# WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLE·PLAY

# DEVELOPER DIARY

CUBICLE 7 SEVEN

## Welcome to the fourth edition of our
## Developer Diary: the Artists' Edition.

JG O'Donoghue and Sam Manley, two of Cubicle 7's amazingly talented artists discuss their favourite pieces from **The Enemy Within**, share their creative process and illustrate exactly how they create art for these campaigns— from the brief, to the themes, initial sketches, the approval process and much more.

## THE ENEMY WITHIN

Sam Manley

JG O'Donoghue

## Sam Manley

Sam is currently working on **The Enemy Within** and Age of Sigmar**.** He has previously provided artwork for *Cthulhu Tales, World War Cthulhu, Cthulhu Britannica, The Laundry, Lone Wolf,* the *Doctor Who Card Game,* **The One Ring, Adventures in Middle-earth**, **and WFRP.** Warhammer had a huge impact on Sam as a teenager when he played the game, but he was really drawn into the world through the amazing artwork. Sam is a self-taught digital artist, and time allowing, dabbles in oil and scribbling with ink.

## Grim and Perilous

It seems apt to start with a piece titled: 'Grim and Perilous'... The brief for this painting was to convey a downtrodden, moody, oppressive-feeling street that our heroes are trudging through. Joy is definitely not sparked in their hearts here. Anyway, they'll take centre stage, but the world of the scene around them is every bit as important.

We nearly always need a sketch to start — some very small pieces might not need one, if they're simple and not plot-critical, but otherwise a sketch is always produced. The sketches need to be approved by C7 and Games Workshop before we can move on to the painting stage. Here, I felt that a closed-in setting better captured the feeling of an Empire street than a more open and spacious, desolate (almost Hopper-like) feeling would. Tighter-packed buildings put together in a rather ramshackle manner, bent wooden beams and awkwardly-placed repair works are an Empire staple, so they had to be included!

Lighting is always important in setting mood. In this case, that mood needed to be overcast, grey and grim — really hammering home an atmosphere so thick you could slice it. So, that's established, I've an idea of how I want the scene to look, but now I need to think about the characters. When we depict heroes, we usually don't show all of them as they can crowd out all but the bigger scenes, and they're not all going to be in the same place at any one time anyway. So the choice over who ends up where is normally influenced by who hasn't been seen so much recently, and who makes the best compositional sense given their body shapes, attitudes and clothing colours. In this case, I definitely wanted the Witch Hunter, face obscured, head bowed, trudging forwards.The Slayer to her right made an excellent counterpoint to her in

shape and colours. Bringing up the rear, I felt a taller character worked better, and also someone who had a visible stride would read better at a distance — robes would more than likely just obscure the gait — and so the Captain made the team. Then it was on to the background characters. These people are always fun; out in the streets I could depict a disreputable array of fanatics, unfortunates, and other Empire denizens you certainly wouldn't want to run into! I took inspiration here from previous Warhammer titles, in particular, John Blanche's and Dave Gallagher's wonderful illustrations in **Death on the Reik.** In my sketch, I rather liked the foreground woman who is staring right at the viewer, and the strange little moon-faced familiar (who's having probably the best time of anyone there), grinning and perched up on the roof at the edge. I made the ground muddy, added some indications of rain, ensured we've got those all-important Warhammer symbols so we're firmly rooting details in the Empire, and the sketch held together.

Okay, so it got approved without any major changes. I was cleared to progress to the painting stage. The shapes are all working together, the roughly scrubbed in tones more or less as I want them — it was succeeding as a black and white composition. The painting might be the longer stage relative to the sketch, but most of the difficult work is already done. However, colour choices are still very important; naturally we're leaning into more drab colours, with some kind of contrast to draw the viewer's eye. You know that overcast light you sometimes see in the late afternoon? Where the sky's dark but there's still a stronger light coming through? That was the idea. If I anchored the whole thing as dull yellow, I could then move to reds, greys, even dull greens, where I needed them, and my piece would remain cohesive. The darker toned Witch Hunter and the more brightly coloured Slayer both stood out against the paler background for different reasons , and the edges of the picture could be allowed to fade into more unified colours to keep the focus on the more centrally-located contrasts. A final pass was to make sure the scene looked properly wet, and it was sent for approvals.

