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MMOZine

Issue 6 | September 2008

The Free Magazine For MMO Gamers

EXCLUSIVE #1

WORLD OF WARCRAFT WRATH OF THE LICH KING

HANDS-ON PREVIEW WITH EXCLUSIVE VIDEOS

EXCLUSIVE #2

AION: TOWER OF ETERNITY

In-depth preview and interview – new levels revealed!

EXCLUSIVE #3



SCOOP! BLIZZARD INTERVIEW
WoW dev spills the beans on Lich King. And more...

EXCLUSIVE #4



BLADE AND SOUL
New MMO from NCsoft



DC UNIVERSE ONLINE
Fight with, or against Batman & Superman!

EXCLUSIVE #5



FREE WOW WALLPAPERS!

Wrath of the Lich King art

Get your free World of Warcraft backgrounds here!

PLUS! LINEAGE II UPDATE • CITY OF HEROES/VILLAINS REPLAY • LOTRO: MINES OF MORIA • ATLANTICA ONLINE • MORE!

Welcome to MMOZine



This issue brings you an unbelievable collection of MMO exclusives. First up, we've put together a World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King Special, with our own hands-on preview, including exclusive videos, an introduction to Valiance Keep, an exclusive interview with Lich King's Lead Designer (in which he reveals concept work has begun on the next WoW expansion - see page 28 now!), a Lich King tutorial and some exclusive WoW wallpapers for your computer.

We could have stopped there, but oh no. Following our sister magazine PCGZine's exclusive Aion hands-on preview (go grab it now), we have our own follow-up preview with more exclusive gameplay details and screens. And to top it off, we've scooped first details on Blade and Soul, the new MMO from NCsoft. Enjoy!

Steve Brown, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

These are the guys to thank for this...



STEVE BROWN
Finds the Lineage II overhaul may tempt new players in.



IAN MORRIS
Took to the skies in Aion, and escaped with more info.



ADAM OXFORD
Went in search of the Lich King, and returns to tell all.



MMOZINE EXCLUSIVE

WRATH OF THE LICH KING MMOZINE SPECIAL

- *Seven page preview with exclusive videos*
- *Welcome to Valiance Keep*
- *Exclusive Blizzard interview*
- *Wrath of the Lich King tutorial*

PLUS! FREE WOW WALLPAPERS

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

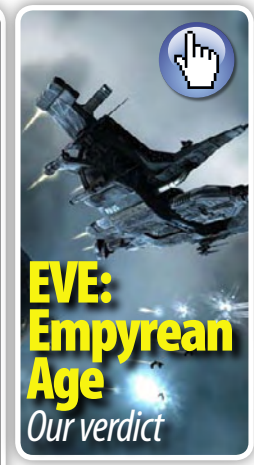
Aion: The Tower of Eternity

More details revealed



SCOOP!

Blade and Soul – details & screens



EVE: Empyrean Age

Our verdict

QUICK FINDER

Blade and Soul
Atlantica
DC Universe
Lord of the Rings Online: Mines of Moria
News in Brief
World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King
Aion
EVE Online: Empyrian Age
Lineage II
City of Heroes / City of Villains

