

# Keizer illustrator's 1st video game, *Paperbound*, on shelves in 11 days

By ERIC A. HOWALD  
*Of the Keizertimes*

During the past 17 months, Keizerite Mike Smith has dedicated much of his time to creating the characters for a new video game, *Paperbound*, that will debut on Playstation and Windows platforms March 31.

In that time, he's created more than 15 gigabytes of artwork (translation: a lot). But there's one, tiny problem.

"I suck at my own game. Anywhere we've shown it off, I end up losing," said Smith.

*Paperbound* is a four-person, multi-player fighting game, which makes it a challenge all on its own. But players also have the capacity to switching the gravity mechanics while playing, meaning attacks can come from just about anywhere.

"It's like *Super Smash Bros.* on crack," Smith said.

While Smith has not been involved in the actual programming, he's designed every character and most of the background/battlefields where fights take place. The characters are derived from a few classical works and a wholly concocted one.

"We've got people and places from *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *Dante's Inferno*, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, *The Book of Five Rings* and a made-up book called *Skull Kingdom*," Smith said.

That's meant everything from Egyptian deities, to mummies, martial artists and devils have been brought to life through Smith's thick line work. Some of his artistic influences are Arthur Rackham, Ralph McQuarrie and Moe-bius (aka Jean Giraud), but the place of highest honor is reserved for Brian Froud.

Froud is known for his artwork featuring fairies and goblins, but gained prominence working with Jim Henson on the movies *Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal*. The latter of the two had the most impact on Smith.

"It's my favorite movie and it just left a mark on me. It was scary as hell, but it was the most unique story I'd ever seen. Froud's art-

istry in character design stuck with me," Smith said.

For a while, Smith entertained dreams of working as a muppeteer, but it fell to the wayside after Henson's death. He'd failed art classes in high school, but didn't let it deter him from pursuing his passion in college.

"My training has been a lot of self-training. I bounced around from community college to community college. I began taking fashion design,

but my instructors allowed me to spin it into costume design," Smith said.

When asked to design a sweater, Smith put it on a Nazi villain. When asked to create an actual costume he made an outfit for someone to dress as a salad.

He managed to get some design work on a film around 2005, but the project fell apart.

Faced with continuing to pursue his passion for film or raising his kids, Smith put his career on the backburner — for eight years.

In 2013, he found himself with more time on his hands and decided to see if there was still any interest in his particular skill set. He posted some of his portfolio work to an indie video game website and was flooded with 25 potential projects. He narrowed those to three and went with *Paperbound*, a game spearheaded by developer Dan Holbert.

Unbeknownst to Smith at the time, Holbert had worked on two of his favorite games, ones that brought to life the *Transformers* cartoon of the 1980s. Smith's studio prominently features a framed poster from the *Transformers the Movie*.

With a project lined up, Smith experienced a crisis of faith. "I had allowed my talent to go dormant," Smith said. "I got this great opportunity, but I was rusty. I knew I knew how to do it, but it wouldn't come. I had to battle a lot of fear and anxiety."

He plowed through with some inspiration from an unexpected source.

"When I took lunch



Keizer artist Mike Smith at work on a background for *Paperbound*, a game set for release on the Playstation and Windows platforms March 31. Smith supplied all of the character designs and many of the background illustrations for the game.

breaks, I began watching the old *Rocky* movies on Netflix in 20-minute installments. *Rocky IV* (which features



Dolph Lundgren as Balboa's Russian nemesis Ivan Drago) became my favorite," Smith said. "I bought the soundtrack and cranked it when I felt insecure. I saw all these challenges as Ivan Drago coming at me every day. Some days were terrible, but other days, I knocked that guy out."

Now he's 11 days away from a worldwide release of the game.

The interconnected world we live in meant Smith spent much of his time working in a vacuum. He is one part of a five-person team with three members in California and one in the United Kingdom working on the soundtrack.

It's left the days leading up to release feeling more than a little unreal.

