

Wiggity Bang!

Meet Matthew and Jean Rivaldi, game inventors extraordinaire



Local creative mavens Jean and Matthew Rivaldi working on the prototype for Wiggity Bang's "Magic Feather" game.



Husband and wife team Matthew and Jean Rivaldi take time from their busy lives as game inventors and parents to sit for a chat in the San Diego neighborhood of South Park. It's the very same neighborhood that inspired Matthew's illustrations for their new family game, Magic Feather (ages 7+). Magic Feather moves

players around a neighborhood, requesting crazy actions and asking interesting

questions. Players compete against each other but also try to get to the final destination before the "pesky crows" beat everyone to it. The first two players to reach the end compete in a final hilarious task to win the game.

"Our kids [Jack and Alex] were getting to the age where it was easier to sit down and play a board game with them," says Jean of Magic Feather's beginnings.

Friends Robb Earnest and Jeremy Fifer co-founded Wiggity Bang with Matthew, and two years later, Jean came on board.

Lots of laughter is a given in the Rivaldi household.

"Matthew has an old lady voice he does that always cracks me up," Jean says.

Later that evening, when I get a chance to play Magic Feather for the first time, this duo's desire to have fun in life rubs off on my own family as one of us acts out an Olympic gold-medal ice skating



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performance in the living room and then makes up a rock song for a bottle of suntan lotion!

There is a cooperative play option, but my family went for the fun and friendly competition that ended with my 11-year-old on the floor in a fit of laughter as her brother won the game.



Photo: Wiggity Bang Games

“We are a content-driven company,” says Matthew. “A lot of the questions [in the game] are things I’d like to talk to my kids about.”

The best part is that although the game was designed with younger kids in mind, all ages will benefit from the creative interaction. How could you not learn about each other with cards like, “What’s something your parents do that you think is weird?” and “Name three things that the person to your right is probably thinking right now.”

All of the Wiggity Bang games provide irresistible motivation to come together and enjoy one another, especially in a time of society where we are more separated by technology and less outdoor play. Wiggity Bang’s company philosophy states, “a sense of humor is the key that unlocks the universe.”

Jean tells the story of one summer when her mother told the family that the television was broken. She still doesn’t know if it was true, but says she had the best summer ever.

“We didn’t need all that stuff [technology] back then and I don’t think they need it now,” says Jean.

Transplanted from Chicago, Jean is amazed that anybody stays indoors with San Diego’s great weather, but San Diegans do love their games and San

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Diego is home to many game inventors.

"The last few years there's been more of a connection between all of us inventors," says Matthew. "We've all been starting to meet and talk more."

The gaming community is growing in San Diego, and Matthew hopes to see it grow ever bigger. The San Diego County Fair is getting in on the trend this year with the theme "Game On!" that features, well, games! Wiggity Bang was asked to be a game partner and the fair will exhibit Magic Feather in all its hilarious glory.

All this merely eight years after their first smash-hit game "Quelf," which became a huge success, winning Board Game of the Year.

"We took that success and started "Furt." We were able to do the other games a little slower. We've learned a lot of things," says Matthew.

Furt is a party game for ages 13 and up, and won the 2011 Game of the Year award from *Creative Child Magazine*. With two new games slated for release this summer, Wiggity Bang's success will undoubtedly continue into the future.

I quickly admit that in checking out their other smash-hit board games, I was distracted by Matthew's "Gamma Phoebe" comic strips that he posts online.


"I always wanted to be a cartoonist," Matthew says. "I would read comic strips every single day."

"I have the mother-in-law you could have written down what you wanted and popped her out of a machine," says Jean, describing Matthew's mom. Jean and Matthew laugh at her requests that Matthew draw her character with more of a neck, even though it's not technically her. Gamma Phoebe isn't real, after all!

"Gamma Phoebe is not my mom," insists Matthew. "Gamma is the nagging voice in my head."

With this much creative energy, I say, "Nag away!" ♦

Laura Pardo is lucky to write from her favorite neighborhood in San Diego... South Park.



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