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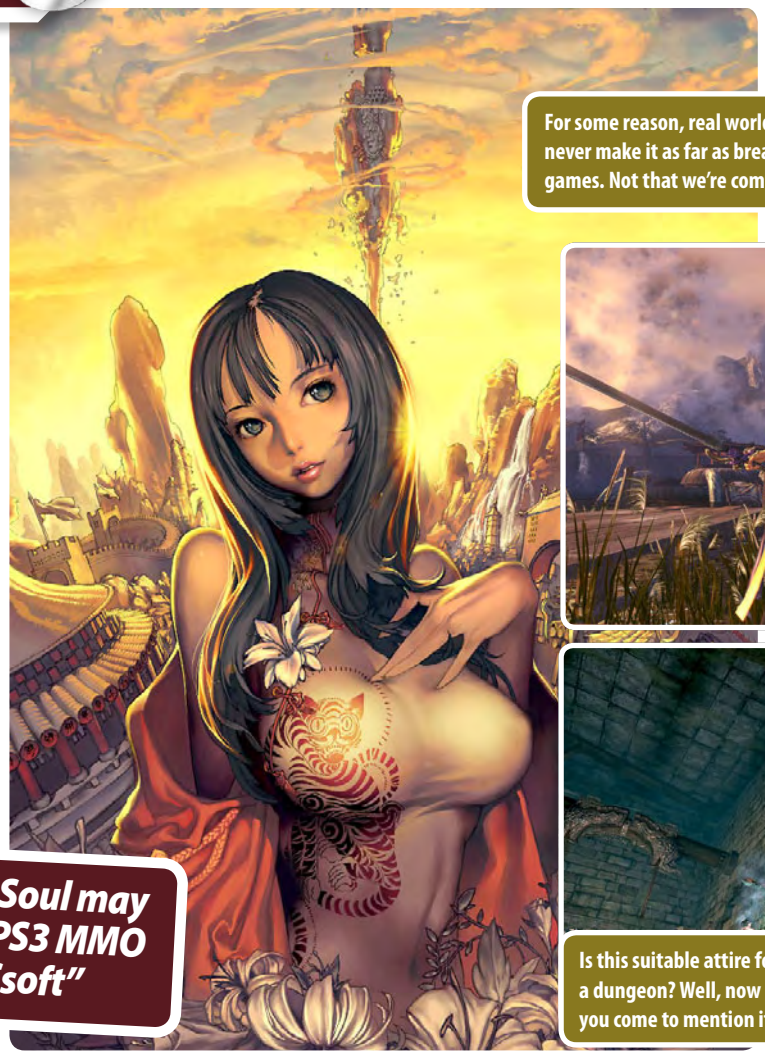
WARNING! MULTIMEDIA DISABLED!

If you are reading this, then you didn't choose "Play" when Adobe Reader asked you about multimedia when you opened the magazine.

Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: NCsoft
Heritage: Lineage II, Guild Wars, Aion
Link: http://www.bladesoulsource.com/
ETA: 2010



For some reason, real world physics never make it as far as breasts in games. Not that we're complaining.

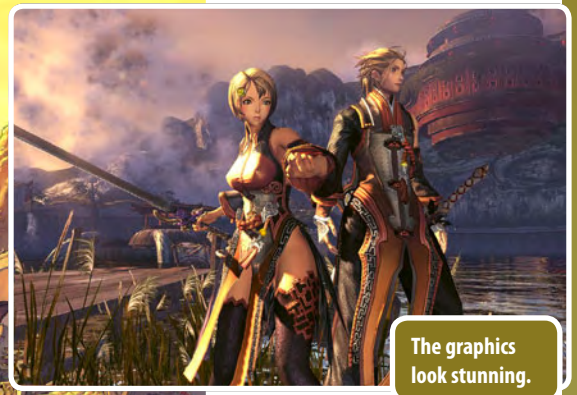
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Blade and Soul

EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

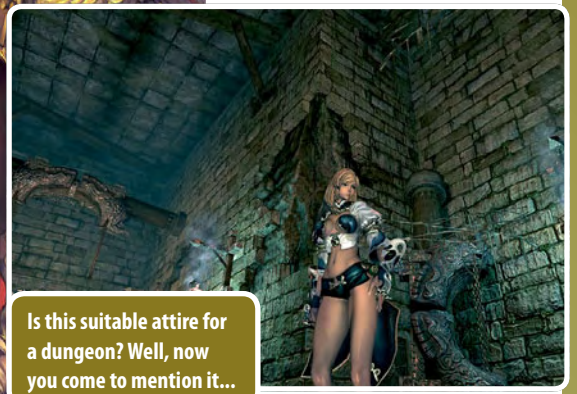
FIRST LOOK

Blade and Soul

Oriental Martial Arts MMO that has allows players to alter their environment



The graphics look stunning.