Now, I did have a change or two to make before it was finished-finished (not a Skaven, I swear!). The biggest one was a note about what to do with the Slayer's hair! Originally, I had it sagging a whole lot more in the rain, but that was deemed a bit to 80s-looking, so I lifted it back up a bit. Little revisions are common: small tweaks to details, things that need minor changes to convey the right impression. With that sorted, Grim and Perilous was finished!



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# Red Moon

The Red Moon Inn, seen previously in **Fatshark Games' Vermintide**, was a double-page tavern scene, that means there's a whole lot to pack in! In fact, Fatshark kindly shared some of their existing art assets with us — so C7's Red Moon Inn was directly based on theirs! It had to feel busy, so a good number of our heroes and a lot of supporting background characters were called for. I was trying to keep the feeling of the interactions and lighting somewhere between that of Gérôme and Caravaggio. (Well... you have to aim high, right?) Once again it was a sketch first, and the more complex the scene the more critical it is to make sure that the main elements are clearly readable at this stage. The time limit on this one was also very tight, a day to draw and three days to paint.

The big challenge was trying to get the sense of scale right: it's a wide scene, but we need to show some of the height of the inn without leaving a whole lot of boring space towards the top of the image. Fading to a darker colour toned up there helped, as did using the chandelier (bit of a grand term for what it is, but let's just roll with it…) to anchor the composition; almost like a halo under which the rest of the scene unfolds. With most of the details more or less suggested by the existing Fatshark version, I could focus more on the patrons — obviously we needed a decent spread of our heroes, a greater number than Grim and Perilous required, but we also needed a cast of varying other characters. The foreground dwarf, who we see from the back, functioned to help lead the eye into the scene, giving some additional depth to it (a technique called repoussoir, literally 'to push back'). We have someone sturdy-looking behind the bar, we have shady dealings going on under the top-left balcony, a couple making their way into the main hall, a chap at the table who doesn't really look like he's living his best life right now, a slumped soldier at the

bar, and we can see various other ne'er do wells in the room at the back. Now, I love getting to dig into moments like this — who are these people? In my head, I tell myself little stories about them as I work. I think you can plant the seeds of a lot of tales by making background characters visually interesting, in body language or details. Here, one man has animal skulls strapped to him; one's wearing an eyepatch and is pointing at someone in the room; the couple walking in look a little more upmarket than everyone else; the slumped soldier — are they down on their luck? Drinking to forget… something? Each of them has dozens of different possible stories to tell, roles to play in different adventures, depending on how the viewer might choose to interpret what they see.

Alright, changes… again, minimal. I think originally our Slayer was holding an axe and a pint, and that was changed to be two pints. And, with that, it was on to the painting! Colour choices here were, again, reasonably simple to figure out: candlelight ensured we had warmth, and everything else got keyed in from there. I really didn't want to make the shadows too cool this time (generally if you have warm light you have cool shadows, and vice-versa), as I felt the shadows didn't need that much attention, other than to define the light. With that established, I could take time to render the piece, add little shots of colour where areas were otherwise appearing too homogeneous (such as the green feather in the slumped soldier's hat) and bring it to a finish. As with Grim and Perilous, and with nearly every painting, the critical choices happen earlier on.



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# Caught

Ah, Caught. Caught was a little different, as the character had already been drawn as a black and white portrait piece by another artist: Victor Leza. Caught was also set up to be a corner piece, one of my favourite compositions to work on. Corner pieces allow a bit more flexibility in terms of how they're laid out, as a full rectangle doesn't have to be filled. You do, however, have to make sure that whatever part of the image is jutting/fading out into the rest of the page isn't jarring — too colourful, overly smooth, overly fragmented, or anything like that.

