

A three of a kind is made up of three cards with the same value. If multiple players have three of a kind, the set with the highest card value is strongest. If multiple players have the same three of a kind, first the highest and then the second highest *kicker cards* are compared.

### Kicker Card

The term “kicker card” refers to a card that does not contribute to the actual hand. Every hand that doesn’t consist of five cards, is “padded” with kicker cards. As a reminder: A maximum of five cards are incorporated into the evaluation of the hand ranking.



### Straight

A straight is made up of five cards with consecutive values. If multiple players have a straight, the straight with the highest card wins. The ace can count as either the highest or the lowest card: A-2-3-4-5 or 10-J-Q-K-A. The ace cannot be used in the middle of a straight: K-A-2-3-4 is not allowed.



### Flush

A flush is made of five cards in the same suit (clubs, spades, hearts, or diamonds). If multiple players have a flush, they are evaluated based on the highest card. If these are the same, the second highest decides, then the third highest, etc.



### Full House

A full house is made up of a pair and a three of a kind. If multiple players have a full house, the higher three of a kind wins. If the three of a kind is the same, the highest pair wins.



### Four of a Kind

A four of a kind is made up of four cards of the same value. For example, four kings. If multiple players have four of a kind, the highest four of a kind wins. If multiple players have the same four of a kind, the value of the fifth card decides (→ Kicker Card).



### Straight Flush

A straight flush consists of a straight, i.e., five consecutive cards, all in the same suit. If multiple players have a straight flush, the player with the highest card is the winner.



### Royal Flush

The strongest hand in the poker ranking is a royal flush. A royal flush consists of a straight flush, i.e., five consecutive cards all in the same suit, that begins with 10 and ends with an ace.

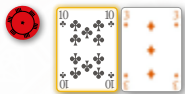
## TRUE TIE

Sometimes it happens that (despite the kicker cards) the card combinations of several players are **exactly the same**. This happens, for example, when the best possible card combination consists of the five community cards and therefore the players' pocket cards are not part of the best possible card combination. Then you have *true tie*. Among the players who are involved in a *true tie*, the order of the chosen chips is irrelevant. The ranking compared to all of the other players must still be correct.

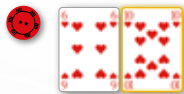
**Example:** Showdown in a four-player game



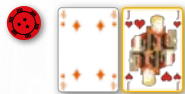
Arsène has the hand **2-2-A-10-7**  
and the 1-star chip



Doris has the hand **2-2-A-10-7**  
and the 2-star chip



Trudy has the hand **2-2-A-J-7**  
and the 3-star chip



Danny has the hand **A-A-A-2-2**  
and the 4-star chip



Danny has a full house. The other three players each have a pair made up of two 2s. Danny therefore ranked himself correctly (4-star chip), as he has the highest-ranking hand.

Arsène, Doris, and Trudy next compare their highest kicker cards. For all three, this is the community ace. Because all three have an ace, the second highest kicker card is compared. For Arsène and Doris, this is the 10 and for Trudy this is the J. Trudy has a higher-ranked hand than Arsène and Doris and therefore also ranked herself correctly (3-star chip).

Arsène and Doris have the exact same hand, a true tie. Their chosen chips are counted as correct (1-star and 2-star chip). Therefore, all of them have ranked themselves correctly and the gang can flip a vault card to the gold side.

## REMINDER

You **may not share information about your hand** with the other players. You may only speculate on the hands of the other players with information that is available to everyone (you may not share any information that relates to your own hand).

# ADVANCED MODE

When you have gained some experience with *The Gang*, you can add the **specialist** and **challenge cards** into the game. These cards alter the rules a bit and add more variability to the heists.

Place the **challenge cards**  and **specialist cards**  **face down in two separate stacks.**

When you play with these cards **for the first time**, they must respectively be ordered from 1 to 10. When you turn over the first card from the stack, it must be card 1, and so on.

The first heist of the game is unchanged; play it without specialist or challenge cards.

Depending on the outcome of each heist, a specialist **or** a challenge card is activated.

## Successful heist?

If you are successful in a heist (vault card turned to the gold side), your next heist will be made more difficult by a challenge card. Reveal the **topmost challenge card** in the stack, place it in the center of the table, and read it out loud. This challenge is **now active for the next heist**.

**At the end of the next heist**, place this challenge card **back at the bottom of the stack**. It is only active for **one** heist!

