

Knightmare.com

2025

Foreword

It's been an energetic year in Knightmare kingdom. 2025 began for us on New Year's Eve, when we were contacted by a BBC producer to appear on radio in January. What fun it was to introduce an experienced presenter in Phil Williams to a show he'd never heard of, and the quiz put him in a very good mood.

Much of the 2025 material concerns the beginning or end of Knightmare's run. There's a promotional brochure for the second series in 1988. A dig into the news archives unearthed a great snippet about the number of complaints received about Knightmare in its early years. At the later end, we caught up again with Knightmare's final dungeoneer, and revisit the letters sent by Broadsword to inform applicants that the show had ended.

Some ideas have been in the pot for some time - namely revisiting Knightmare's overseas adaptations and the demographics of its contestants. The comedy theatre show Knightmare Live is also beginning to feel like an ever-present. It concluded its long tenth anniversary tour in London's West End, with Hugo Myatt and Mark Knight appearing together for the first time.

Fittingly for a show that thrived on it, we also tackle the thorny topic of technology. In recent years, some have dabbled with AI for fun, or as a training exercise. But a new attempt at creating dungeon rooms was far beyond anything that had come before. So, we delved a bit deeper into the design and delivery predicaments around generative technology. And of course, we spoke to Knightmare artist David Rowe about the impact of technology and how he thinks a new series could work.

Thanks, as always, for your support. All the very best for 2026.

The knightmare.com team

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Knightmare.com team make midnight appear- ance on BBC Radio 2

The nightmare.com team appeared on BBC Radio 2's Midnight Mastermind on Thursday 16 January, 2025.

Alan and Keith joined the early morning show on BBC Radio 2 to quiz host Phil Williams about Nightmare.

Midnight Mastermind is a quiz at around 00:30 on weekday mornings where guests are invited to test the host on a specialist subject.

The host is not aware of the subject in advance. They only discover the subject when the guests are introduced.

They then have the length of one song to revise before facing three questions.

“I should have heard of it, shouldn't I?”

Phil Williams, formerly of Radio 5 Live, was sitting in for regular host OJ Borg.

Phil is a seasoned pro at Midnight Mastermind but didn't have the

best record of late, so he was looking to make amends.

He wasn't optimistic when we turned up - he'd never heard of Knightmare before!

But he was intrigued about the technological side, seeing the chromakey setup as a precursor to VR.

After a chat about our memories and our contributions towards the legacy of the show, it was down to the quiz.





The questions

1. In Knightmare, a contestant (the dungeoneer) was placed into a virtual dungeon using blue screen technology. However, the dungeoneer was not able to see the virtual dungeon, so a prop was added to partially blindfold them. What was the name of the prop they wore?

2. Treguard, the dungeon master, gave limited advice and help to the contestants. He had two assistants over the course of the show. What notoriously unpopular burger condiment shares a name with one of the assistants?

3. During their quests, the dungeoneer could replenish their life force by putting food in their knapsack. The life force was represented on screen by a meter that changed over the eight series. Which of the following was **not** used to visually represent dungeoneer's life force:

- An armoured figure whose armour fell off
- A pie cut into slices
- A face that disintegrated
- A candle that melted?

How did you do?

And how do you think Phil did - having never heard of the show before and with only three minutes to read up on it?

He achieved his first full-house in around three months, so was deservedly jubilant about the victory.



How Nightmare Inspired CW's Spy School



**TV producer Ben Spiteri tells us how
Knightmare inspired his interactive
gameshow for youngsters, Spy School.**

It starts in a pub, as most good things do. Ben is fizzing with energy. In TV, a fast-moving industry, you need to be alert and ahead of the game.

He's worked on a variety of kids' and adults' TV and comedic entertainment. But as passionate as he is about his upcoming work, he is equally enthusiastic about the past and his influences.

As soon as we turn to Knightmare, he is effervescent about the show he grew up with.

"Some of it is hammy, as you might expect, but so much of it holds up so well today," he muses. "I can't imagine how incredible it was to make at the time."

For a show that was stretching the limits of technology in its day, Knightmare still impresses industry professionals.

And we're now reaching full circle, as some of those that idolised Knightmare as children are now the creators and producers of today.

Ben's show, Spy School, shares some core characteristics with Knightmare. A pair of youngsters pit their knowledge and mental agility against a themed quest to thwart an evil overlord called Goldfist (played by Steve Furst).

They are supported by a Q-style character in the boardroom (Agent J) and a field agent (Agent L) who acts on their intelligence.

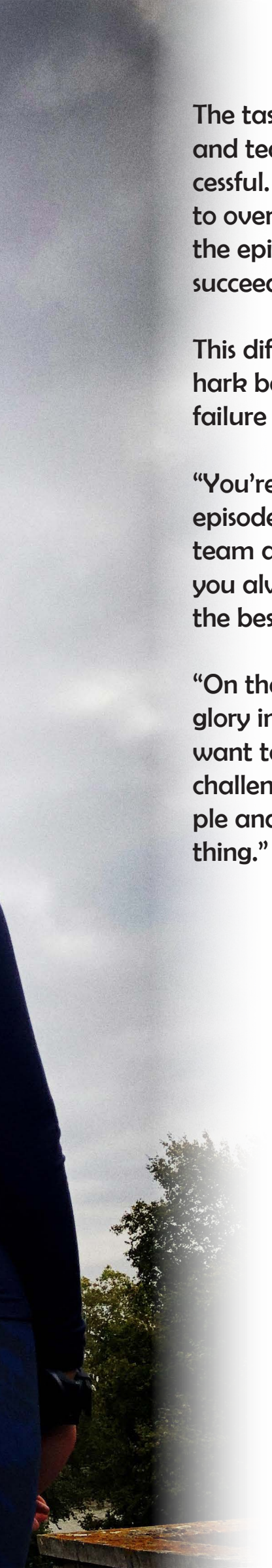
“

Perhaps we'll see a Disney+ or Amazon pick up a narrative-based game show that captures the imagination of kids all around the world.

Ben Spiteri (right)







The tasks are quite stretching, and teams are not always successful. Some of them manage to overcome adversity to win the episode; some either don't succeed or fail to 'graduate'.

This difficulty is an unapologetic hark back to Knightmare when failure was almost guaranteed.

"You're incredibly proud of the episodes when there's a bright team and they win, because you always want to see what the best looks like," says Spiteri.

"On the other hand, there's also glory in defeat, because you want to know that you set a challenge that really tests people and doesn't gift them anything."

"Still convincing"

Unlike Knightmare, which transformed a large blue void into an expansive dungeon environment, Spy School takes us outside, to a lot of familiar London landmarks.

The British Museum, the National History Museum, Charing Cross Station, and Stamford Bridge Stadium are among the list.

Fittingly, Bletchley Park, the former home of world-war codebreakers, is among the game's venues. It even gets inside the Houses of Parliament.

Conversely, it's the 'antechamber' (known as 'headquarters') where technology is deployed, and where the various tasks take place.



The most interesting part of our discussion falls around ‘rolling’ gameplay.

For *Knightmare*, this allowed each quest to vary in length, fulfilling creator Tim Child’s vision of an adventure game rather than simply placing youngsters inside a video game.

Spy School is single-episode format, but the adventure element is important to what Spiteri wanted to achieve.

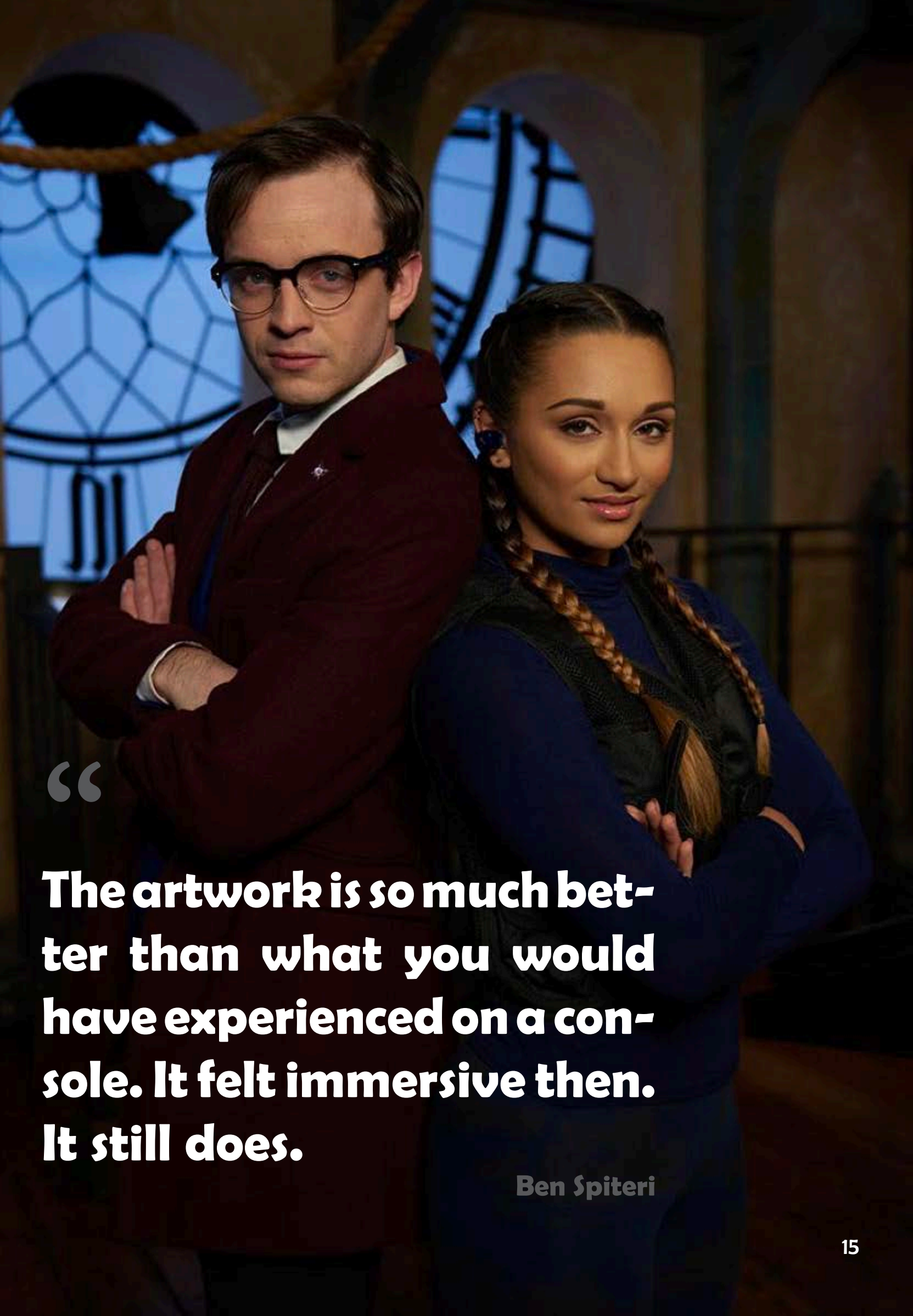
“To look back at *Knightmare*, you’d think the suspension of disbelief would

have been quite hard to achieve,” he says. “But the artwork is so much better than what you would have experienced on a console. It felt immersive then. It still does.

“It’s still convincing. That’s the key. And making something feel convincing is always very satisfying.

“What we’ve done with *Spy School* is try to build some suspense into real-world settings. Anything is possible if you can make it believable.

“I think we’ve done a good job.”



“

The artwork is so much better than what you would have experienced on a console. It felt immersive then. It still does.

Ben Spiteri



Where is the future?

The trajectory for kids' television is looking bleak. The closure of CITV in September 2023 after 40 years feels like the end of an era.

Yet, we still all want to ask the same question: could Knightmare ever make a return? Is there still an industry for kids' TV in newer platforms, or are we leaving that behind for good?

Surely there's no better person to ask than a producer of a children's show for ITV?

“
Knightmare running on the Unreal Engine, or Spy School with AI or AR integration... Now that’s something to dream about!

“It’s a tough one,” Spiteri admits.

“Certainly, British terrestrial TV feels unlikely to pump the kind of money needed into shows like *Knightmare* or *Spy School* in the current climate.

“That said, the money and production values on the bigger streaming platforms is immense,” he adds.

“With production companies desperate to develop internationally selling IPs, perhaps we’ll see a Disney+ or Amazon pick up a narrative-based game show that captures the imag-

ination of kids all around the world. We’ll then all be back to chasing ‘the next one’.”

Spiteri believes the more tantalising question is less ‘will these shows return’, rather ‘what will they look like?’

“*Knightmare* running on the Unreal Engine, or *Spy School* with AI or AR integration,” he ponders.

“Now that’s something to dream about.”

Blue Sheet of Death

30 years ago, letters on blue paper were landing on hundreds of doormats around the country, confirming the end of Knightmare.

In the summer of 1995, hundreds of hopeful Knightmare contestants had their dreams of appearing on the show quashed as Broadsword announced that the show had ended.

Letters in self-addressed envelopes began arriving from May and continued throughout the summer.

Applicants were informed of two new shows in the pipeline and that all teams would be automatically opted in for selection.

For those unaware of the doubt surrounding Knightmare's future (announced in *The Quest* fanzine), it was a crushing revelation.

Why Knightmare ended

Knightmare creator Tim Child has explained at length the reasons behind the show's demise. He attributes the decision to a set of circumstances.

It began in 1992 when Knightmare narrowly missed out on the Royal Television Society's award for the best chil-

dren's show. Child believes this would have secured a longer-term future for the show.

Meanwhile at ITV, a new controller of children's programming, Dawn Airey, had arrived with a data-driven approach. Research had shown that older children were migrating towards consoles and away from television.

While Airey was a fan of Knightmare, she sought assurances about how Broadsword's output would reflect these trends.

After protracted negotiations, Broadsword was asked to trial something for younger children. Thus, Knightmare's final season in 1994 was curtailed to make room for a new gameshow, *Virtually Impossible*.

Airey's sudden departure in 1994 put a further thorn in the works. ITV appointed Vanessa Chapman as Airey's successor rather than one of the anticipated favourites, Janie Grace.

Grace was head of children's programming at MAI, which had purchased



KNIGHTMARE
Broadsword TV
Anglia House
Norwich
NR1 3JG

Date as postmark

Dear Adventurer,

Thankyou for your application to compete on Knightmare.
Sadly we must inform you that after eight years this adventure
game has come to an end, and there is no intention to return it
to CITV.

Here at Broadsword we continue to make advanced forms of fantasy
adventure games, including VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE for CITV, and a
new Swords & Sorcery style dungeon game for Children's BBC.

We have taken the liberty of placing you and your team on the
list of applicants for these other adventure game shows.
Later this year we will select from this list those teams which
we intend to audition.

If you do not wish your names to go forward for selection for
these programmes then please let us know.