The idea of Caught is that the main character, Philippe, is leaping up from a table and scattering the contents of it, including a deck of cards (the backs of which had also been previously painted), and he's firing his pistol in the general vicinity of the viewer, if not quite at us directly. Well, that means drama! And drama, visually, means angles and diagonals. There's beer spilling; cards flying in all directions, some close by and some further back, at all kinds of orientations; and we can see movement in the tablecloth and the angle of the table itself. (Have you noticed a pattern yet? All three of these paintings have some kind of drink spilling or being tipped out of a tankard.) But Philippe, he's the star of the piece, and he needs to be making a grand gesture. So, arms out stretched to create tension around his shoulders, pistol forward, curve in his back, furrowed brow and he needed to be yelling — really going all-in on a snapshot of a moment of action. He's wearing opulent clothing, and to keep cohesion to his surroundings, in particular, the chair he's knocking over should also hint at that to some degree. At least, his clothes and the furniture shouldn't be totally plain. (Nevertheless, on closer inspection, you'll notice the tablecloth is tattered and stitched up in places… opulence in the Old World doesn't last long!) A coaster and another tankard were sketched on the table, an indication of a stain that's probably more beer, and the sketch is finished. Now, there was a request to change the angle of the arm and the pistol, to point a little more diagonally. That adjustment was made and the new version is quickly approved without any further tweaks, so it's time to move on to painting this piece!

Colour here needed a bit more thought than in the previous two pieces. With a corner, there's often less obvious visible light to work with. Your background is the page background, so your opportunities to directly depict light sources are a bit more limited. Anything struck by a strong light source that isn't visible has to be handled carefully or it looks out of place on the final laid-out page. Philippe already had a dark-toned coat, so I wanted the lighter colours of his skin, the tablecloth and the tankard, to contrast with that. But, both to keep attention on it and to fit in with his status, the coat needed some colour to it. Red felt out of place, perhaps not providing enough variation in the piece, but a deep blue juxtaposed nicely with the warm colours everywhere else.
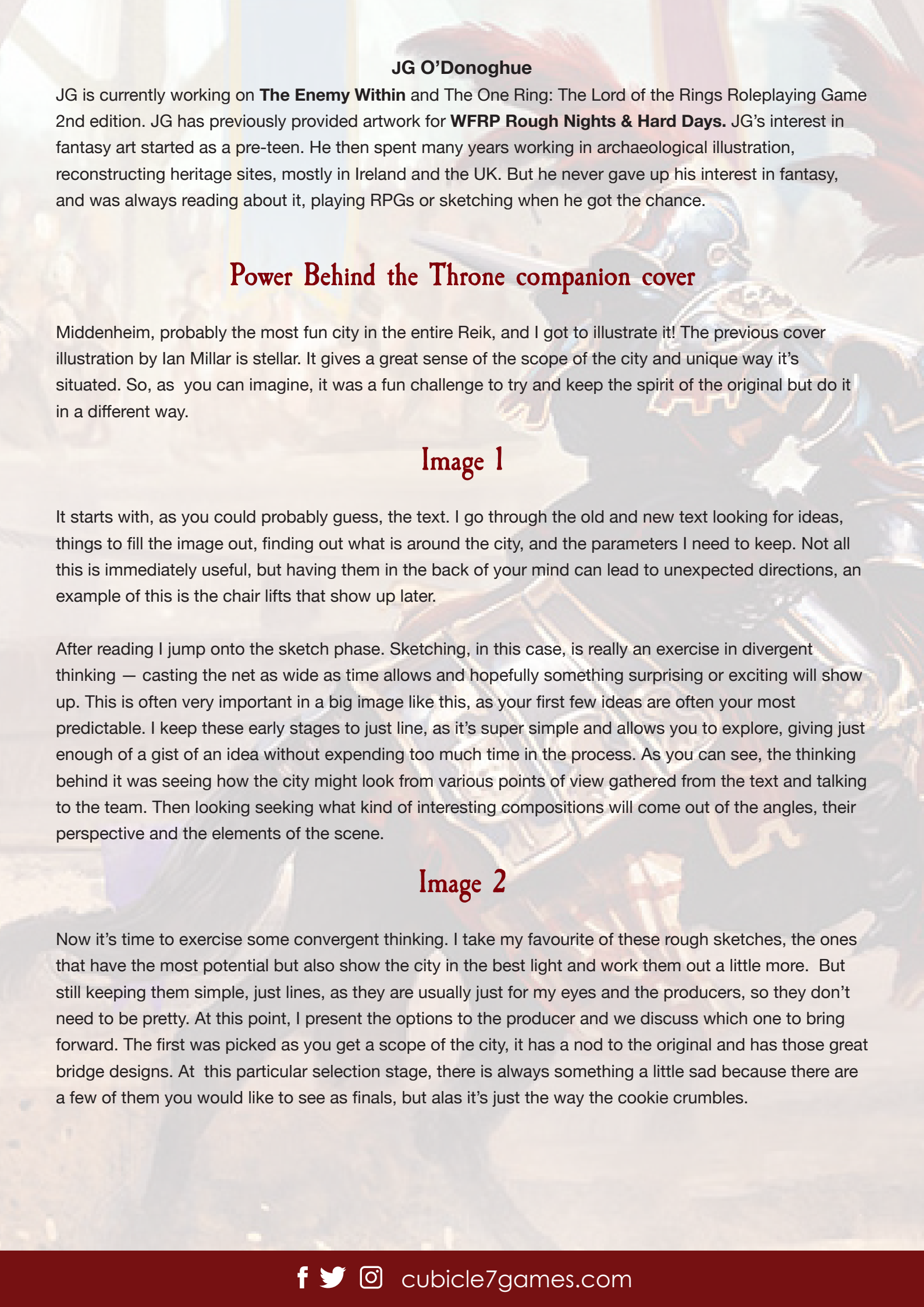
One of the things I like to do, when possible, is to reference other parts of the Old World in my paintings. Here, I took the image of the shrine of Sigmar from the **WFRP 4th edition core book** as inspiration to illustrate the back of the cards in the deck. It's the same idea with repeating clothing patterns or repeating motifs like skulls and hammers and twin-tailed comets — you're keyed in to the world through callbacks to other images, and that reinforces in the painting a sense of place in the world. This is obvious when it's a main figure, but I think it's important to carry that through into less overt elements, echoing designs in quieter places. Maybe it's not the first thing you spot, but perhaps the second, or the third, and there's quite possible something new to see as you flip through the book multiple times.