"I've made posters for this game, we've had people play it. I played it with them. It's shown up on all the video game websites I visit, but it won't be totally real until the release," he said.

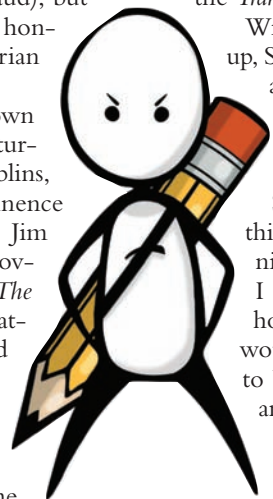
If things go well, Smith will continue creating downloadable content (DLC) for *Paperbound*, but the one thing he'd like to return to is a children's book he's working on. A project that is completely his own.

"If *Paperbound* sells well and we do DLC, I have to stay open for that," Smith said. "But, *Walter the Last Knight* is something I still want to get back into. It's really heavy on



the Froud influence with long legs and distorted bodies, but it's my own fairy tale."

Smith's story seems to be rife with inspiration for any book, children's or otherwise.



## crossword

### Musical Drama

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
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69						70						71		

CREATORS NEWS SERVICE

By Charles Preston

### ACROSS

- 1 Goddess of discord
- 5 Campfire remains
- 10 Come down
- 14 Dryer leftover
- 15 Perch
- 16 Seine feeder
- 17 Mozart opera, with *The*
- 19 Wolfis wink
- 20 Bikini, for one
- 21 Lollapalooza
- 22 Dutch or French
- 23 Talk incessantly
- 25 Part of D.D.S.
- 27 Had bills
- 29 Perfect
- 32 Org.
- 35 Famous fables
- 39 Three: prefix
- 40 Luau souvenir
- 41 Strauss opera
- 42 Cable sta.
- 43 To the right
- 44 Kingdom
- 45 Geezer
- 46 Osborne's *Look Back in* \_\_\_\_\_
- 48 Bones
- 50 '60s child

### DOWN

- 54 Swiss
- 58 City southeast of New Delhi
- 60 French friend
- 62 Rose oil
- 63 Cafe au \_\_\_\_\_
- 64 Verdi opera
- 66 Notable movie maven
- 67 Encumbrances
- 68 Bullring cries
- 69 Campus gp.
- 70 Last name in journalism
- 71 Wall Street letters
- 1 Violinist Mischa
- 2 Gaucho's gear
- 3 Fort Knox item
- 4 Crumbly cheese
- 5 Sandy's comment
- 6 Aria
- 7 Dog
- 8 Cosmetician Lauder
- 9 Back of the boat
- 10 Gizmo
- 11 Verdi opera
- 12 Sonja Henie's birthplace
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ Gynt

- 18 Ball of yarn
- 24 Domain
- 26 Actress Farrow
- 28 Benchley novel, with *The*
- 30 *New Yorker* cartoonist
- 31 Mardi Gras follower
- 32 Pond plant
- 33 Caught in the act
- 34 Wagner opera
- 36 Hit the slopes
- 37 Another, south of the border
- 38 Music mark
- 41 First name in architecture
- 45 Heading
- 47 Ticked pink
- 49 Sofian
- 51 Half of a Washington city
- 52 Cyberspace letters
- 53 Last \_\_\_\_\_
- 55 Triple Alliance country
- 56 Archibald, et al.
- 57 Wipe out
- 58 Woe is me!
- 59 Infatuated
- 61 Cubist Rubik
- 65 Horned viper

## 24th Annual Colored Pencil Exhibition

by the Portland Chapter of the Colored Pencil Society of America





**April 2 - April 29**  
Keizer Art Association

Enid Joy Mount Gallery (2nd floor)  
980 Chemawa Rd NE Keizer, OR 97303

Hours:  
Thursday and Friday 1 - 4.  
Saturday and Sunday 10 - 4 (except Easter, April 5).

Artists' Reception \* Awards \* Refreshments \* Raffle  
Saturday \* April 4 \* 2 - 4 pm \* open to the public