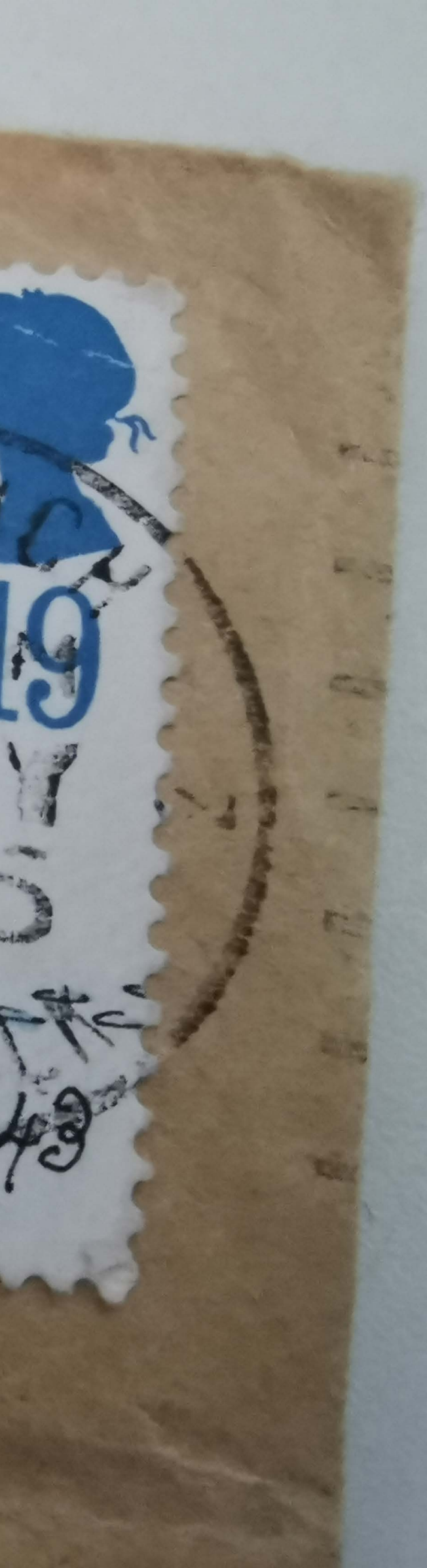
Yours sincerely,

TIM CHILD
Producer

Bob Cratchit
& Tiny Tim



A Christmas Carol 18



Anglia TV earlier that year. She continued to fight Nightmare's corner in subsequent discussions but was unable to alter the path that had been set in motion.

Child eventually decided against a final ninth series of Nightmare, explaining that the VR technology needed to take the show to the next level was still too primitive.

The letter (Full text)

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Yours sincerely,
TIM CHILD [Producer]

Promotional Press Pack From 1988

A promotional press pack for the second series of *Knightmare*, published by the Anglia Television Press Office in 1988.

This short brochure demonstrates how Anglia Television promoted the show in its early seasons.

The branding is a dripping black and red *Knightmare* logo against a speckled red background. That is consistent with the computer games released at the time.

The press pack features some familiar test imagery, with dungeons superimposed onto the Dragon Room and the Skeleton Room created by illustrator David Rowe.

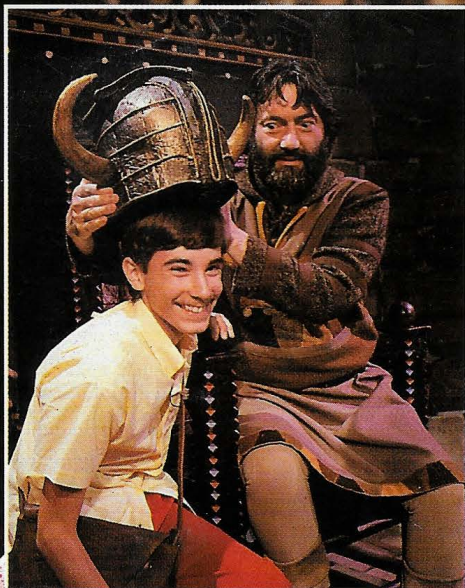
There are some less familiar glimpses of the behind-the-scenes activities.

It includes 'computer wizard' Robert Harris of the Travelling Matte Company preparing the graphical display.

We also see Tim Child in conversation with director Sally Freeman in the 'control gallery'.

The final page contains the credits and a cast gallery of the nine actors.

Knightmare



ANGLIA²³
Television Limited

Knightmare

Knightmare is a unique television experience for youngsters who enjoy a challenge.

It's a problem-solving adventure game in a knights-of-old setting created by some of television's most advanced production techniques.

Each programme in the 16-week series opens the door to a fantastic world of dungeons, castles and caverns generated on the TV screen by three powerful computers.

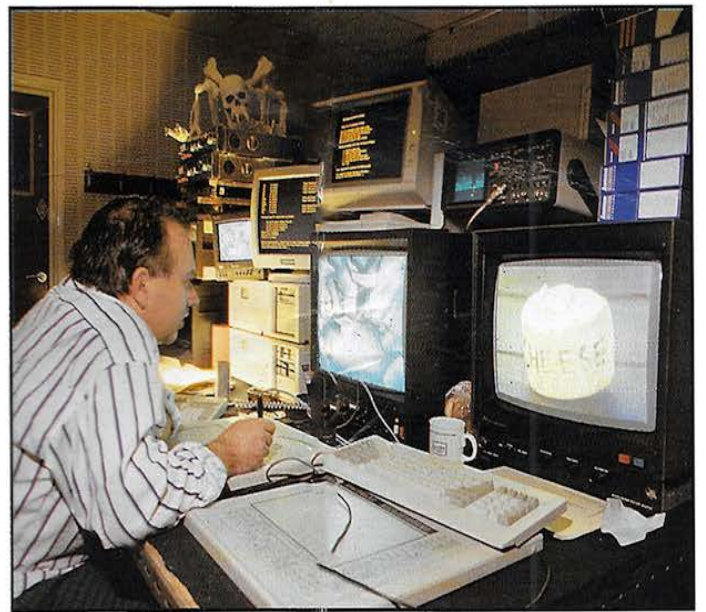
Into the illusory labyrinth steps a Dungeoneer, blindfolded by a "Helmet of Justice" and guided by three team-mates who remain outside the Dungeon door and watch through a "Magic Mirror". Their mentor is the noble Treguard, Master of the Dungeon.

Each new adventure brings contestants face to face with the wierd and wonderful characters who dwell in the computerised catacombs — some helpful and some hostile to their cause.

The key to success is survival, and the only way is onward. There is no turning back...



The key to success is survival, and the only



▲ Computer wizard Robert Harris conjures up Knightmare's electronic set.



▲ Conference in the control gallery between deviser and producer Tim Child and director Sally Freeman.



▲ A dungeoneer enters the Skeleton Room.

...way is onward. There is no turning back...

Knightmare



*Knightmare is a Broadsword
Production for Anglia Television and
Children's ITV.*

Devised and produced by Tim Child.

Directed by Sally Freeman.

*Computer animations by Robert
Harris of the Travelling Matte
Company.*

Fantasy illustrations by David Rowe.

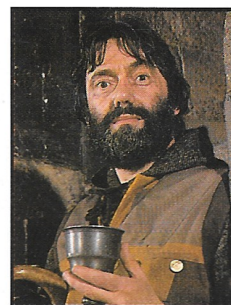


ANGLIA
Television Limited

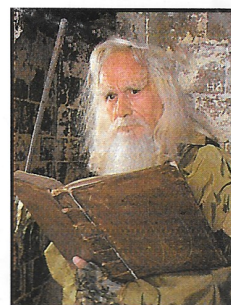
Knightmare



Gretel the Maid
AUDREY JENKINSON



Treguard the Dungeon Master
HUGO MYATT



Merlin
JOHN WOODNUTT



Sir Gumboil
EDMUND DEHN



Folly the Jester
ALEC WESTWOOD



Mildread the Crone
MARY MILLER



The Troll
GUY STANDEVEN



Olaf the Viking
TOM KAROL



Cedric the Monk
LAWRENCE WERBER

For further information contact: Anglia Television Press Office Norwich (0603) 615151

A
BROADSWORD
production for



ANGLIA
Television Limited

Published by Anglia Television Press Office. Photographs: Anglia Stills Department. Designed by Graphic Origination. Printed by

Full brochure text

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Knightmare is a Broadsword Production for Anglia Television for Children's ITV.

- Devised and produced by Tim Child.
- Directed by Sally Freeman.
- Computer animations by Robert Harris of the Traveling Matte Company.
- Fantasy illustrations by David Rowe.

Where did the accents go?

Why Knightmare Went South

Many Knightmare fans have a particular fondness for its earlier years. One reason for this that is rarely dwelt upon is the startling array of accents of its competing teams.

It's usually something that escapes our notice, but the show began with ambitious geographic diversity.

The short opening season in 1987 featured three teams from the Yorkshire / Lancashire region, along with a team from Wales. Knightmare's first dungeoneer, David Campbell, brought Scottish heritage, and a team from Bedfordshire.

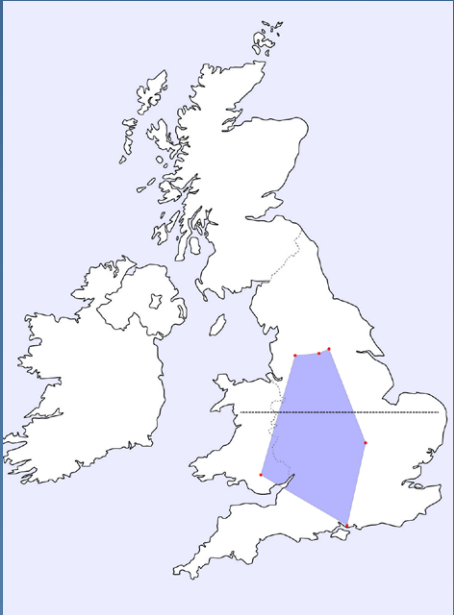
By the end of the second season, teams from Scotland and the far north-east of England had taken part. By the halfway point of Knightmare's run, Wales, Scotland and the north-east had all been represented a second time.

After that is a different story altogether, as the show's contestant base drifted notably southwards.

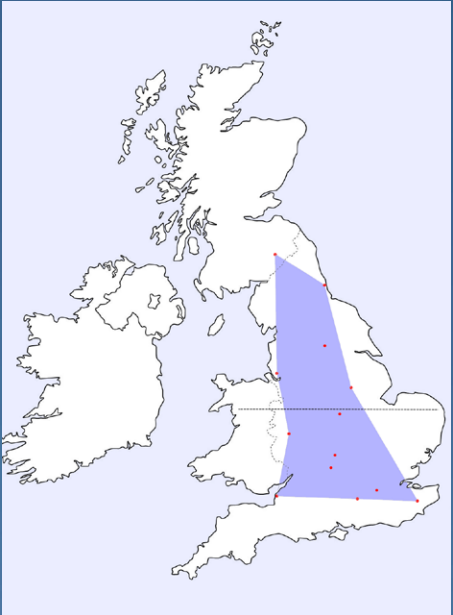
The team from Tyne & Wear that opened the fourth season in 1990 was the most northerly point the show ever reached again - by over 100 miles.



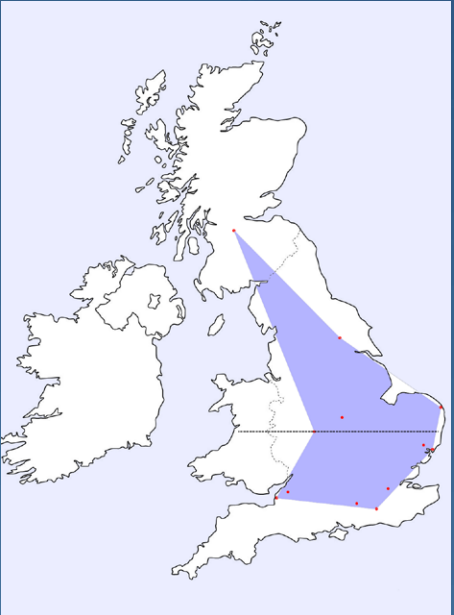
Right: The map and average latitude of Knightmare's eight series, moving increasingly southwards.



Series 1: 52.59



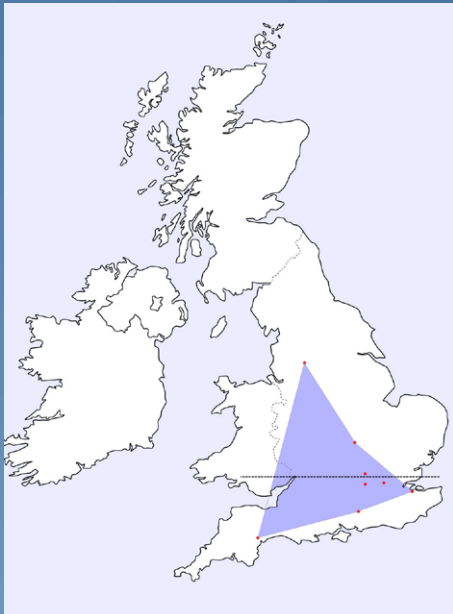
Series 2: 52.63



Series 3: 52.29



Series 4: 51.87



Series 5: 51.48



Series 6: 51.46



Series 7: 51.81



Series 8: 51.34

Some stats:

Most northerly:
Uddington, Glasgow (1989)

Most southerly:
Cornwall (1993)

Most common:
London (x7)
Leicester / St Albans (x3)

A throwback to regions

There are aspects of the 1980s that seem nostalgic even of their own time, let alone ours.

The distinct accents of the Highlands and northern territories feel like a throwback to something more - to personality and regionality, to local community, to Hovis and milk adverts, to a sense of pending change.

Knightmare, like anything that spans almost a decade in length, reflected a modernising world.

The second half of the show's run became much more southern-centric. Far fewer teams took part from north of the Watford gap.

The show's final year ventured north of London's commuter belt on just one occasion - the late appearance of a team from Leicestershire.

Without that cameo, the average latitude of its contestants' hometowns would have been Woking in Surrey. The team from the East Midlands drags that up (slightly fortuitously) to north London.

Why Nightmare went south

So, why did the show narrow its geographical horizons?

It can be explained in part by design. The introduction of Lord Fear as principal opponent heralded a shift from single room challenges to longer quests with broader story arcs.

By the sixth series, Knightmare needed just half the number of teams it had previously used in its second and third seasons.

Equally, the teams who had travelled furthest or across national borders during the show's early years didn't always perform particularly well.

A team from Sunderland that opened Series 2 in 1988 registered the shortest quest by airtime (albeit a little harshly), at under 10 minutes.

A team from the Glasgow suburbs that opened Series 3 in 1989 fared little better and even benefited from a let-off after an early mistake. No more were to follow from Scotland.

A team from Swansea in 1990 suffered Knightmare's most ignominious demise. No more players would follow from Wales either.

The show wasn't completely closed to looking further afield. The late Paul Boland and companions were set to become Knightmare's first contestants from Ireland in 1992 until bad fortune caused them to miss out.

But this seems to go against the grain rather than towards it.



Wast me hearties!