When I sent in the painting, it came back with a request to make more of the smoke. That was simple enough to add, and so Caught was complete!

**JG O'Donoghue**

JG is currently working on **The Enemy Within** and The One Ring: The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game 2nd edition. JG has previously provided artwork for **WFRP Rough Nights & Hard Days.** JG's interest in fantasy art started as a pre-teen. He then spent many years working in archaeological illustration, reconstructing heritage sites, mostly in Ireland and the UK. But he never gave up his interest in fantasy, and was always reading about it, playing RPGs or sketching when he got the chance.

## Power Behind the Throne companion cover

Middenheim, probably the most fun city in the entire Reik, and I got to illustrate it! The previous cover illustration by Ian Millar is stellar. It gives a great sense of the scope of the city and unique way it's situated. So, as you can imagine, it was a fun challenge to try and keep the spirit of the original but do it in a different way.

## Image 1

It starts with, as you could probably guess, the text. I go through the old and new text looking for ideas, things to fill the image out, finding out what is around the city, and the parameters I need to keep. Not all this is immediately useful, but having them in the back of your mind can lead to unexpected directions, an example of this is the chair lifts that show up later.

After reading I jump onto the sketch phase. Sketching, in this case, is really an exercise in divergent thinking — casting the net as wide as time allows and hopefully something surprising or exciting will show up. This is often very important in a big image like this, as your first few ideas are often your most predictable. I keep these early stages to just line, as it's super simple and allows you to explore, giving just enough of a gist of an idea without expending too much time in the process. As you can see, the thinking behind it was seeing how the city might look from various points of view gathered from the text and talking to the team. Then looking seeking what kind of interesting compositions will come out of the angles, their perspective and the elements of the scene.