Is this suitable attire for a dungeon? Well, now you come to mention it...

"Blade and Soul may be the first PS3 MMO from NCsoft"





Fights are absolutely soaked in blood.



What's the story?

Based, apparently, on the Korean myth "Song of Genesis" and with factions modelled after Korean mythological characters, you battle the gods to put the world back to the way it was before they interfered. There's a trailer out that shows plenty of fighting and enough blood to keep a Ninja Gaiden fan happy.

What do we know?

The game has been in development for two years already, but a beta isn't expected until the end of 2009. It is going to feature a changing environment which will mean that the world will adjust to the playing style of the gamer and make it a dynamic environment. Two races, Jin and Gon are officially announced, though some are reporting there are 4 races and 8 classes. The game won't follow the traditional MMO class type of tank, healer, etc though and will feature blends of these types. You'll be able to knock back opponents and jump, kick and hack away with your sword in cinematic battles that are as much fun to watch as they are to play.

When do we get more?

Not for a while is our guess. The game has literally only just been announced for the Western market, so there's a long wait ahead.

Anything else to declare?

NCsoft won't say anything, and the game is only announced for PC currently, but given the graphics and the fact that it is well known that NCsoft is developing a cross-platform MMO for the PC and PlayStation 3, that Blade and Soul may be the first PS3 MMO from NCsoft.

Publisher: NDOORS
Developer: NDOORS
Heritage: Goonzu Online, Time'n'Tales, KoongPa
Link: www.playatlantica.com
ETA: TBA



PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Atlantica Online

"Mercenaries can be raised from infants and have children themselves"

Are you a predator or a bottom feeder? Try Atlantica and get hooked.





The Far-Eastern style is evident.



We've seen better character models, we have to say.

Atlantica Online

FIRST LOOK

If it doesn't sink without a trace, this could still be a very deep strategic MMO

What's the story?

A lethal energy known as Oriharukon is emanating from Atlantis and poisoning the rest of the world. Your party will travel the globe to stem the tide in the hotspots of ancient civilisations, including Hanang (Korea), the Indus Valley (India and Pakistan), Mesopotamia (Iraq, Syria and Turkey), Egypt's Pyramids, Angkor Wat and even North America.

What do we know?

Atlantica will blend classic turn-based combat with character management of your NPC party and higher-level strategic management of cities and even countries. You will recruit eight NPC mercenaries to aid you and be able to group with two other human players and their mercs to form uber-groups of 27 for adventuring. Above this are guild and group guild allegiances, and it's here that cities and countries will go to war.

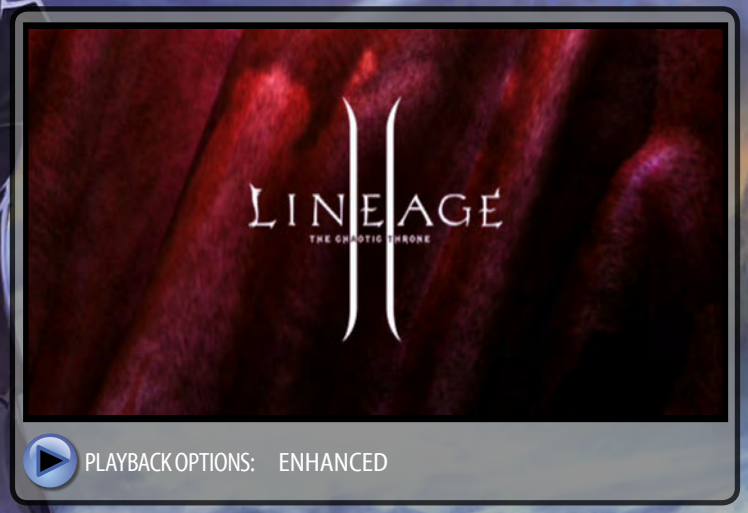
When do we get more?