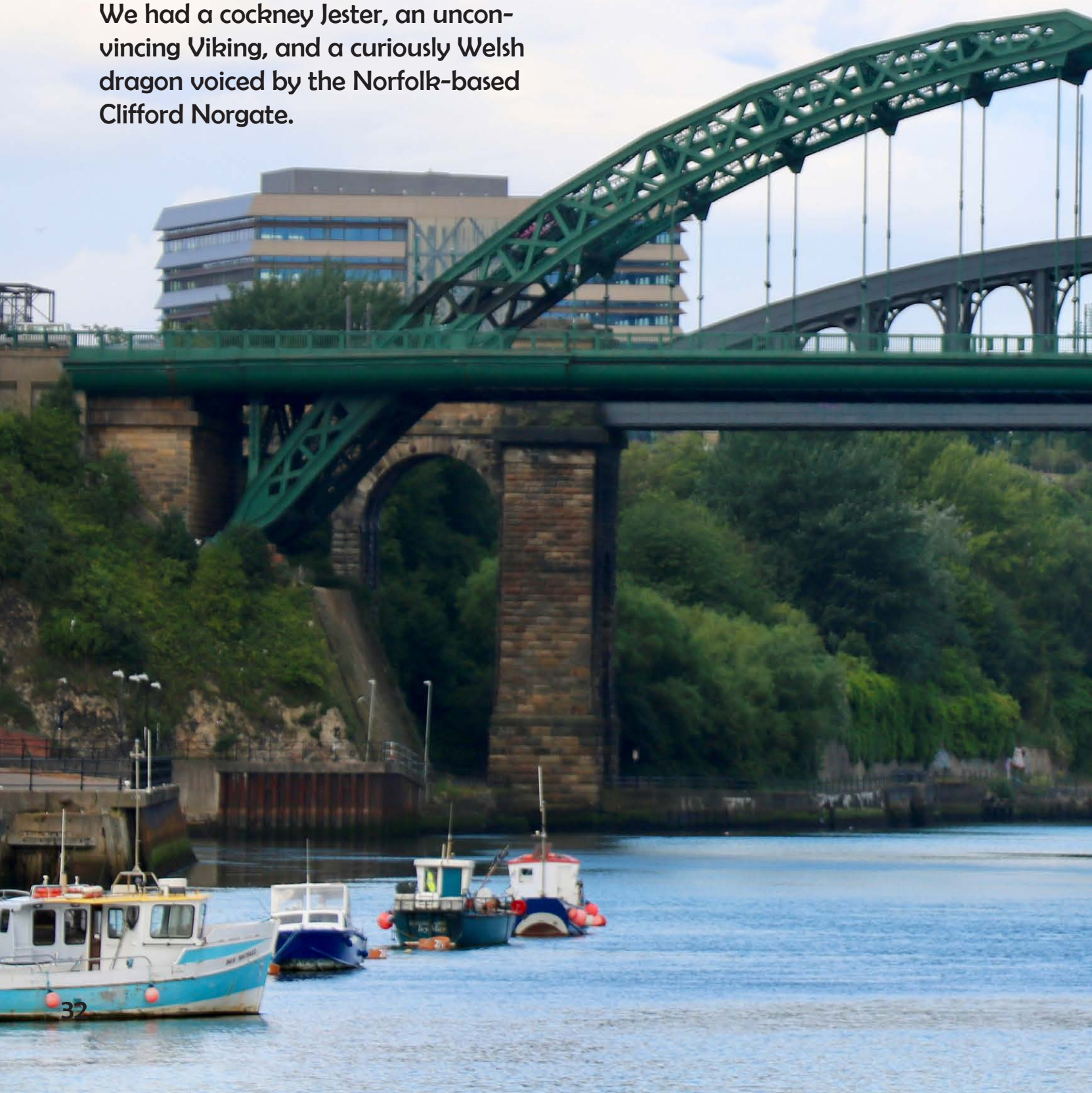
Accents were also a curious feature of Knightmare's character base.

In the show's early years, two Scottish actors were cast to play English roles (albeit Alec Westwood also had a brief stint as a Glaswegian guard), while an English actor played a Celt.

We had a cockney Jester, an unconvincing Viking, and a curiously Welsh dragon voiced by the Norfolk-based Clifford Norgate.

The north and the fractious Miners' Strike of the 1980s got their homage through Tom Karol's officious but generous mineworker, Bumptious.

The later years included a west-country barmaid, a pirate, a Scouse merchant, two Mediterranean characters juggled by Adrian Neil, and a crude but entertaining Oriental stall holder played by Mark Knight.



Accents weren't always lost on the cast either. During a final encounter scene in Series 7, Lord Fear mocks the pronunciation of Julie in her teammates' Staffordshire accents.

But for all of this, the variation among the contestants was largely gone by this stage. The movement in the geographical make-up of its teams makes it clear to see why.

The variety of regions and accents contributes heavily to the unique character of Knightmare's early competitors, much as the more experienced gamers and role-players excelled in its later years.

And by making those early years seem more dated than they are, this fuels the strong wave of nostalgia that keeps the memories of the show so vividly alive.



Oliver Duhl (1994)

Knightmare's final dungeoneer shares his experience on the show and some behind-the-scenes insights from Series 8 in 1994.



Your audition went very well, by all accounts. Can you tell us about your memories of auditioning?

We travelled to a hotel in Manchester for the audition.

I think we only had three steps. Two were riddles old Granitas might have posed (and indeed, did, in one case).

1. You've two clocks; one is broken, the other runs 5 minutes slow. Which of them tells the correct time most often?
2. You plant a new tree on Monday. It doubles in size every day and reaches its full size on Sunday. On which day was it half grown?

The final step was a micro-RPG scenario, featuring a river to cross. On our side of the river is a cave. Inside await a bundle

of items, and we're able to choose only one of them. Which one would we use to cross the river safely?

We answered the first two very quickly. I can still remember all four of us shouting "Saturday!" immediately and simultaneously, evoking much laughter from the grown-ups.

Our Dungeons & Dragons playing at school safely saw us speed through the river crossing scenario as well.

Tim Child and (I think) Sue Child did our audition. Based on our performance, it was over very quickly. The travel to and from Manchester took us far longer!

“

Even though my quest looks and feels shorter and easier than others, we did film more than I suspect many realise.

You walked the Corridor of Blades (short-cut) and survived. But there's a video of you disappearing through the wall!

I recall Ian Craig (First Assistant Director) saying he hoped we'd take the shortcut when walking me back from the back of the blue void post-scene.

We'd practised the Corridor of Blades long before we got to Norwich. Of our advisors, we agreed that Anthony had the clearest instructions, so he would issue the guidance.

When it came to filming, I obviously knew it was coming. The spyglass sequence was all about speeding up the blades.

It was filmed against the left wall of the studio. The crew creates a portable wall about halfway across the void that serves as the right-hand wall of the corridor.

As I'd been practising, I was keen at leaping left and right. I got a bit carried away and knocked the portable side so

that it wobbled and shunted sideways. According to knightmare.com, a few lucky visitors were in-studio watching us - something I don't remember. In their account, I also apparently walked beyond the point of the mobile wall.

I don't remember this either, but it was possible. We did have to pause filming, and it may explain why David's spell-casting to slow down the blades wasn't broadcast - as we didn't re-film that aspect.

The production team definitely sped up the blades since they were introduced in Series 4. I think ours were quicker than most.

Given my rather athletic performance in that room, Ian swooped on me after filming and 'accused' me of knowing what was coming. Fun times. He was the crew member with whom I connected the most.

The end of series is often unpredictable. Was there anything you filmed that got cut from the broadcast?

Yes. Even though my quest looks and feels shorter and easier than others, we did film more than I suspect many realise.

You can sense the editorial pinch begin immediately when we appear to start in a clue room. That's not where we started filming, so anything before that had been cut.

For our practice room (which all teams get before shooting for real), we had the Moving Blocks. We had to cross three chasms across sliding stone walkways. The intent was to include this as part of my quest, but it didn't make it in.

I also filmed an encounter with the fearsome Maldame in Linghorm. This, we later discover, is made more interesting because of a showdown announced in





Dunstan's quest (before ours). A red dragon was dispatched to destroy Linghorn. Maldame survived.

Unfortunately, due to terrible feedback in my earpiece, I couldn't hear what she said. The shrieking in my ear when she was speaking was quite alarming and very painful - and you don't want to disrupt filming or assume that something is wrong. I could hardly escape it, either.

In hindsight, cutting that makes sense, because I suspect the interaction plays back bizarrely. I had no clue what Maldame

was saying. All I had to go on is what my advisors were saying to me. So, the ending of that story arc might have to remain a mystery!

I have a hunch that she and I reached an accord, which probably didn't bode well for Lord Fear. Perhaps he was responsible for the painful feedback in my ear!

Our total screen time was around 15 minutes. We probably filmed at least half as much again that wasn't shown. But we'd definitely have taken what we had over not getting to play at all.

What are your memories of meeting cast and crew around the venue? Was there a sense of 'packing up' as you finished?

We were strictly chaperoned to and from the green room. If we wanted to leave, we had to request it, and someone from the production company had to accompany us.

There was one overlap with cast during lunch. I remember Treguard and Majida in full costume in the restaurant on a different table. Tim Child had told us before lunch that we'd see the two actors there and not to approach them.

Martin Cairns (Director) took us for a little tour of the tech room where all the chromakey magic was performed. I remember a small and very warm cupboard-like room, with an entire chassis of computers.

Ian (AD) was my main point of contact. Ian would put the helmet on me and lead me to the edge of the blue void. He checked that my mic and headphones (inside the helmet) were working.

Once we reached the exit at the far side of the room, I had to press my shoulder against the hard wall and wait for "cut".

Ian then came over, removed the helmet, and escorted me out of the studio filming area, where I'd be reunited with the advisors and all of us returned to the Green Room.

I vaguely recall crew members starting to pack up once we'd finished filming. But we had our return train to catch and didn't stick around very long. David's father took some photos of us with Treguard, Majida and Clifford Norgate. A shame I never got to meet Hordriss, but I did interact with Clifford as the voice of Smirkenorff.

We'd already checked out of the hotel before returning to the studios that day, and I have the faintest memories of getting a taxi on that sunny August late afternoon, back to the station. And that was that!

What was the reaction like at the time (at school/ from family)?

My family was pleased for me, even if my mum didn't quite really get it. When I described to her the Corridor of Blades, I remember her asking whether they were real blades or not.

School was more of a mixed bag. There were some who were envious, some who couldn't care less, and a small handful who used it to poke fun.

That kind of thing never bothered me. I chalked it up as a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me, and something they'd never have. I think hundreds of teams auditioned for Series 8, which is just nuts.

For some, I think appearing on TV was the main lure. For me, it was always about the adventure side of it. I'd spent so long imagining being on it, but never, ever expecting to have the chance. That our adventure was televised was just the cherry on top.

I was a freshly minted thirteen-year-old at the time, and I didn't have a great deal of confidence. Even during the whole experience, I was always very mindful that I was in a TV studio and rigidly stuck to all the rules!

Plus, I think it was the first time in my life I'd stayed away from home without adults I knew well. So, looking back, I think I was kind of awed by the experience.

What did you take away from the experience? Did it have much influence on you?

I think it showed me that dreams are possible. It was a surreal experience in that sense. Norwich became a bit of a mythical place for me. It has this subtle little way of always pulling me back! It's a great city and I've always had a great time there.

I've always been a bit of a geek and had already been playing Dungeons & Dragons when we filmed (all three of my teammates were in the same school D&D group).

After a hiatus, I still run two weekly D&D groups. I sprinkle little easter eggs into the games where I can, or, on occasion, import entire puzzles into them, reshaped to fit the TTRPG rule set. I'm also infamous for playing the tolling bells when a player's character dies, or even an audio snippet of Treguard's inimitable "Ooh, nasty!".

A couple of the players were also huge fans of the show back in the day, and initially thought I was making it up when I first told them I'd been on *Knightmare*!

Knightmare remained my favourite TV show, and I was very sad when it emerged our episode was its last. What is even more clear to me now than it was back then is that *Knightmare* was - and is - unique. There's been no show like it since.

The leaps and bounds of technology since the mid-90s do make me wonder how it'd all look now. Yes, TV audiences have changed, etc, but I can think of no time in my lifetime where the appetite for fantasy adventure has ever been greater.

“

**Knightmare was - and is - unique.
There's been no show like it since.**



Knightmare's Overseas Adaptations

How the French and Spanish producers took different routes in their adaptations of Knightmare.

It's not particularly well-known that French and Spanish versions of Knightmare were made in the early 1990s.

They came in a short, sharp burst. Over 100 episodes of *Le Chevalier du Labyrinthe* were made in two years – almost as many as Knightmare's entire run in just a quarter of the time.

The Spanish version, *El Rescate del Talisman*, had 78 episodes in a little over three years.

French producers got in on the action after Knightmare was awarded the Prix Jean D'Arcy in 1988, named in recognition of the French television pioneer. The input of television ef-

fects artist Jean Peyre may have also spread awareness of what was being attempted in the UK.

By 1990, the independent Marina Productions had come up with a single-episode format for *Le Chevalier du Labyrinthe*, which the Spanish version would also adopt at first.

It was one team per episode – win or lose. Dungeoneers or 'knights' who failed a challenge would be eliminated and replaced by one of the advisors.

That meant three 'lives' for the French version and four for the Spanish version – with the last player being advised by the host.





Quests typically lasted for 8-10 rooms before a final challenge or showdown, which the team would almost invariably win.

Treguard's gambit, 'this is no game of numerous lives', had been well and truly put to the sword.



The quest for rolling gameplay

The European format changed the show from an adventure game to a computer game, with midi-sequenced music adding to a Dizzy-style platform. Even Nightmare's early years with a high turnover of teams had avoided the feel of a show that simply reset every episode.

After creating a single-episode pilot for the US market in 1992, Nightmare creator Tim Child admitted that he found no satisfaction in the format without rolling gameplay. By the sixth season of Nightmare, the average quest lasted over two episodes.

But the single-episode approach was the model that overseas broadcasters wanted. And the way to make that work was to have second and third chances.

The one major advantage of that formula is that it allows for greater difficulty - you can be ruthless from the start. There are some seriously tough rooms to negotiate from the beginning.

There's also some originality in the overseas adaptations. The authentic hand painted backdrops from Nightmare's early years are

adapted in creative ways - bridges, chasms, all sorts. While the format feels reductive, fans of Nightmare will enjoy seeing new variants of familiar rooms.

A fast-track through Nightmare

Where this gets more interesting is how the approach differed between the two foreign adaptations.

Marina Productions stuck to a strict formula for the French version, which made *Le Chevalier du Labyrinthe* an efficient beast. Its charismatic host, Georges Beller, did much of the heavy lifting, with the rest of the small cast playing multiple roles.

The French version stuck to David Rowe's hand painted scenes throughout, with small pockets of innovation but little more ambition than it absolutely needed.



By contrast, El Rescate del Talisman aspired to emulate the UK version as it progressed, which made it the more ambitious enterprise. Its cast had risen to 20 contributors by the third year - double the typical cast of the UK show.

The Spanish version was also prepared to experiment more. By its second year, it was using a fascinating hybrid dungeon of David Rowe's hand painted scenes with location shots of castles and courtyards from Knightmare's later years.

By the final year, it had added dragon sequences, further variances, and - significantly - it had abandoned the single-episode format.

Quests could now run over multiple episodes, which removed the need for each game to fit to a specific length.

We now had something unique on our hands. Spanish producers aspired to have something as close

to Knightmare as possible, despite starting with a different premise.

Same Differences

The foreign versions of Knightmare were an interesting variation of stick and twist when it came to emulating the much-loved game.

Knightmare lovers will probably find the final series of the Spanish show the most satisfying. It's not only the most faithful to the original series; it also manages to feel like the entirety of Knightmare history on display at once.

Of course, Knightmare always set the pace in terms of evolution. It moved from high team turnover and single-scene puzzles in its early years to deeper plots and story arcs in its later years.

But El Rescate del Talisman's radical shift in a short time saw it become a hybrid of the computer game format favoured by the European networks and the adventure game format adored by UK audiences.

There's something quite unique there that not even Knightmare can be said to have achieved.





Knightmare and Artificial Intelligence



How might a new series of Nightmare look if artificial intelligence was used to create the dungeon? We speak to long-term fan, Andrew, about some of his recent AI experiments

Fans of *Knightmare* have long mused about how new technology might prompt a new reawakening for the show. Now, latest advances in AI generative imaging are bringing a whole new world of possibilities to light.

Long-term *Knightmare* fan Andrew (forum member: Malefact) recently decided to test its capabilities.

Andrew begins by recreating rooms based on iconic *Knightmare* locations from the early series and quickly finds it quite spellbinding.

“You’re feeding your imagination in words and having it replayed back to

you graphically in seconds,” he says.

“The trick is to use loads of adjectives. That tends to help it get much closer to something that might be interesting.”

Amazing atmospheres

Andrew points to the captivating artwork created by David Rowe and amplified by Robert Harris’s Traveling Matte Company as a great inspiration.

“You can evolve all you want - and you should,” he says. “But those hand





Part 1: Design

painted rooms from the early series in their luscious colours - they were so impressionable.

“Banburn, Death Valley. They all had that dark fantasy feel that keeps you coming back to marvel at it all again decades later.”