## Image 2

Now it's time to exercise some convergent thinking. I take my favourite of these rough sketches, the ones that have the most potential but also show the city in the best light and work them out a little more. But still keeping them simple, just lines, as they are usually just for my eyes and the producers, so they don't need to be pretty. At this point, I present the options to the producer and we discuss which one to bring forward. The first was picked as you get a scope of the city, it has a nod to the original and has those great bridge designs. At this particular selection stage, there is always something a little sad because there are a few of them you would like to see as finals, but alas it's just the way the cookie crumbles.
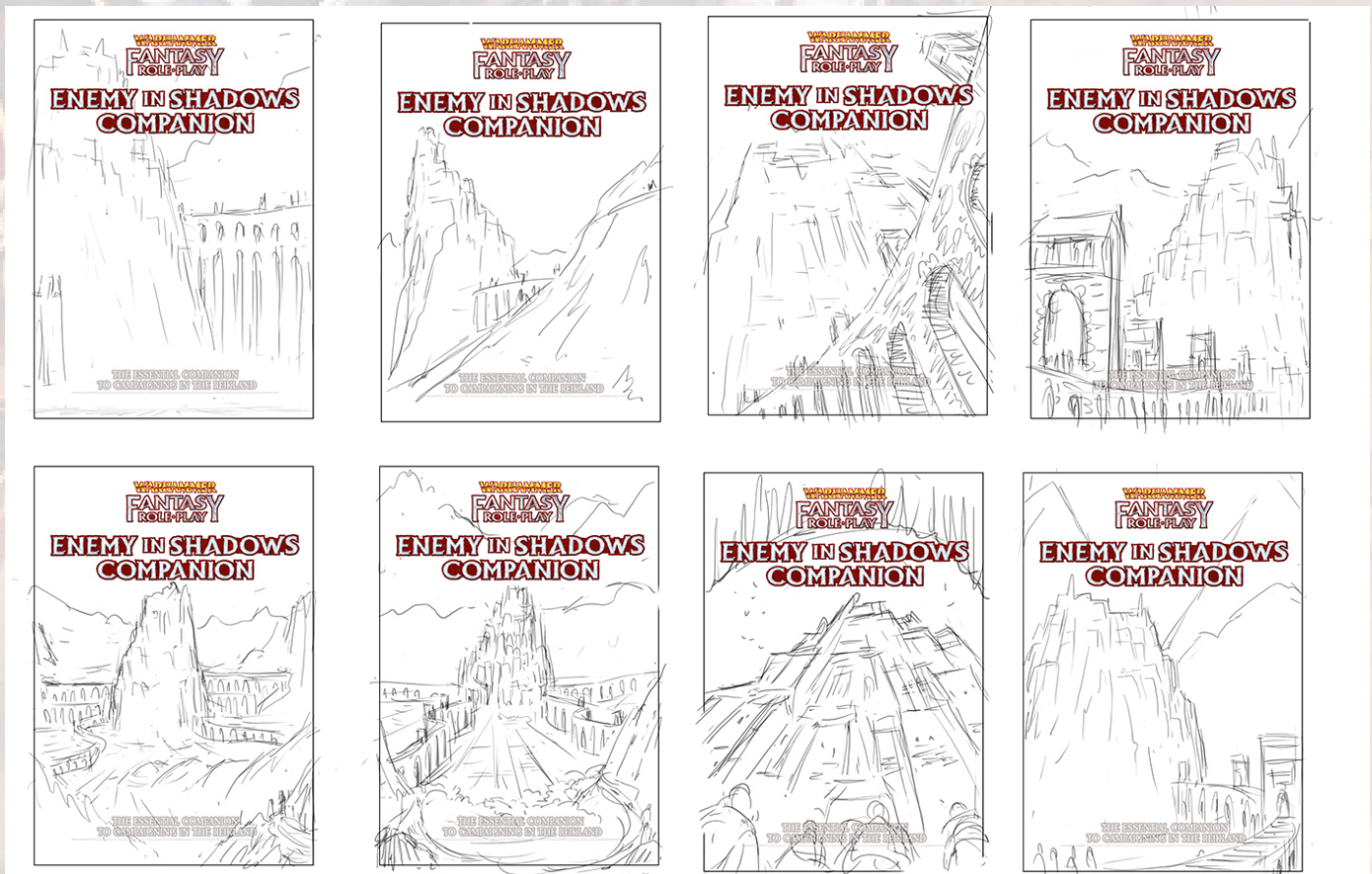
Text elements from the **Enemy in Shadows Companion** cover were used as placeholders for initial sketches.