An open beta began in July, so try and get on it.

Anything else to declare?

The mercenary system is pretty complex and allows players to manage several characters at once, all of whom can be raised right from infancy if desired, or recruited later in life. Mercenaries will age and their powers weaken, so they'll need to be managed and replaced through the game years. They can even have kids themselves!

Reputation is EVERYTHING



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LINEAGE II TEAM

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Publisher: SOE/Warner
Developer: SOE Austin
Heritage: EverQuest, Star Wars Online, The Agency
Link: www.dcuniverse online.com
ETA: TBC

DC Universe Online

FIRST LOOK

Dark Knights, Caped Crusaders and psychotic clowns need playmates…



PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of DC Universe Online

"Aid the Joker as you infiltrate Batman's hidden lair, the Batcave"

You too can keep small boys in caves and get them to dress up for you!





Fight in the air with superpowers.



Everyone picks on Superman – will you too in DCUO?

What's the story?

Drawing on the rich comic book heritage of DC Comics, this ambitious MMO invites you to join (but not play) iconic characters such as Superman, Batman and the Joker in familiar settings like Metropolis, Gotham City and Arkham Asylum, fighting either with them or against them depending on your good/evil choices. You may be using superhuman powers of flight to help Superman in the skies of Metropolis, aiding the Joker as you infiltrate Batman's hidden lair, the Batcave, or freezing enemies with ice powers and throwing them off the Daily Planet news building.

What do we know?

The visual style benefits massively from the close involvement of Jim Lee, whose acclaimed artwork for DC Comics make him the dream Creative Director for this project.

When do we get more?

We'll be on the Beta as soon as it opens!

Anything else to declare?

As you'd expect, this will be an action-packed game, and Jim Lee explains that, "DCUO is in many ways a reinvention of the traditional MMO. It's a hybrid between the traditional MMO and a button-mashing, console-action game." Could this be a rival at last to City of Heroes? See our Replay section for more on that…

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Publisher: Codemasters Online Gaming
Developer: Turbine
Heritage: Dungeons & Dragons Online
Link: www.unlockthe minesofmoria.com
ETA: Autumn

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of LOTRO: Moria

The Lord of the Rings Online: Mines of Moria

FIRST LOOK

"Speak friend and enter"… The Tolkien MMO opens its secret door to new adventurers



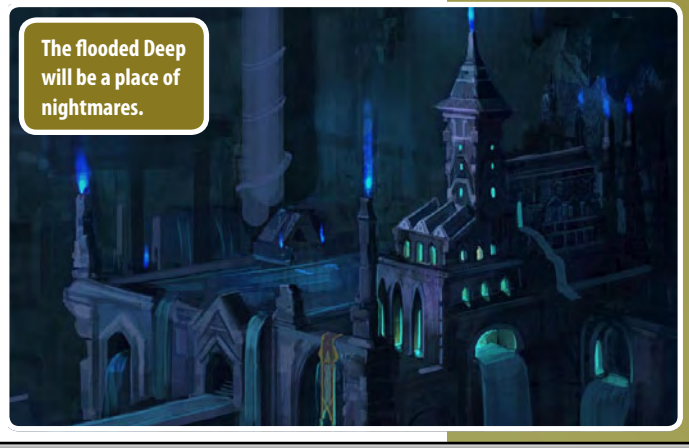
"This is the location that spawned all dungeon adventuring"

Dwarves can always be counted on to make an excellent gate.



Now that's a set of bellows for you!





The flooded Deep will be a place of nightmares.

What's the story?

This Volume II expansion pack opens up one of the darkest corners of Middle Earth, the massive tunnel, hall and mine network of Moria, grandest ancient city of the dwarves. Running beneath the Misty Mountains, this is the location that spawned all dungeon adventuring and will be packed with nasties such as goblin hordes and The Watcher!