The fine art style of the AI samples takes us beyond the glossy computer game cover art that led Tim Child to David Rowe and more towards a Tolkien graphic novel or film-scape.

“That’s the look it has to have for a 4K environment,” Andrew adds. “It looks fantastical and magical but

with some realism as well. You can create amazing atmospheres.

“It might have taken days to produce one like this by hand, but when it’s available at this quality at this pace, you can quickly experiment with all sorts of concepts.”

You could make it darker

Of course, Knightmare is not just about ambience. You also need perils. Plenty of them.

This seems to spark a different kind of excitement, as these ramp up the

gameplay and require a slightly different kind of imagination.

Andrew leads with a bomb room and a long pit, which would require speed and accuracy. This could be replaced by a pendulum too, for a different kind of hazard.

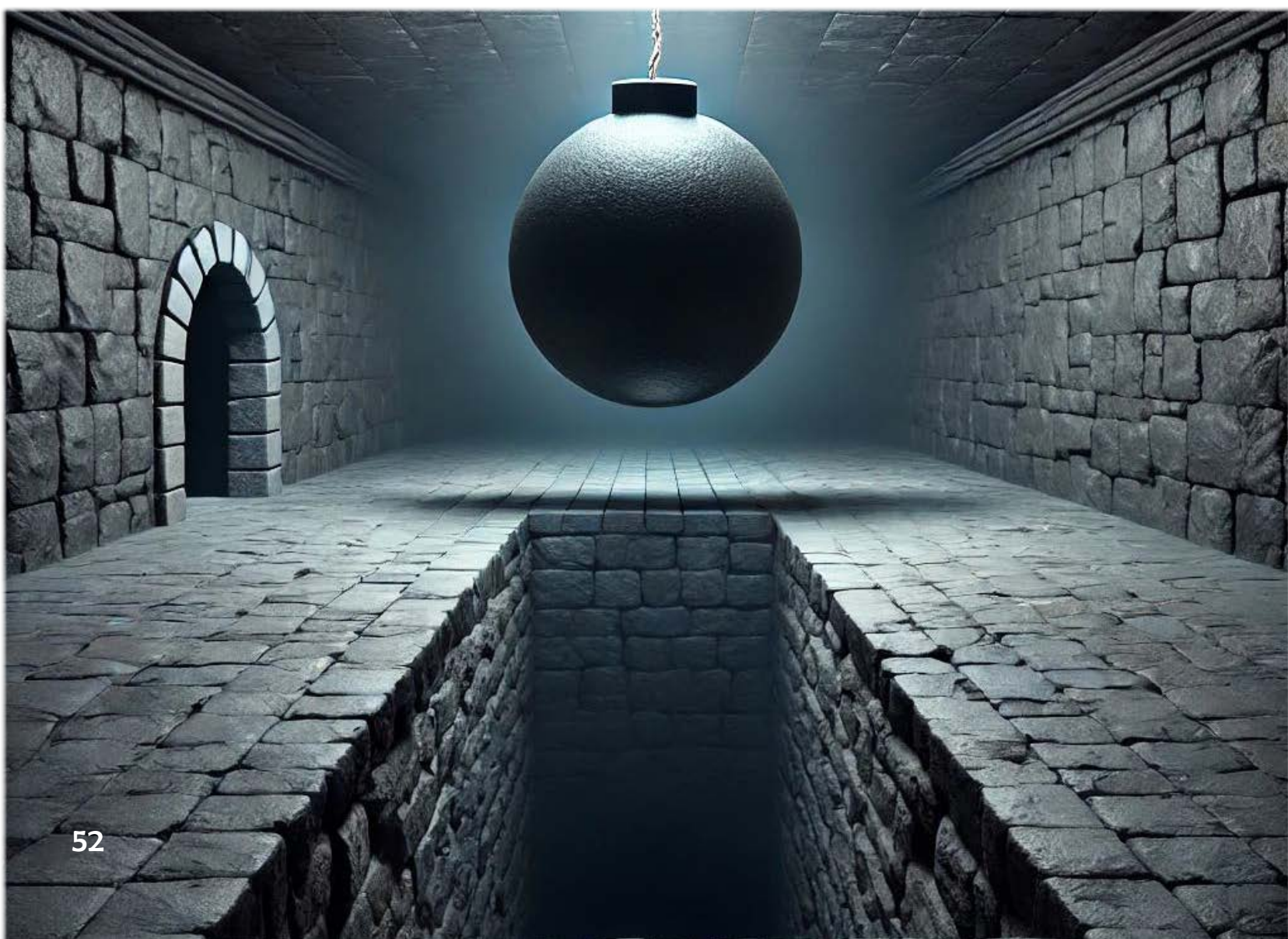
A corridor overlooked by a Sauron-style eye is gripping. It's based on the final encounter in the Nightmare gamebook *Can You Beat the Challenge?* It suggests the player is being watched in real time by the Opposition.

Even rich ambient rooms could have

their perils. In one example, crystals fall from the ceiling and damage parts of the floor. The original series used lasers and fireballs to achieve a similar sort of hazard.

Andrew suggests there is room for making the concept a little darker, if it became for older players. A corridor becomes a prison.

"Imagine a desperate prisoner banging or howling to be let out," he posits. "Nightmare frequently had people locked up or restrained, but you could make it darker if you wanted to push the limits."





Not about replacing people

Andrew is ambivalent about AI, but he sees a great opportunity if it's harnessed the right way.

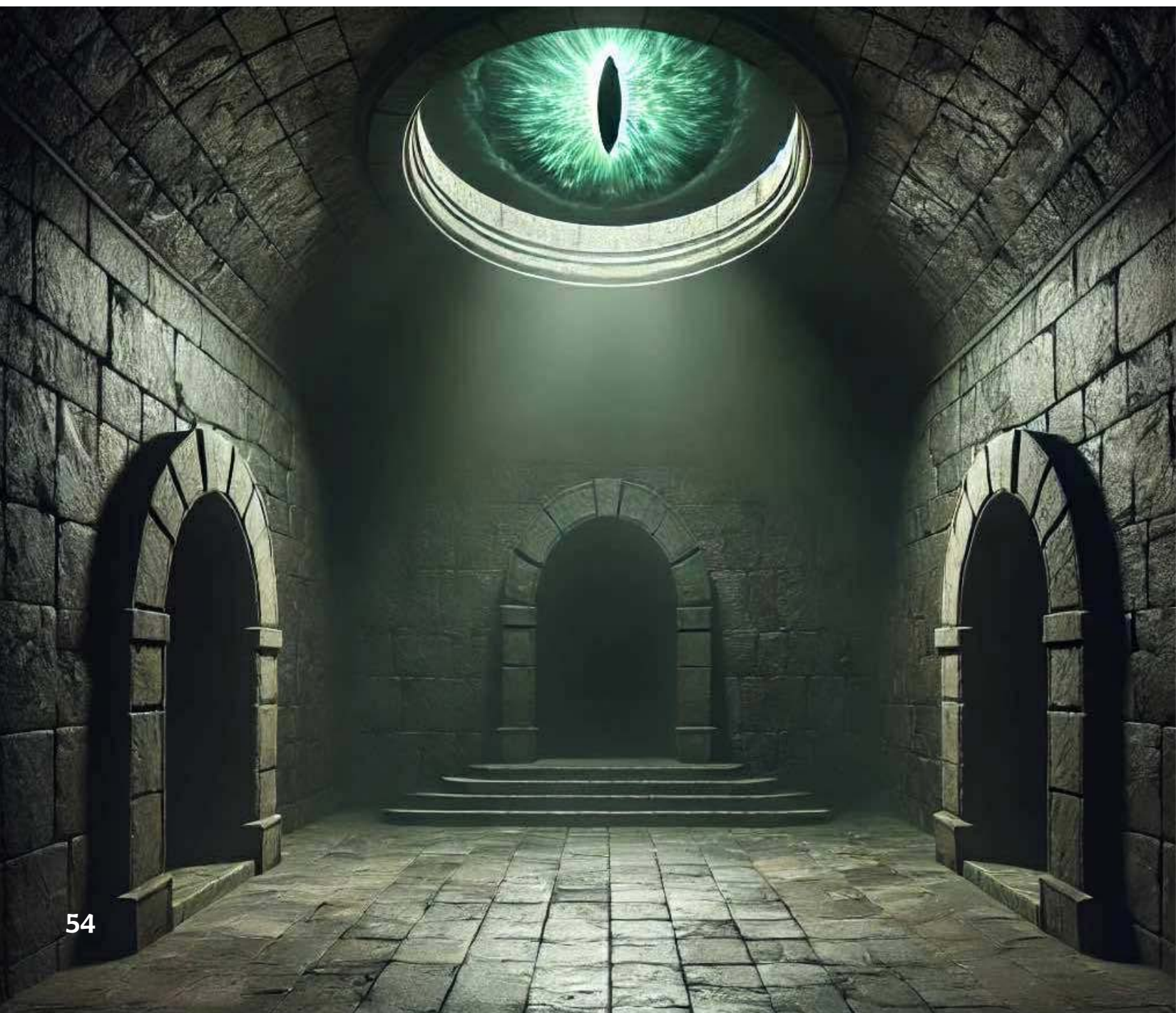
"It's not a substitute for what a real person can do," he insists. "The results are rarely perfect. I absolutely see this as a tool for people, not a replacement for them."

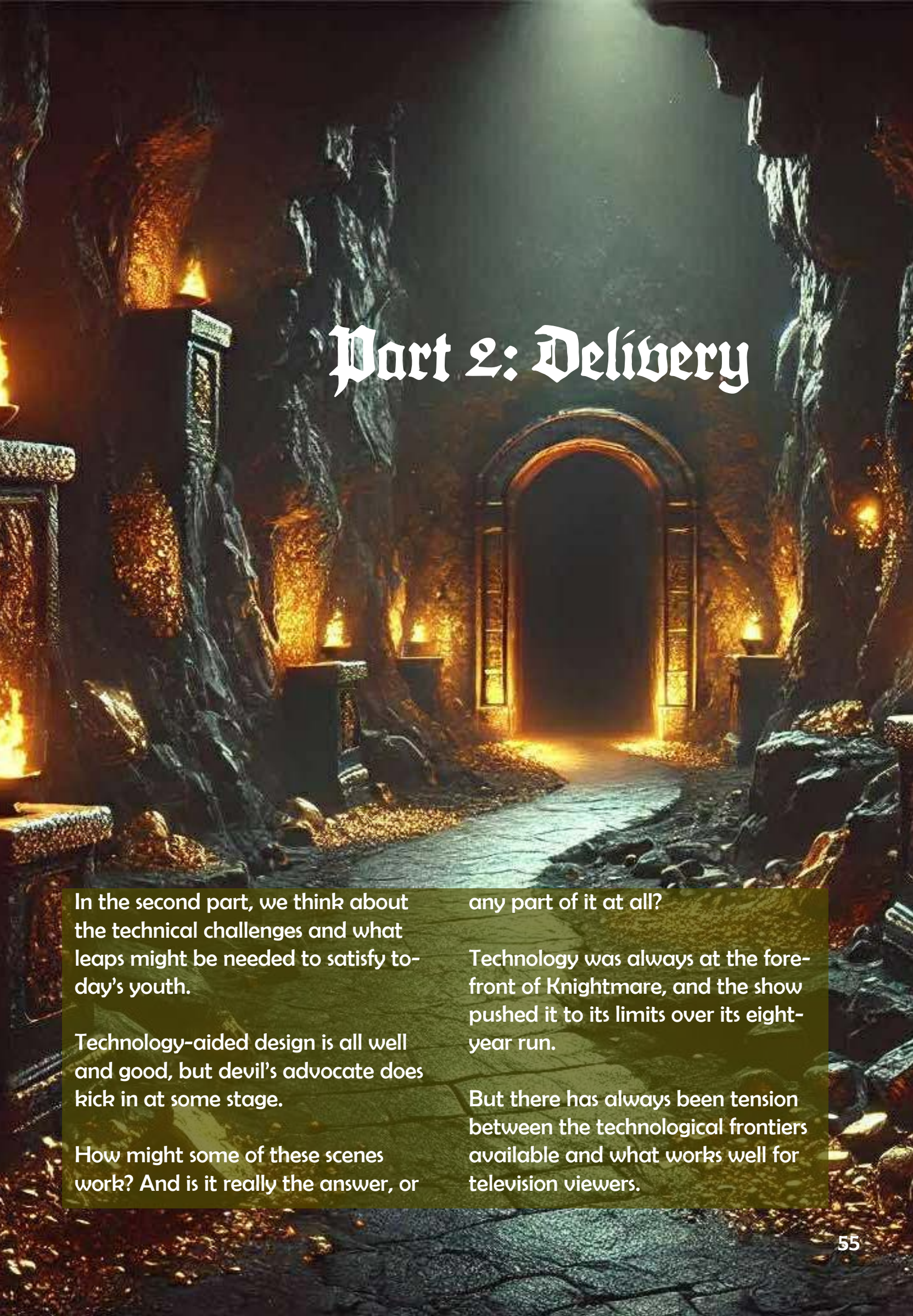
He's keen to point out that design is just one part of what makes a good game. Narrative is also important.

"When we think of the history of Knightmare's design, some of those scenes became 'places' with character. We formed attachments to them," he says.

"While there's something exciting about every room being different and random, something would also be lost if every scene was unique.

"But as an experiment, this was to generate some ideas and to help myself imagine what it could look like."





Part 2: Delivery

In the second part, we think about the technical challenges and what leaps might be needed to satisfy today's youth.

Technology-aided design is all well and good, but devil's advocate does kick in at some stage.

How might some of these scenes work? And is it really the answer, or

any part of it at all?

Technology was always at the forefront of *Knightmare*, and the show pushed it to its limits over its eight-year run.

But there has always been tension between the technological frontiers available and what works well for television viewers.



This vision was realised with a pilot for Knightmare VR in the early 2000s, but it proved less satisfying to watch.

Once the player as avatar could see their surroundings, the basis of what made Knightmare successful was gone. The peril, the panic, the mistakes, inexplicably sidestepping left into a chasm - where was that going to come from?

The formula that made Knightmare successful cannot simply yield to technology. But could technology play its part in making the original Knightmare better?

Prop Crops

The design options are plentiful. AI understands the properties of certain types of rooms: libraries and studies, caverns, throne rooms, dungeons.

But one problem surfaces immediately. Part of what makes some of these designs atmospheric is fixtures and fittings that require precision

engineering.

Knightmare worked to exacting grids so that blue props such as staircases or wells that were featured within the artwork could be exactly aligned.

No amount of technical wizardry will circumvent the challenge of real people engaging with large props that form an integral part of any artwork.

It would still be prudent to reduce prop complexity where possible. The fewer challenges you add to manufactured environments, the more expansive you can be with them.

Knightmare did this in its later series by replacing well-ways and staircases with other video or CGI transitions. You might see a staircase in a room, but any interaction with it was foot-age shown through the Eye Shield.

Knightmare always was - and would remain - an expensive enterprise. Technology will need to promote working smarter, not harder.

Game engine power?

One area where Knightmare was intentionally sparse was immersive perspectives.

Most of the time, we saw the default room view with occasional second angles where a non-playing character was involved.

Very occasionally, we saw reverse views. Some of the hand painted locations, Banburn and Death Valley, had extra artwork for this purpose.