# Image 3

Now on to painting! Here is where the image really starts to take form. We begin working on translating the rough line idea into a more fleshed out idea. I'm thinking a lot here about a sense of space and ways of hinting at that; some examples being value shifts (change from darker to lighter) and receding sizes. I'm also thinking a lot about  silhouettes and shapes, which are so important to a good design. A cool-dusk palette was chosen at this stage, to be balanced later by opposite complementing colours for the lights, like yellow and orange. It's often best to start with overcast top-down lighting and keep the directional lighting to later.

I knew at this stage I wanted the city to be full of mist and mostly silhouette as that just felt right for the storyline.I also wanted to add snow — as what is more Middenheim than that. But also atmospherics like snow or rain make images really come alive by adding movement. These atmospheric touches often offer fun ways to give an image grounding, like reflections and blending shapes together.

# Image 4

Here the design of each building is pushed further to make it more 'warhammery'; choosing the materials that the buildings are made of and showing the history of the site. Breaking out of my limited thinking I try to create abstract shapes and see what comes out and then render that somewhat later. Working from abstract is essentially you pulling from your mental library developed from years of studying and ingesting various architectural  styles and other visual aspects of the world. I'm also starting to add a more interesting lighting here. These kind of pinpricks give the idea of many eyes watching you, which again fits perfectly into the theme of the story. All old buildings usually tell a story and have a history. This image shows a mix of the dwarven bridge structure with later human layers added first in stone, then in wood and finally in half timber. The articulation is mostly in the roofs here and the materials. Each gate is given its own character (most are named) — which is often the case with historical gates.

# Image 5

Big jump here. We submitted the last image to Games Workshop and they send back their comments. For instance, that there were too many bridges for Middenheim, so we removed some. Also the scale was wrong with the gates, they needed to be much larger. It was also decided that the gatehouses were too close to the viewer, and so gave too much weight to that part of the frame and overshadowed the city itself because of it.