You can read about the different challenge cards on pages 16–17 of this rulebook.



## Failed heist?

If you fail at a heist (alarm card turned to the red side), your next heist will be made easier by a specialist card. Reveal the **topmost specialist card** from the stack, place it in the center of the table, and read it out loud. This specialist is now **active for the next heist**.

Some specialists will help you all directly from Round 1 of your next heist.

For other specialist cards, you decide as a group which of you shall use it and when during the next heist. In order to do so, one of you may suggest using the specialist card at any time (before the showdown!). If the others agree, use it!

**At the end of the next heist**, place this specialist card **back at the bottom of the stack**. It is only active for **one** heist — whether you have used it or not!

You can read about the different specialist cards on pages 18–19 of this rulebook.



Repeat these steps **at the end of each heist** until the end of the game. This means that either **one challenge card or one specialist card** will be active from the second heist onward.

**TIP:** *In order to experience the whole variety of specialist and challenge cards, **do not** re-sort the stacks from 1–10 at the end of your game. Play through the stacks over several games until you have seen every card from 1–10. When you come back to number 1 **for the second time**, shuffle the deck. From then on, the cards will be in a random order.*

## PROFESSIONAL MODE

Professional Mode functions like Advanced Mode, but with these changes:

- Remove the challenge card “1) Quick Access” from the stack. This will not be used in Professional Mode.
- Reveal a random challenge card at the beginning of the game. This challenge card is active for all heists in the game!

This means that the revealed challenge card is active from the first heist and stays active for all following heists. From the second heist on, for example, there will be either two challenge cards or one challenge card and one specialist card active.

## MASTER THIEF MODE

Master Thief Mode functions like Advanced Mode, but with these changes:

- Remove the challenge card “1) Quick Access” from the stack.
- Remove one of the three alarm cards from the game. You lose the game when you have set off **two alarms**.
- There are no **specialist cards** in this mode.
- Reveal two random challenge cards at the beginning of the game. These are active for the first heist. At the beginning of each of the subsequent heists, discard the lowest-numbered challenge card. Then reveal a new challenge card. There are therefore always **two challenge cards active** for every heist.

## CHALLENGE CARDS

### Overview & Explanations



#### 1) Quick Access

Put aside the white chips for this heist. In the first round, distribute the pocket cards and go straight to Round 2.



#### 2) Noise Sensors

Turn over the **1-star chips for Rounds 1, 2, and 3** to the **dark side**. These chips **cannot change owners after they have been taken from the center of the table**.



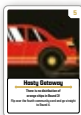
#### 3) Motion Detector

If at **least one of the community cards** in Round 2 is a **J, Q, or K**, the following occurs: The player who has the **white 1-star chip** (from Round 1) must put their pocket cards face down in the discard pile and draw **new pocket cards** from the deck.



#### 4) Retina Scan

This challenge adds an **extra condition** for a successful heist. Before the **player with the highest-value red chip** reveals their hand in the showdown, you must do the following: The **other players** must **confer and agree together on a card value (from 2 to ace)** that they believe the **player with the highest-value red chip** has **at least one of in their pocket cards**. The player with the highest-value red chip obviously cannot take part in this discussion or give hints. If the players are incorrect, the heist is unsuccessful, even if the ranking of the red chips was correct.



#### 5) Hasty Getaway

**There is no distribution of orange chips in Round 3.** Just reveal the fourth community card and go straight to Round 4.





## 6) Ventilation Shaft

Turn over the **highest-value chips for Rounds 1, 2, and 3** to the **dark side**. These chips **cannot change owners after the first time they are taken from the center of the table**.



## 7) Laser Tripwires

If **none of the community cards** in Round 2 is a **J, Q, or K**, the following occurs: The player who has the **highest-value white chip** (from Round 1) must put their pocket cards face down in the discard pile and draw **new pocket cards** from the deck.



## 8) Blackout

**At the beginning of Round 2**, you must all **discard your chips from Round 1**.

**At the beginning of Round 3**, you must all **discard your chips from Round 2**.

**At the beginning of Round 4**, you must all **discard your chips from Round 3**.

This means that you all must pay close attention to who has which chips in each round in order to better evaluate changes in the strength of your hands.