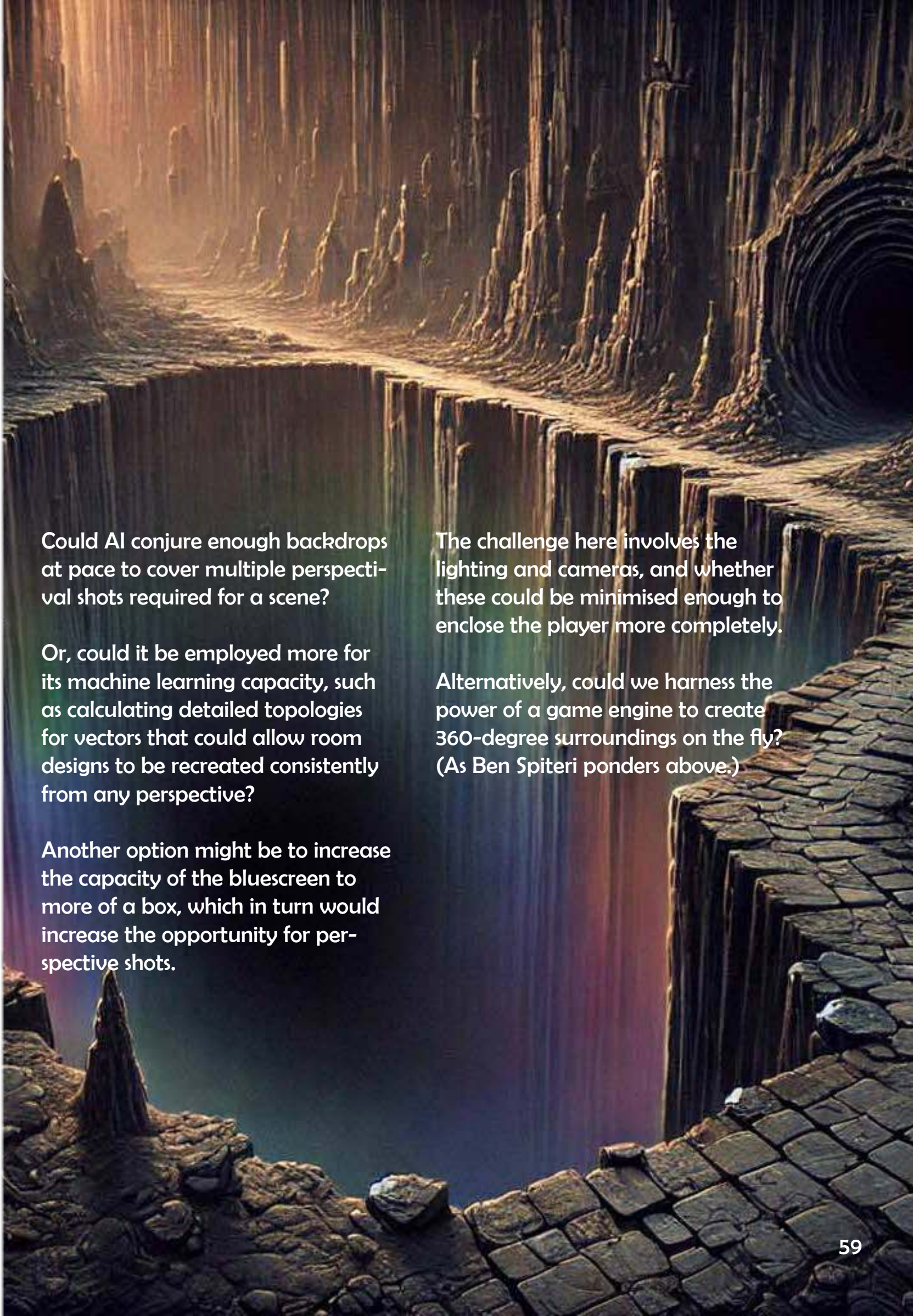
Otherwise, this was achieved via video (Giles, Series 4), CGI (Daniel, Series 8), or by creating bespoke set items such as Dwarf Tunnels.

The Geek Week episode includes an aerial shot of the 'Slice Me Dice Me' challenge in a throwback to the VR pilot where that was introduced.

To feel like Knightmare had made the leap technologically, this variation would need to increase.

“

The formula that made Knightmare successful cannot simply yield to technology...



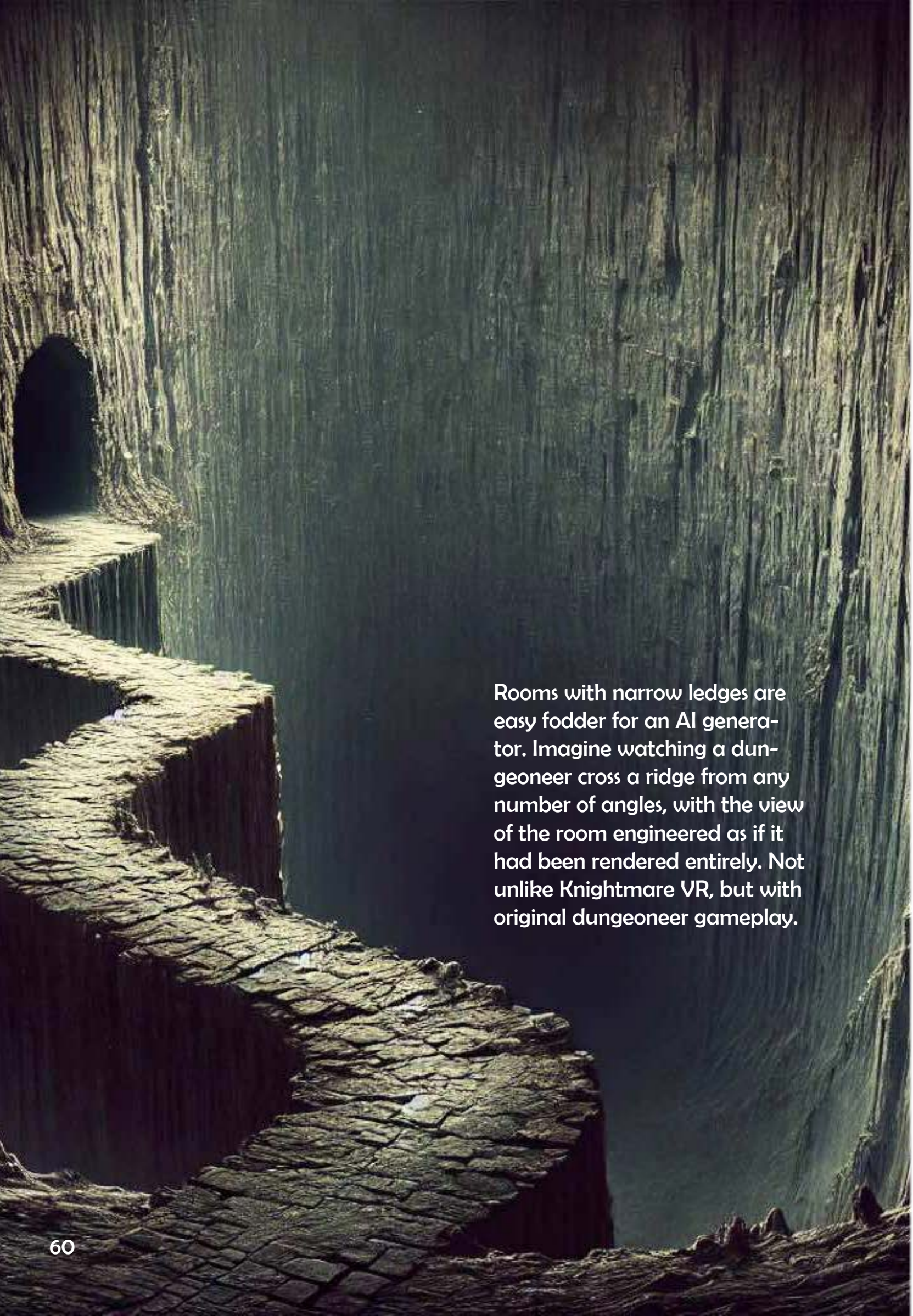
Could AI conjure enough backdrops at pace to cover multiple perspectival shots required for a scene?

Or, could it be employed more for its machine learning capacity, such as calculating detailed topologies for vectors that could allow room designs to be recreated consistently from any perspective?

Another option might be to increase the capacity of the bluescreen to more of a box, which in turn would increase the opportunity for perspective shots.

The challenge here involves the lighting and cameras, and whether these could be minimised enough to enclose the player more completely.

Alternatively, could we harness the power of a game engine to create 360-degree surroundings on the fly? (As Ben Spiteri ponders above.)



Rooms with narrow ledges are easy fodder for an AI generator. Imagine watching a dungeoneer cross a ridge from any number of angles, with the view of the room engineered as if it had been rendered entirely. Not unlike *Knightmare VR*, but with original dungeoneer gameplay.



And not all of this would have to be prepared in advance for contestants. Simply capturing the movement from multiple angles enables a post-production experiment for a better viewing experience.

The animator's time

That's a world of static scenes. You could create a stock of varied and stunning artwork.

But how then to bring it to life in the same way that the Travelling Matte Company did to David Rowe's dungeon room designs?

AI would be fine for light-touch animation, such as flaming torches and igniting bombs. It may also be able to perform common phenomena, such as cracking ice.

However, generative technology is probably a little short of being ready to animate complex sequences convincingly, such as a creature being able to move or speak reactively.

That is where human input would be well served. Rasterising might be the single biggest opportunity that technology can offer.

Could an interpretation of a Catacombite or a generated monster be converted to a vector and animated?



Knightmare dealt with many of its threats economically. In the early series, some of the pursuits were pre-filmed and recycled.

In the Corridor of the Catacombs, the Behemoth always targets the right exit even when a team chooses the other. The goblin pursuits through Banburn and Death Valley were also recycled.

Were Nightmare to remain on the

precipice of technological advances, it would benefit enormously from expertise in animation and game development to render scenes in as close to real time as possible.

It may feel like a reinvention, starting from the beginning again, and iterating – much as the original series did.

But bringing those possibilities together, a future series could be irresistible.



In Defence Of The Artist: David Rowe

The artist behind Knightmare's hand painted scenes discusses the value of human input in a technological world and how a new series might look.

Catching up with David Rowe over an autumn evening feels so quintessentially 'Knightmare'.

But this occasion felt quite loaded too. Online response to the fan AI experiment was polarised. Some loved the potential. Some loathed the idea.

It reminds us - if we didn't know already - that technology has leapt several times since the series ended in 1994 and continues to gather pace.

Unthinkably, the once cutting-edge chromakey experiment that brought Knightmare to life is now probably the least compatible element with the tech available at our fingertips.

We were keen to hear David's take

on the evolution of design technology and how it has affected the life and work of the artist.

Art 'brought to life'

To face the future, it always helps to understand the past that shaped it. So, we take a journey back to the beginning.

Something that came up repeatedly during the AI design discussion was how the original hand painted artwork took on a life of its own.

We talk about the Vale of Banburn or Death Valley as established venues. It's rather like the suspension of disbelief has never really gone away.



For Rowe in 1987, it was the first use of the Serpent Room - initially Lillith's Domain - that really brought to life the magnitude of the achievement.

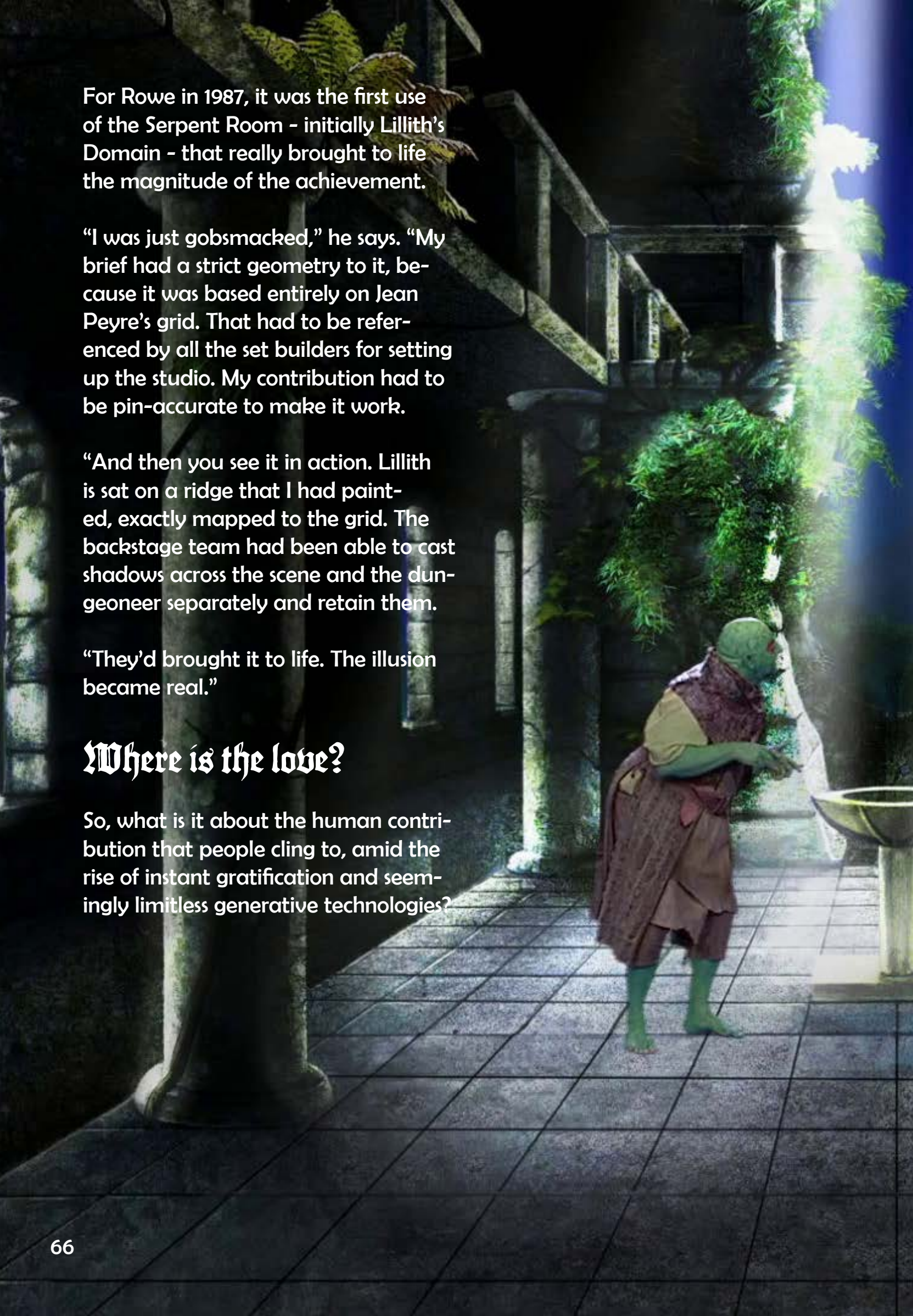
"I was just gobsmacked," he says. "My brief had a strict geometry to it, because it was based entirely on Jean Peyre's grid. That had to be referenced by all the set builders for setting up the studio. My contribution had to be pin-accurate to make it work.