What do we know?

Moria will expand the level cap to 60, introduce new traits, virtues, skills and class quests, and introduce two new classes in Rune-keeper and Warden. Even more powerful items can be crafted and you can even forge legendary items.

When do we get more?

We'll have more screens and a hands-on next issue.

Anything else to declare?

This opener to Volume II of LOTRO will encompass six new books, which will include exciting quests such as the release of Durin's Bane, the battle against the Watcher and the race to give support to Galadriel. We can't wait!

7 UP

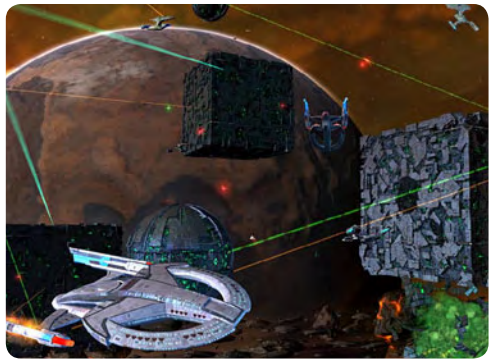
New MMOs and content updates to mark on your calendar with a BIG RED PEN!



Guild Wars CC

Developer: NCsoft | **ETA:** September 5th

There's never been a better time to get into the stunning fantasy MMO Guild Wars. This popular and well-established world is now available as a Complete Collection bumper pack that combines the three standalone campaigns of Guild Wars (Prophecies), Guild Wars Factions and Guild Wars Nightfall. As part of the boxset you'll even be given the massive expansion pack Guild Wars: Eye of the North and an exclusive Golem Hero!



Star Trek Online

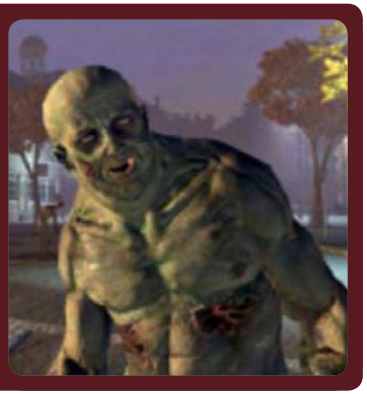
Developer: Cryptic | **ETA:** 2009

It's fantastic news for fans of this beleaguered title, which has at last been picked up by a developer we can trust to get it right and actually release the game. City of Heroes' Cryptic Studios will be making it so, and we can't wait for them to beam us up into a Beta soon…

The Secret World

Developer: Funcom | **ETA:** TBA

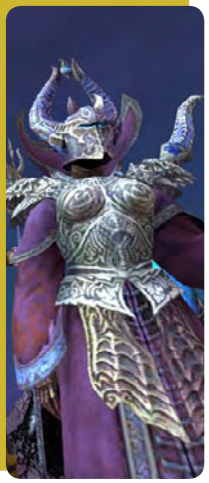
With Age of Conan successfully launched, Funcom will next be turning its attention to this unusual MMO project, headed by respected game designer Ragnar Tournquist (The Longest Journey and Dreamfall). Set in a conspiracy-packed sci-fi world within our own more humdrum environs, locations such as London will feature portals to a more dangerous place.



Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning

Publisher : EA | **ETA:** September 18th

If you're really quick, you may be able to get onto the last-minute public Beta for WAR, as this will be open from 7th September, just ahead of the game's launch on 18th. The game has been in closed Beta for some time, so this will be your last opportunity before release to get in some early orc-bashing action!



EverQuest II The Shadow Odyssey

Developer: SOE | **ETA:** November 18th

A massive new expansion has just been announced for this grizzled MMO veteran. The Shadow Odyssey is the fifth expansion and introduces 20 new zones including the dungeon Guk and new overland zone, Innothule Swamp. Level cap will be increased to 85 and it includes access to all previous expansion and adventure packs.