## 9) Fingerprint Scan

This challenge adds an **extra condition** for a successful heist. Before the **player with the highest-value red chip** reveals their hand in the showdown, you must do the following: The **other players** must confer and **agree together on what hand ranking (high card to royal flush)** they believe the **player with the highest-value red chip** has. The player with the highest-value red chip obviously cannot take part in this discussion or give hints. If the players are incorrect, the heist is unsuccessful, even if the ranking of the red chips was correct.



## 10) Security Cameras

Instead of two pocket cards, you all play with **three!** For the showdown, build the best five-card combination out of your **three pocket cards and five community cards** (instead of two pocket cards and five community cards).

# SPECIALIST CARDS

## Overview & Explanations



### 1) Informant

Decide which of you will **secretly** show **exactly one of their pocket cards** to **one other player**. Of course, this player may not tell the others which card they have seen.



### 2) Getaway Driver

Decide which of you will share **what hand ranking** their current hand has (pocket cards plus current community cards) with the rest of the players. They cannot share further details.

*Example: "I have a pair."* The player cannot share which pair they have!



### 3) Investor

Once the **pocket cards have been dealt in Round 1**, each player says how many "**face cards**" (**J, Q, K**) they have.

*Example: Arsène has K, J and says: "I have two face cards." Doris has Q, 3 and says: "I have one face card." Trudy has A, 10 and says: "I have no face cards."*



### 4) Mastermind

Decide which of you will share with everyone **how many cards** of a **specific value** they have in their hand.

*Example: You decide as a group that Danny will tell you all how many gs he has. He has 9, 3 and says: "I have a 9."*



### 5) Hacker

Decide which of you will **take one card from the deck** and add it to their hand. Afterward, this player must place **one of their pocket cards face down** on the discard pile. This can be the card that they have just drawn from the deck.



### 6) Coordinator

Once the **pocket cards have been dealt in Round 1**, each of you chooses **one of your pocket cards**. Everyone then **simultaneously** passes their chosen card to the **player on their left** as a **pocket card**.



### 7) Jack

Decide which of you will add the “**Jack**” specialist card to your pocket. Afterward, this player must place **one of their pocket cards face down** on the discard pile. The “Jack” specialist card counts as a **J (Jack)**. However, it **does not have a suit**, so it cannot be used for a flush. If you have a four of a kind with the other four Jacks, it counts as a Jack four of a kind with a Jack as a kicker card.



### 8) Math Whiz

Once the **pocket cards have been dealt in Round 1**, everyone states the **sum of the value of their pocket cards**. 2 to 10 have the values 2–10. J, Q, and K have the value of 10. A has the value of 11.

*Example: Arsène has 10, 7 in his hand and says: “I have 17 total.” Doris has Q, 3 and says: “I have 13 total.” Trudy has A, 10 and says: “I have 21 total.”*



### 9) Con Artist

Once the **pocket cards have been dealt in Round 1**, and everyone has looked at their cards, place them **face down in a pile** in the center of the table, **shuffle** them, and **then redistribute** them.

**Important:** *You must only mix the cards that were previously dealt and redistribute them. If you paid attention to which cards you had before they were mixed up, you know two of the cards that are somewhere in your fellow players' hands.*



### 10) Muscle

Decide which of you will take the “**Muscle**” specialist card and place it in front of you. During the showdown, this player beats any other player with a hand of the **same ranking**.

*Example: Arsène has the hand 2-2-J-8-7 in the showdown and the “Muscle” specialist card. Doris has 2-2-A-8-7. Trudy has 8-8-K-7-3. Danny has 7-7-7-8-2. Arsène, Doris, and Trudy all have a pair. Arsène actually has the weakest pair. However, the “Muscle” specialist card turns his pair into the strongest pair. Danny has a three of a kind, a different rank, and is therefore stronger than Arsène. The correct order of the chips here would be Doris (1 star), Trudy (2 stars), Arsène (3 stars), Danny (4 stars).*

## THE AUTHORS



**John Cooper** is a retired NASA engineer. He lives with his wife and their dog in Greenbelt, Maryland.

**Kory Heath** is a non-retired software engineer. He lives alone and moves from place to place every few years. In 2000, this place was Greenbelt, Maryland in order to develop board games there with John Cooper.

The two of them, along with some friends, have developed the games Zendo, Homeworlds, Blockers and many other games that you - as they both say - have definitely never heard of . 23 years have passed since then, and they are still inventing games together. Their latest is *The Gang*.

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