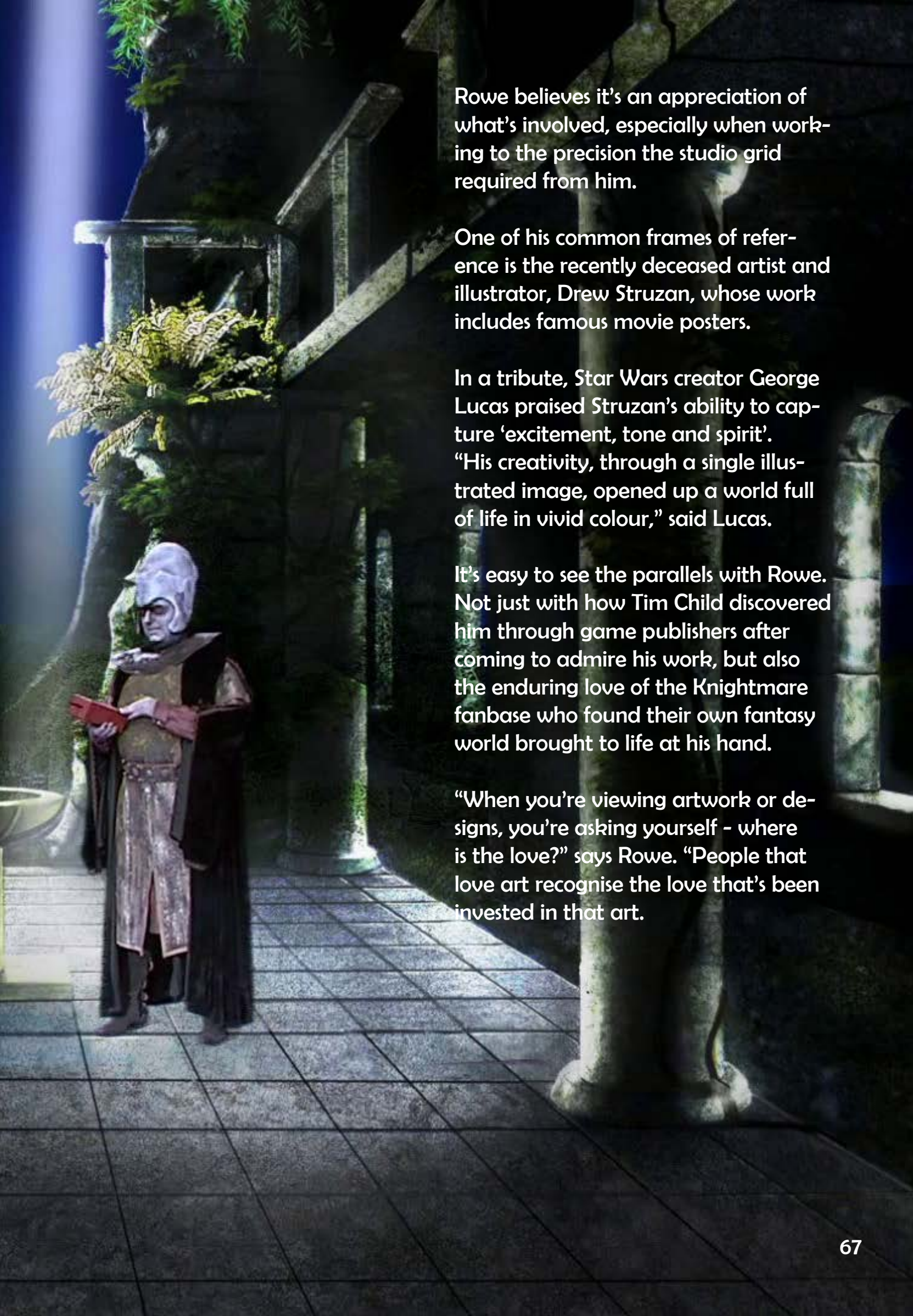
"And then you see it in action. Lillith is sat on a ridge that I had painted, exactly mapped to the grid. The backstage team had been able to cast shadows across the scene and the dungeonier separately and retain them.

"They'd brought it to life. The illusion became real."

Where is the love?

So, what is it about the human contribution that people cling to, amid the rise of instant gratification and seemingly limitless generative technologies?





Rowe believes it's an appreciation of what's involved, especially when working to the precision the studio grid required from him.

One of his common frames of reference is the recently deceased artist and illustrator, Drew Struzan, whose work includes famous movie posters.

In a tribute, Star Wars creator George Lucas praised Struzan's ability to capture 'excitement, tone and spirit'. "His creativity, through a single illustrated image, opened up a world full of life in vivid colour," said Lucas.

It's easy to see the parallels with Rowe. Not just with how Tim Child discovered him through game publishers after coming to admire his work, but also the enduring love of the Knightmare fanbase who found their own fantasy world brought to life at his hand.

"When you're viewing artwork or designs, you're asking yourself - where is the love?" says Rowe. "People that love art recognise the love that's been invested in that art."

“And I did approach Nightmare with a hell of a passion,” he adds.

“It was 20-hour days. I was living on adrenaline. Being in the zone like that if you’re a creative person is just an insane place to be.”

Love of the work is key, but perhaps there’s some sentimentality involved as well. Art sometimes bears the hallmarks and memories of its time.

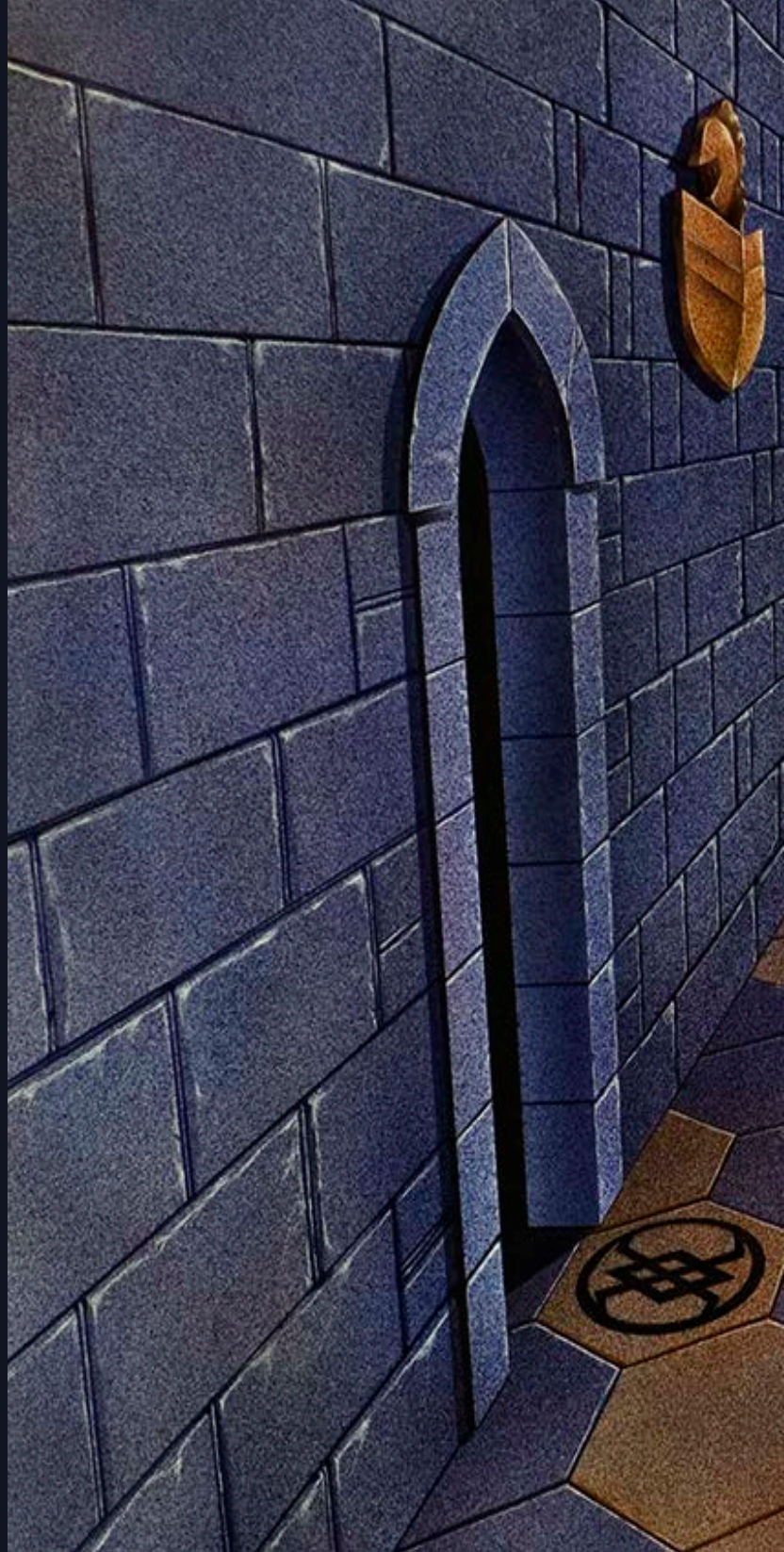
For Rowe, the nostalgic pull is equally strong. “The late 80s was a time when technology still felt somewhat new,” he recalls. “People in bedrooms were copying cassettes. You were free to be a bit wild.

“But looking back, even the way you compiled the things you loved - from making mixtapes to carefully setting your VHS - took effort and endeavour. None of that escapes any of us old enough to remember,” he says.

Digital converts

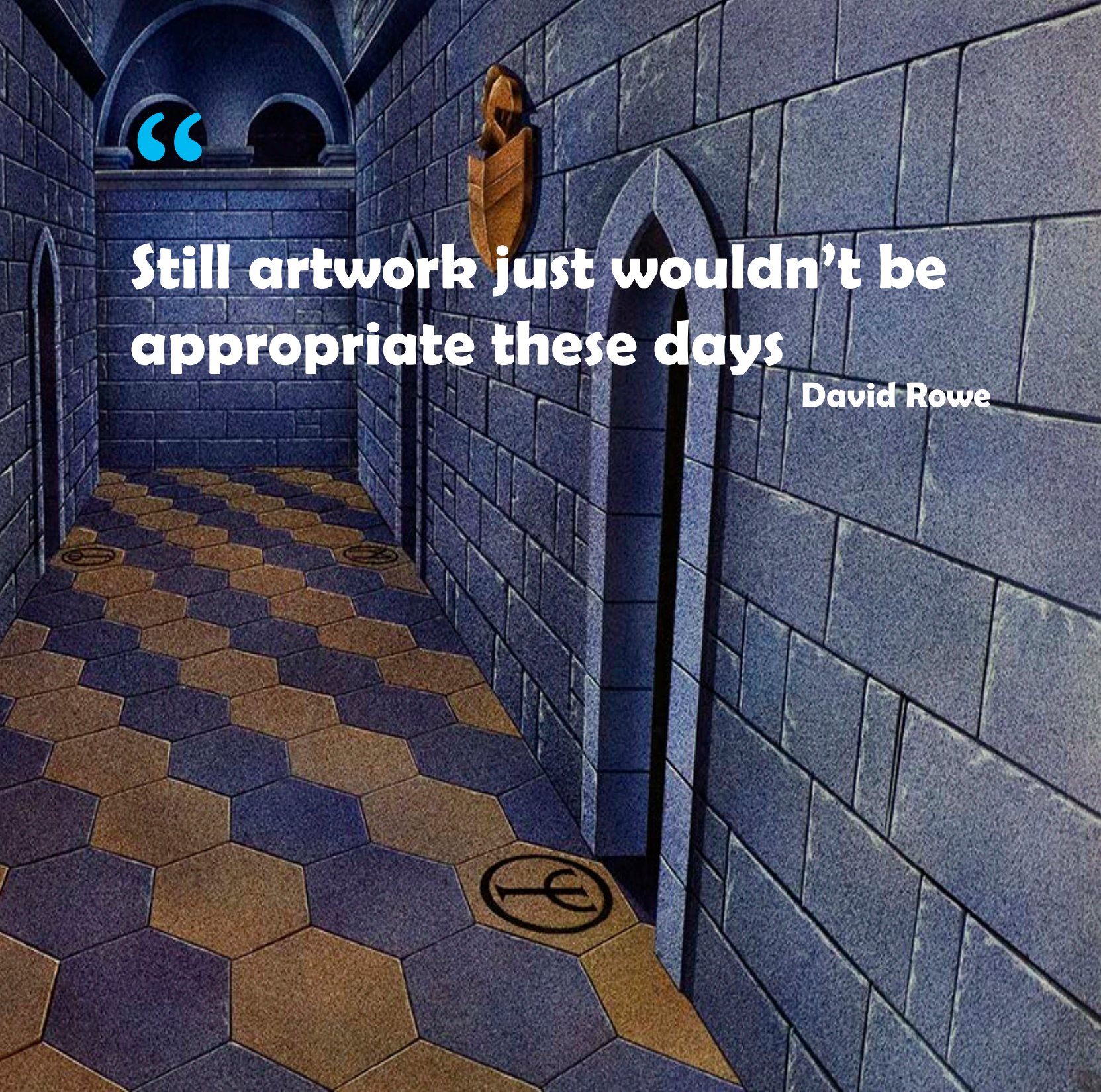
Given this trip down memory lane, you’d be forgiven for thinking that Rowe prefers to shun modern technology. But that’s very much not the case.

“I’ll embrace any way, or any medium,” he says. “You move with the times and try and add strings to your bow.”



Although the hand painted scenes began to be phased out from Nightmare’s fourth series in 1990, Rowe still had occasional involvement with the show.

He also contributed to the 2013 Geek Week episode, digitally remastering his original Mount Fear for the spy-glass sequences.



“

Still artwork just wouldn't be appropriate these days

David Rowe

Shortly after this, he began digitally reimagining the Knightmare dungeon as an archaeological hunt, with overgrown and abandoned rooms.

His work, by his own admission, has taken some interesting slants. He's received requests for older, airbrushed techniques applied over modern designs, or vice versa.

But the most telling giveaway about Rowe's view on technology is that he doesn't believe the same kind of artwork he created in the late 1980s would be enough to make a new series of Knightmare successful.

"Still artwork just wouldn't be appropriate these days," he says.

“I’d be looking for low angles to one side, looking up. Perhaps even camera flythroughs.”

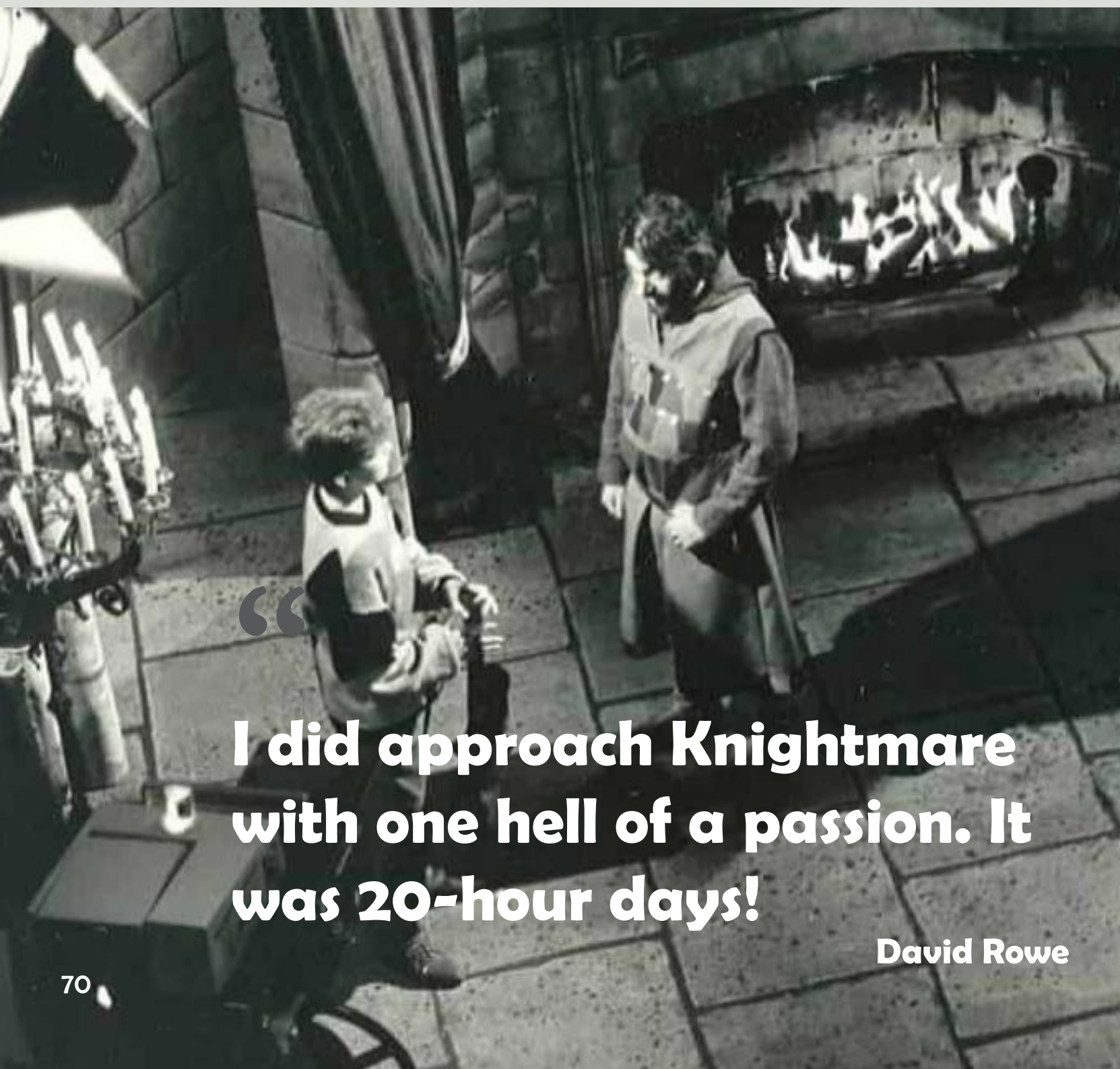
We discussed the possibility of gaming engines, such as Unity or Unreal. That’s an idea that is picking up traction, including among those who actively work in children’s television.