ON THE RADAR

2009
- Star Trek Online

WINTER
- World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

AUTUMN
- Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning

SUMMER
- Guild Wars Complete Collection

Operation Immortality

Publisher: NCsoft | **ETA:** October

In what could be perhaps the greatest and most daring publicity stunt ever to promote an MMO, game designer Richard Garriott will be blasting into space to visit the International Space Station this October, delivering an Immortality Drive containing the digitised DNA of select players, plus Tabula Rasa characters and messages!



The Chronicles of Spellborn

Publisher: Frogster **ETA:** Autumn

This vast fantasy realm consists of shard worlds floating in a magic storm known as Deadspell. Combat-heavy, you'll have to master spell, melee and ranged attacks to prosper.

DREAM OF MIRROR DOMO

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MMOZINE EXCLUSIVE

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

Our Wrath of the Lich King preview brings you up to date with the latest World of Warcraft expansion, complete with exclusive videos, screens and more...

Things are getting a little quiet in the World of Warcraft at the moment. It's getting harder and harder to find a PuG for the daily heroic, and plans for 25-man raids are frequently having to be put on hold for lack of interest.

Perhaps everyone's outside enjoying the sun? Unlikely, given the state of the Summer so far. Maybe they're watching the Olympics? Ah sorry, but the only games we're interested in are interactive, mate.

Here's a more likely story: they're taking a bit of a break before Warhammer Online comes out, as a lot of folks are getting ready to lose themselves in that particular world

Publisher: Blizzard
Developer: Blizzard
Heritage: Warcraft, Starcraft and Diablo series
Link: www.worldofwarcraft.com
ETA: TBC

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

World of Warcraft cont.

of goblin throwing and orc-baiting.

Maybe, just maybe, they've finally exhausted all the possibilities that Burning Crusade had to offer them. WoWed out at last, the army of nine million are downing tools and refusing to grind for any more shadow motes for little more than a tiny increase to their DPS.

Blizzard had better not start shutting down servers just yet though, because when Wrath of the Lich King arrives – and launch is currently thought to be in three months – they'll be back. All of them.

Beta busting

The beta for this second add-on to WoW has been running for a couple of weeks now, although unless some rampaging maniac has taken an axe to your Internet connection, you probably knew that already. The web is full of stories from Northrend – the Arctic isle where most of the new bits take place – already. In just 14 days or so, most of the talent trees have been rebuilt and several large game-balancing patches have already been released in response to some direct player feedback.

What's it like? Well, there's just one European server live, and access is restricted to those who went to the Worldwide Invitational or Blizzcon last year. That probably makes over 10,000 players trying to access one server, so as you might expect, there are a few bugs still to work out. Lag spikes and crashing are the order of the day and there's a remarkable amount of basic stuff – like map graphics – still missing. It may cause some to speculate on whether or not it really will be ready by the end of the year...

> *"It's getting harder and harder to find a PuG for the daily heroic"*

Missing links

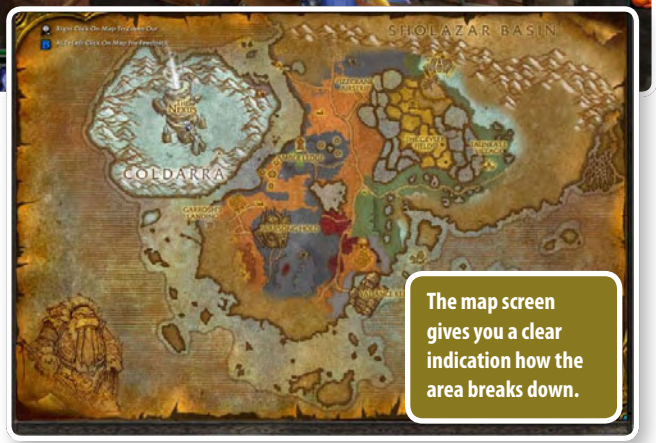
What else is missing? Well, the new profession (Inscriptions) isn't properly implemented yet. It was recently introduced and you get six new glyph slots, three for minor and three for major glyphs. The minor glyphs are for cosmetic changes, such as the mage glyph for polymorph to penguin form. The major glyphs though are gameplay altering, and potentially add to the need to relearn how to best play your character. For example, the druid gets an out-of-combat res glyph, which has implications for raids. Some are less significant, but still enhance you abilities, such as the Glyph of Fire Ward that adds 5% chance to reflect fire spells, or Glyph of Siphon Life that adds 20% to your Siphon Life spell.