But here, you can see the piece coming together. The earlier rough ideas drawn from the silhouette are given more form and realism, here is really where the knowledge of light and shadows, materials and reflections come into play. We have taken off the design hat at this stage and thinking more like an artist or illustrator. The lights are given more form and used to hint at the street layout, and small details are suggested. Here is where your imagination goes into overdrive as you imagine the city and its inhabitants going about their daily lives in the midst of a snow storm. You can see the colour is also fleshed out with better worked out lighting. I am thinking  of the beginning of the story and the main cast of characters. I'm there with them as they gaze up at the city and the task before them at the start of their adventure.
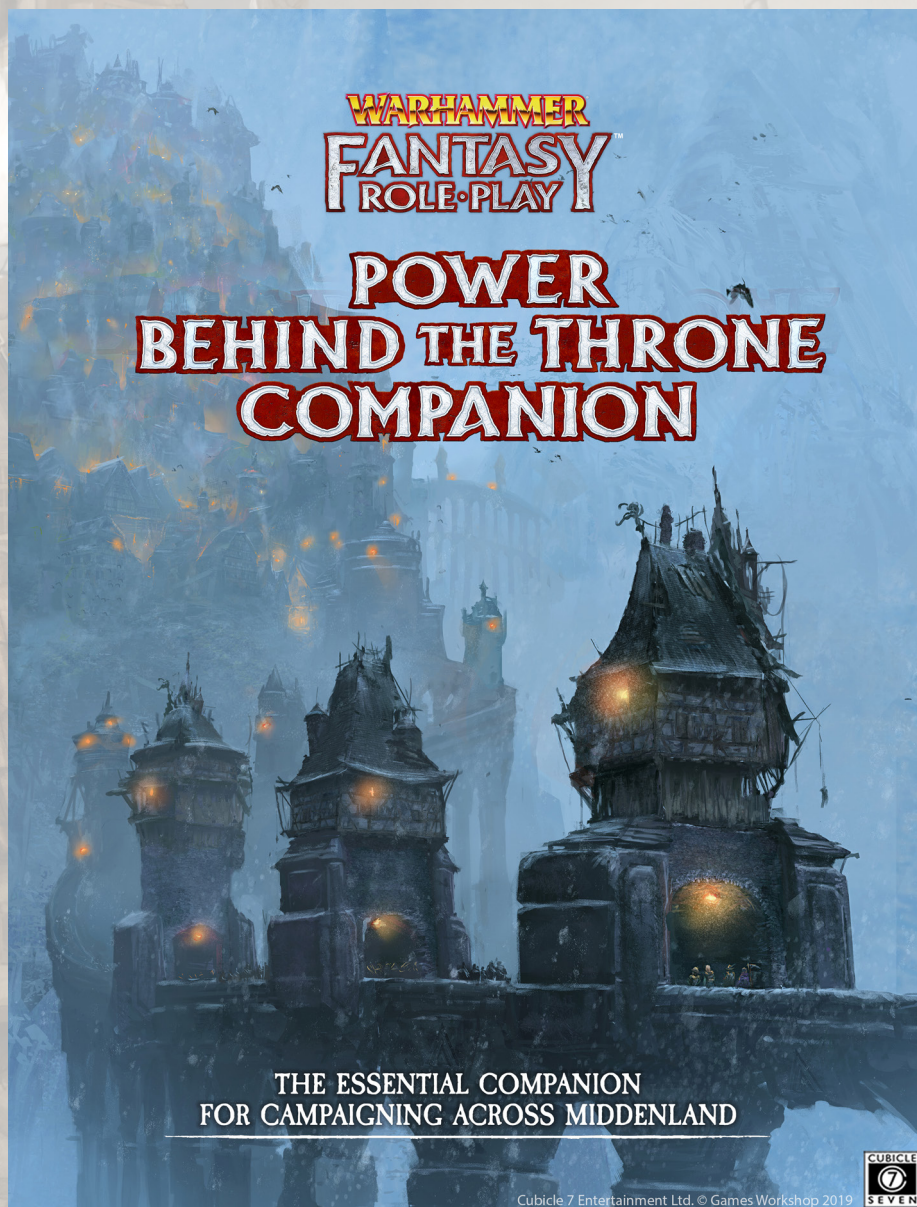
WARHAMMER
FANTASY
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POWER
BEHIND THE THRONE
COMPANION

THE ESSENTIAL COMPANION
FOR CAMPAIGNING ACROSS MIDDENLAND

# Final Cover

After another round of feedback from Games Workshop, various changes were suggested: the city's scale was still not large enough, there wasn't enough detail in the city itself, some aspects had to be developed further and there was also a balancing problem with not enough visual interest in the right hand of the image. This latter was solved by adding more snow caked crows and hinting at a path over the mountains.

It's always funny how much that little extra bit in the end adds, especially aspects like props which are often left out, but it's these things that make a place feel lived in. For example, some tents used to cover traders who hawk goods to people coming into the town or for the guards to seek cover from the snow. Also here we get to use some of that extra research mentioned at the start. I came up with some ideas as to how the elevator lift may work. You can see the large machine strapped to the last chunky gate before the town.

Some of those lights' evil-peering eyes are developed — giving the idea that these buildings are somehow alive. And the blue and orange-yellow contrast is pumped up, giving it that extra push beyond what would be possible in real life and making this more fantastical. This stage is a lot of fun in its own way, earlier stages are more about ideating, but here you get to dig in and give into that perfectionist in you, who wants to give that final coat of paint to something. But obviously this needs to be balanced with time, and a lot can just be suggested rather than detailed out. An example being the rim light on the characters in the bridges.

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Hi All, I hope you enjoyed this behind the scenes look at the creative process for **The Enemy Within** and we look forward to sharing more insights in similar editions in the future. The completion of the companion is a real priority for the extended team and we appreciate your continued patience, we really can't wait to get it into your hands! Our new **WFRP** Producer will be joining us very soon and we look forward to introducing him. Keep an eye on our website and social media for more updates!

*Dan McDowall*

## CUBICLE 7 SEVEN