Only, from there, it’s easy to drift into other interactive or immersive ide-

as that might not necessarily make good television.

But Rowe agrees that the makeup of the artistic contributors for a future Nightmare would look quite different. Animators, composers, potentially computer game programming specialists.

And with that, it’s hard to resist the most tempting question - surely,



“

I did approach Nightmare with one hell of a passion. It was 20-hour days!

David Rowe

you'd need an artistic director to oversee this new universe of Knightmare?

“Oh yes, absolutely!” says Rowe, not missing a beat. “You just need to think about how Peter Jackson managed to bring his idea of Middle Earth to life.

“Somebody has to have the vision and bring it together. You need that

vision for it to work.”

The immortal question that keeps surfacing - could a new series happen? For some, the enthusiasm has never gone away.

Let's hope it never does.



Knightmare and the Occult

Knightmare attracted numerous complaints in 1988 for encouraging 'an interest in the occult'. To mark Halloween, we looked back at how it managed to spook the British public.

From the beginning, Knightmare was no stranger to criticism.

During its first series, journalists were quick to lure a snap judgment from moralist Mary Whitehouse about a new show that was 'killing children'.

Complaints from the public kept rolling in. According to The Times, in 1988 weighty mailbags were received about the following:

- A Joan Collins mini-series, Sins, for broadcasting rape pre-watershed.
- Two shows from Channel 4, Testament and New Faces.
- Knightmare, which 'encourages an interest in the occult'.

The patterns of complaints suggested they could be driven by factors such as press coverage. Thames reported receiving complaints about a programme before it had appeared on air.

So, how did Knightmare engage with 'the occult', such that it unsettled the British public by 1988?

1. Magic

Lots of it. Magic played a big part in Knightmare, and no team managed to win without it.

Magic was also gifted more abundantly in the early stages of the show. In the first series, teams could receive two or even three spells at a time.

It was also manifested in other ways, such as an amulet or talisman of invisibility (e.g. Series 2, Team 12).

As Knightmare continued, this expanded to potions, rings, gloves and other artefacts.

“

You magicked me back down to earth, so I'm going to magic you a little something for your journey.

Mildread

2. Sorcery

Knightmare was underpinned by its wizards, mages, sorcerers and sorceresses. These were the greatest source of help or hindrance to questers.

In the early series, the principal opponent is Mogdred, the dark side of Merlin's magic. He often appears as a spectre, attempting to frighten teams into mistakes or submission.

Mogdred alternated with the dangerous Morghanna in 1989 and then the similarly dual-natured Malice in 1990. He was replaced by techno-sorcerer Lord Fear from Series 5.

One of the first recurring characters was the unforgiving sorceress, Lillith. She racked up more victims than any other Knightmare character.

In Series 3, the arrival of Hordriss - labelled 'the Confuser' by the druids - created a new dangerous and unpredictable outsider.



3. Witchcraft

Knightmare also loved witchcraft as part of its dungeon fabric.

The mischievous crone, Mildread, was introduced in 1988. She would impersonate other forms and voices to lure unsuspecting dungeoneers into her cauldron.

Much later came the coven of Grey Sisters, who occupied a territory called Witch Haven.

Their leader, Greystagg, is an influential presence. She is initially flanked by regular characters Peggatty and Heggatty.

In a twist, one dungeoneer must dress in a witch's robe and fly on a broomstick to evade the Grey Sisters' heightened defences.

4. Alchemy

This unusual theme, of magically changing substances (most commonly to gold), also began in 1988. It featured twice in general knowledge testing.

The first team answered correctly and went on to become the show's first winners. A later team in Series 6 didn't know the term, which arguably cost them a winners' trophy.

In Series 7, the eccentric Rothberry is introduced. He is a haphazard alchemist (and is soon expelled from the centre of town), but a much more effective apothecary.

One of his potions is used to heal Hordriss after he comes off second best from a magical duel with Grimaldine.

5. Monsters

The Knightmare dungeon features lots of monsters and malignants.

By 1988, there were already multiple wall monsters, cavernwrights, dragons, gargoyles and a giant spider called Ariadne. Shortly afterwards came goblins and hobgoblins, an ogre, and a behemoth.

Goblins remained the most pervasive threat for most of the show. In Series 8, we saw a regular new roaming threat in the form of Miremen.

A troll and a giant also featured as talking head characters in the early series. In Knightmare's later years, trolls were reimagined as large stone beasts that pursued dungeoneers.

“

A dungeon is a dark, dank, dangerous place. It's not the sort of place you'd send six-year-olds in.

Tim Child

6. Spirits and the Dead

Many threats in Knightmare were ghostly, phantoms or apparitions.

Early threats by 1988 included the Catacombite, deadly cavern wraiths, and an undead scorpion. Some teams encountered an Oracle or released a ghost from a spell. Main opponent Mogdred also tended to appear as an spirit.

The early series featured venues that were regularly haunted. The Corridor of the Catacombs is 'patrolled by the army of the dead', while skeletons routinely guard the threshold to Level 3.

In Series 3 (1989), animated skulls and hauntings are introduced. Later followed geists and stormgeists, and eventually an army of skeletrons.

The afterlife was also a theme in some of Knightmare's magic.

One Series 3 team must use a GHOST spell to pass through a wall and spook a guard.

A Series 4 team receives a HERO spell to 'summon one who is long dead to your cause'. Their quest ends before the spell could be used.



“

Skeletrons are sort of reconstituted warriors. You might call them undead - though I'm not convinced they ever lived.

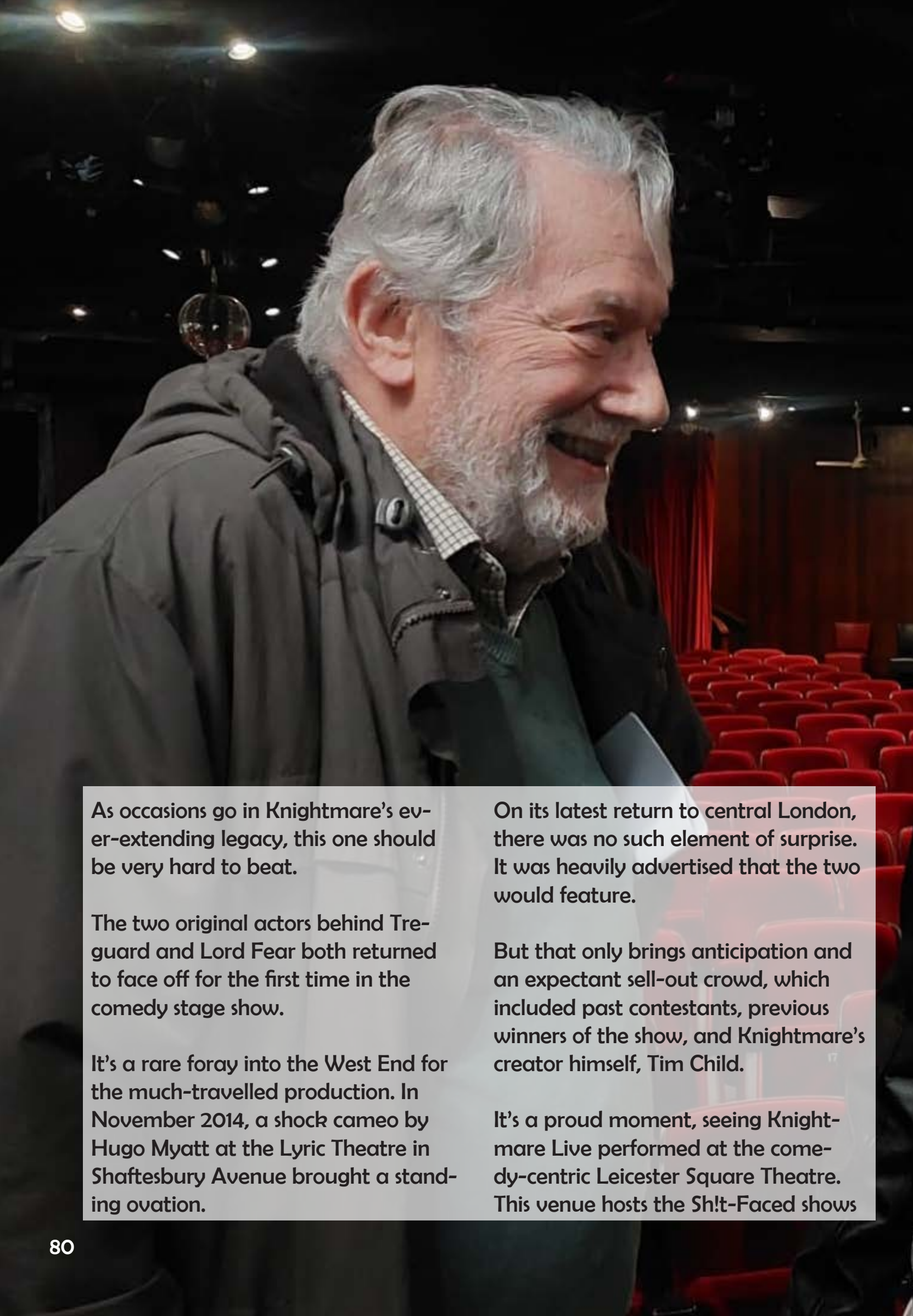
Treguard

Knightmare Live at the Leicester Square Theatre, November 2025





Hugo Myatt and Mark Knight were reunited as Nightmare's main adversaries in this raucous finale to the comedy adaptation's 10th anniversary tour.



As occasions go in Knightmare's ever-extending legacy, this one should be very hard to beat.

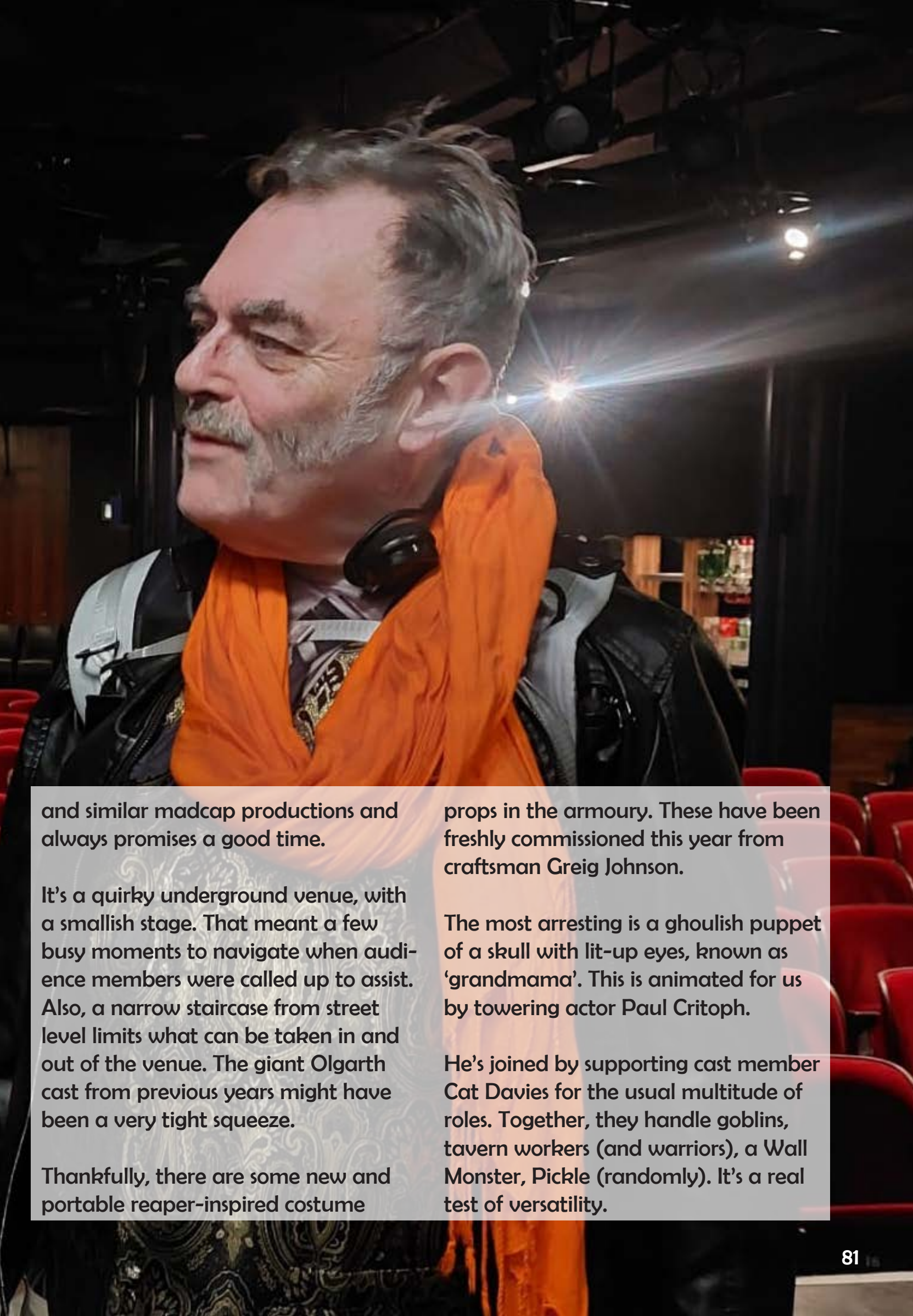
The two original actors behind Treguard and Lord Fear both returned to face off for the first time in the comedy stage show.

It's a rare foray into the West End for the much-travelled production. In November 2014, a shock cameo by Hugo Myatt at the Lyric Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue brought a standing ovation.

On its latest return to central London, there was no such element of surprise. It was heavily advertised that the two would feature.

But that only brings anticipation and an expectant sell-out crowd, which included past contestants, previous winners of the show, and Knightmare's creator himself, Tim Child.

It's a proud moment, seeing Knightmare Live performed at the comedy-centric Leicester Square Theatre. This venue hosts the Sh!t-Faced shows



and similar madcap productions and always promises a good time.

It's a quirky underground venue, with a smallish stage. That meant a few busy moments to navigate when audience members were called up to assist. Also, a narrow staircase from street level limits what can be taken in and out of the venue. The giant Olgarth cast from previous years might have been a very tight squeeze.