There's still more work to be done on Inscriptions and many of the new trees in other professions are still sparsely populated but... oh sod it. Let's stop pretending.

So far, Blizzard has done an amazing job – as it did with Burning Crusade – at introducing new stuff that'll appeal to old dungeoning



Lines of new recruits, like a Medieval Ellis Island.



The map screen gives you a clear indication how the area breaks down.


Things get hot in Utgarde Keep.


Arrival to Northrend is by boat, from Menethil Harbour or a new port in Stormwind. The Horde get airships.



World of Warcraft cont.

hacks and shiny-eyed newcomers to Azeroth alike. Pretty much everyone who's ever played Warcraft beyond level 10 will pick up a copy as soon as is humanly possible, and enjoy it.

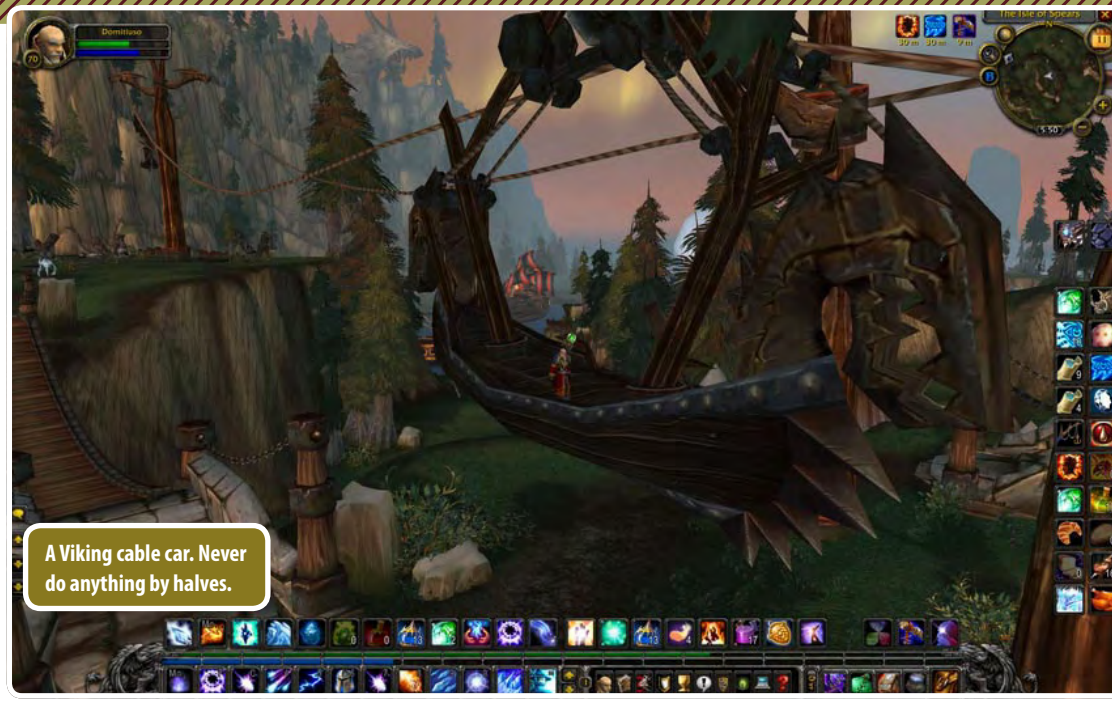
It doesn't need saying, but this is going to be huge.