Thankfully, there are some new and portable reaper-inspired costume

props in the armoury. These have been freshly commissioned this year from craftsman Greig Johnson.

The most arresting is a ghoulish puppet of a skull with lit-up eyes, known as 'grandmama'. This is animated for us by towering actor Paul Critoph.

He's joined by supporting cast member Cat Davies for the usual multitude of roles. Together, they handle goblins, tavern workers (and warriors), a Wall Monster, Pickle (randomly). It's a real test of versatility.

The Audition

The show's format has become a bit of an institution over the years, and most of the audience seem familiar with its patter.

It begins with a customary show-down from stalwart Tom Bell as Lord Fear, who milks the pantomime hostility from the London crowd.

It's handy that he and Paul Flannery (Treguard) are such experienced improvisers, as you never quite know what's coming.

We see this unpredictability straight away, when the first dungeoneer is summoned to the stage.

He once auditioned for Knightmare, it turns out. But having told his story (and thrown his friends under the bus), he's not so keen to revisit that wish to compete 35 years on.

Treguard and Fear - who now spend more time on stage together than apart - promise to kill him off quickly. And they do.

The Knight's Tale

The next dungeoneer is more enthusiastic. Colin gets one of the defining moments - a spyglass sequence. Out storms Mark Knight as a relentless

Lord Fear.

Completely in his element, Knight immediately owns the stage. He demands silence from the audience and cowers over Tom Bell's 'apprentice' Fear, who apologises nervously for the 'low figures'.

The players are guided this afternoon by the comedian John-Luke Roberts and artsy Australian comic Bec Hill, the presenter of CITV show Makeaway Takeaway.

They're a creative and entertaining pair. Hill begins an early instruction, 'With consent...', which brings the house down.

Only, they seem a bit less familiar with Knightmare. It takes some anxious audience prompting before Colin is told to drop the spyglass as Lord Fear closes in.

Tom Bell, as Lord Fear 'lite' on this occasion, seems almost relieved to provide some comic relief and promptly invites his senior counterpart away for a pint.

As ever, there can be too much of a good thing. Now that the audience has his ear, Colin too hastily takes their suggestion as his answer to a riddle. The Wall Monster summons 'grandmama', and there's only one outcome from here. Nasty.



After the interval, a youngster celebrating his 18th birthday gets up to some fanfare and is immediately blown up in a bomb room. To his credit, he takes that as a triumph.

It turns out a spell was needed from the Wall Monster. So, Colin's exit inevitably meant the next player's downfall too.

A rattled Lord Fear once said, 'Winning isn't about playing fair, it's about winning'. On this day, his long-time 'apprentice' wears a writer's pride as he explains two defeats in consecutive scenes.

The Master's Tale

The loss of a third contestant brings about the presence of a hooded stranger. It's the moment so many have been waiting for.

It might be late in the day, but out bursts Hugo Myatt into character, to rapturous applause.

His resonant voice is as masterful as ever, as he banishes the malignants to Level 3.





Hugo's appearance acts as a bit of a late restart. There's time for his traditional Treguard lines of greeting, and he re-equips young newcomer Emily for the show's closing scenes.

It's not made easy. She must copy a rehearsed goblin dance to escape their lair. Bec gets Emily to move 'jauntily', and she plays the part brilliantly.

For the perilous final encounter, Mark Knight returns to the stage to watch alongside everyone else.

It means we've got two Treguards, two Lord Fears, two supporting cast, the two advisors and five audience members packed into a small space. It's carnage.

The bemused advisors admit they can't see the dungeoneer beyond the human obstacles. Emily can't benefit from tilting her head because she's removed her glasses to wear the helmet.

It needs a miracle. But it's an afternoon of miracles. Somehow, somehow, the Cup is claimed.





In a final twist, there's an eco-based dilemma: recycle the Cup to save the planet. Our new champion selflessly brings over a child to perform the sacrifice together.

The kids are alright

We've been to a lot of shows, we've reviewed it many times. But it keeps on delivering.

The best thing about this event was the number of young people in the audience.

A Saturday afternoon was ideal. Some of the Knightmare crew and former contestants brought along children and grandchildren. Two youngsters on stage at the end had seen every episode of the show. What a sense of hope.

As custodians of keeping Knightmare's legacy alive, you want kids to relish the show and take the same joy from it than we once did and have done since.

If this show can entertain a younger generation as well, it's really doing its duty to everyone involved.

Congratulations on a long 10 years, and hats (or helmets) off to that.

The Dungeon You Didn't See



The latest project from Knightmare artist David Rowe gives new life to ideas and drafts that never made it to air.



As with many art projects, lots of sketches were needed in the production process to create the original Knightmare artwork.

Artist David Rowe has taken some of these ideas that never took off at the time and reimagined them into full artworks. These are now available as prints.

Educated guesswork

“Some ideas didn’t work out at the time for a variety of reasons,” Rowe tells us.

“If I wasn’t aware of how a room was meant to work, my original idea

for it might have been different from what Tim Child was looking for.”

A clearly documented example of this was the Dragon Room, originally termed the ‘Crossing Room’.

The brief was for a dragon to form the crossing between two short platforms. Rowe proposed the dragon’s back rather than its mouth.

Child’s faxed response, typed mostly in caps, is unequivocally frank.

“Please understand I need a powerful confrontation scene from this - hence this position which is best for my purpose,” it reads, alongside a basic sketch of a dragon’s head. This



formed the basis of what became the final artwork.

“Tim liked ideas and suggestions, but they couldn’t supersede the vision of how a room needed to work,” Rowe explains.

“There might be technical reasons, such as the need to add further animation or computer effects. That might impact how detailed or complex you could make a scene.

“There could be a lot of faxes and sketches before settling on a final design.”

Caught the bug

So, where did the inspiration for this latest project come from?

Over a decade has passed since the **Art of Nightmare**, the authoritative collection of Rowe’s illustrations and artwork for the show.

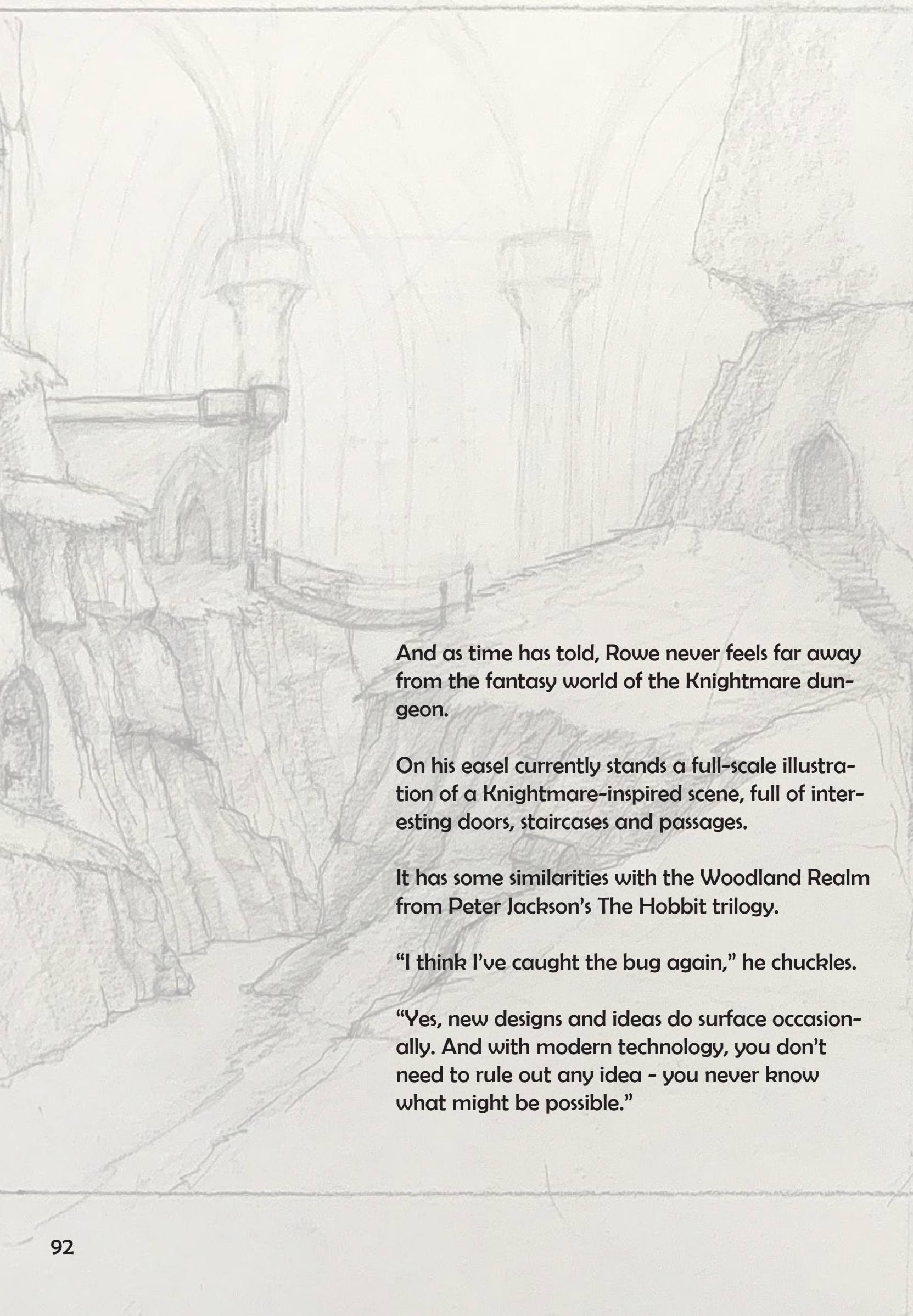
Here, Rowe credits former Nightmare contestant and victor, Jason Karl, who had been reviewing the surviving correspondence between Rowe and Broadsword.

This prompted the commission of the new hand-painted scenes, with a physical album also in the planning.

“

**DEAR DAVE, PLEASE UNDERSTAND
I NEED A POWERFUL CONFRON-
TATION SCENE FROM THIS...**

Tim Child, via fax



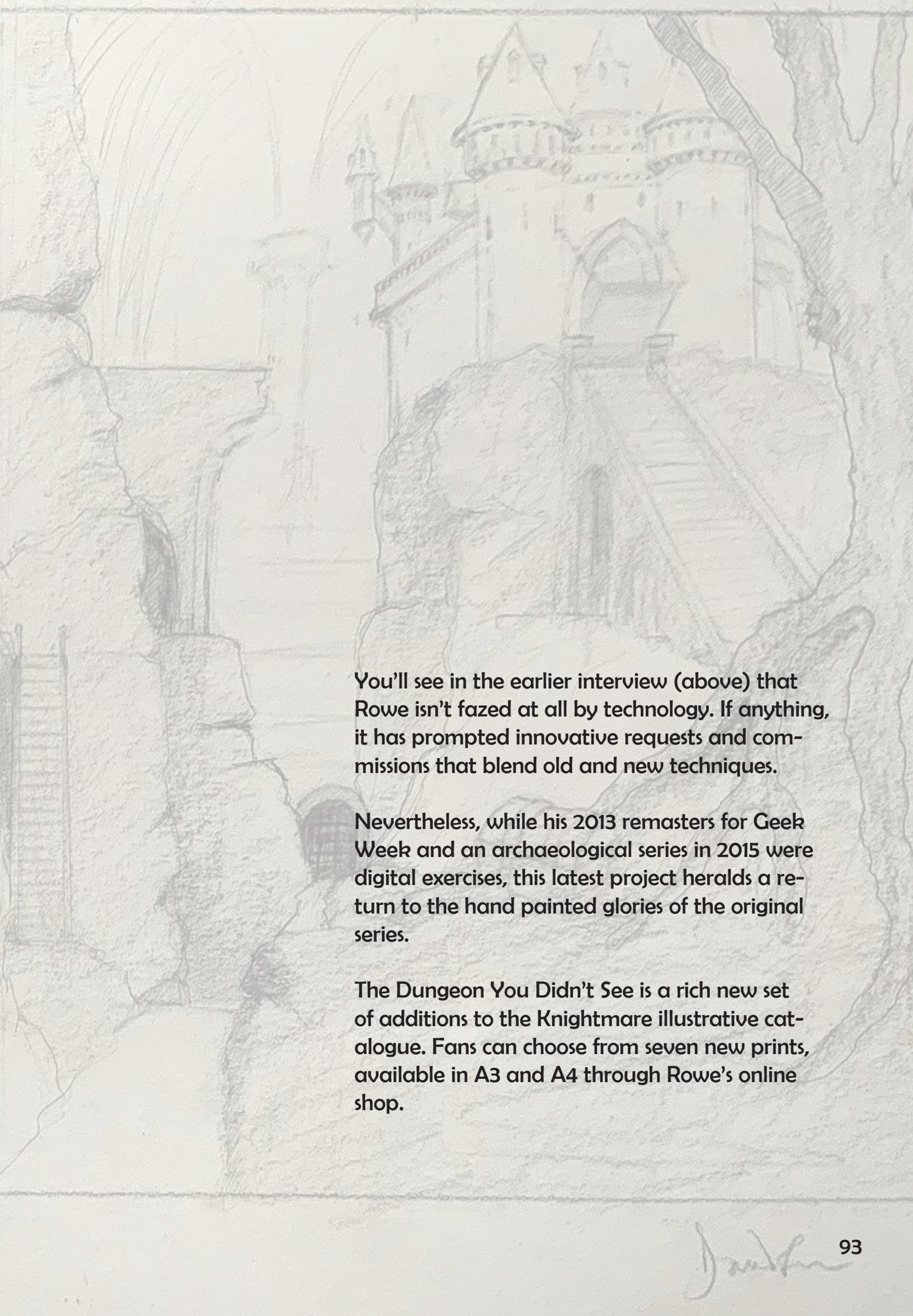
And as time has told, Rowe never feels far away from the fantasy world of the Knightmare dungeon.

On his easel currently stands a full-scale illustration of a Knightmare-inspired scene, full of interesting doors, staircases and passages.

It has some similarities with the Woodland Realm from Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* trilogy.

"I think I've caught the bug again," he chuckles.

"Yes, new designs and ideas do surface occasionally. And with modern technology, you don't need to rule out any idea - you never know what might be possible."



You'll see in the earlier interview (above) that Rowe isn't fazed at all by technology. If anything, it has prompted innovative requests and commissions that blend old and new techniques.

Nevertheless, while his 2013 remasters for Geek Week and an archaeological series in 2015 were digital exercises, this latest project heralds a return to the hand painted glories of the original series.

The Dungeon You Didn't See is a rich new set of additions to the Knightmare illustrative catalogue. Fans can choose from seven new prints, available in A3 and A4 through Rowe's online shop.

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Credits

- Page 2. Bokeh Effect. Connor McManus / Altereddnaps on Pexels.
- Pages 4-5. Wooden armchair: Marcelo Jaboo on Pexels.
- Pages 8-16. Promotional images of Spy School. Courtesy of Ben Spiteri.
- Page 17. Lightpainting Fantasy (Blue): Mariola Grobelska on Unsplash.
- Pages 23-27. Anglia Television Press Office. Courtesy of Jason Karl.
- Pages 28-29. Sailboat Weather Vane: Thomas Parker on Pexels.
- Pages 20-31. Gold Hill Street: AbigailRF on Pixabay.
- Pages 32-33. Wearmouth Bridge: Ethan Wilikinson on Unsplash.
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- Page 47. Alcázar de Segovia: Hernan Gonzalez on Unsplash.
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- Page 77. Red object with smoke: Trophim Laptev on Unsplash.
- Pages 80-81, 83, 84. Hugo and Mark Knight in rehearsal. Courtesy of Jackie Vance.