Huge, because the devs aren't being as controversial as Burning Crusade. There's no massive gear reset in which painstakingly put together purple armour sets will swiftly be replaced by greens. To give an example of the items in so far, rare drops from the bosses of the first dungeon are around Tier 4 stats, so they're perfect for those who never made a heroic and an interesting alternative for toon with a half-set of loot from the badge vendors in Outland.

And huge because it's not just about new level 80 skills and spells. Everything has been – and is continuing to be – reworked. Not just because of glyphs, playstyles which have been honed over the last year of high-level raiding will be challenged and re-thought, and on the whole, it looks like there'll be more buttons to press, too.

For example, an Arcane Mage has a variety of equally powered spells at their disposal to choose a suitable rotation in a boss fight, plus some interesting procs to watch out for and fire off when they go live.

"Playstyles which have been honed over the last year of high-level raiding will be challenged"







A giant sea turtle carrying the world on its back. If the world is a large boat, that is.



The view across Borean Tundra. Lots of stuff to see here.

World of Warcraft cont.

It looks, on this first evidence, as if we're being carefully manipulated away from repeatedly pressing the same button for an entire fight.

Some established players may still want to stick to the same routines, like a lazy comedian delivering tired and worn-out punchlines one more sad and sorry time. For most, you'd hope, the renewed challenge of theory-crafting your character from scratch will blow away any doldrums you may have sailed into. And it doesn't matter anyway, as it's going to be huge. Really, really huge.

Knights who say Ni

There are no new playable races in Lich King – although there are a wonderful number of new NPC types and models, including villages

> *"Pretty much everyone who's played Warcraft will pick up a copy as soon as is humanly possible"*

of strange walrus people – but there is the first 'Hero' class.

The Death Knight isn't much of a hero, mind. Whatever race you choose for your dark reaver, you start off in the service of the lord of the Scourge, the Lich King himself. At

FEEL THE WRATH

Getting to grips with the Lich King

TOOLED UP **DA-DA-DALARAN** **INSTANCE REPLAY**

The new armour in WoTLK looks and feels different to what's gone before – – even cloth items have a Nordic-styling. Mostly they feature Stamina as the predominant stat, putting them on a par with season 1 PVP gear. An odd choice, which will no doubt become clear in time.





Take that, engineers! We all have aeroplanes now. Later on, you'll be able to fight in air-to-air combat.

World of Warcraft cont.

his personal behest, you'll be sent off to lay waste to the still pristine lands of the Eastern Kingdoms, beyond the Plaguelands.

You enter this world at a reasonable level 55 – although unable to spend talent points just yet – as part of the Lich King's powerful invasion force. By the time you've finished the quest chain though, the roles are reversed and you'll be off to the Outlands as an upstanding, if undead, member of the Horde or Alliance.

Of the new quests released so far, this chain is by far the most enjoyable, and shows how tightly Blizzard is winding the Warcraft lore around this expansion – possibly to bring back more committed role players who are having fun in Lord of the Rings Online or Conan. After you've completed it, the Lich King retreats to his stronghold in Northrend with the level 70 characters in hot pursuit.

A big new addition to the game is the much vaunted Achievements system. It integrates with Reputation and adds another incentive for you to play, so you can try and become the first mage on your realm to reach level 80 and become famous, or you can pursue others that are more accessible to all, like completing 3,000 quests.

New ports have opened up around the world – including one in Stormwind – to take your experienced adventurers northwards to fight the Scourge on its home territory, but to be honest, the questing there isn't quite as much fun as the Death Knight intro yet. There are some good ideas and a lot of pace to the way stories develop, but anyone expecting a clean break from the interminable 'find x of x' type challenge will be largely disappointed.

MMOZine EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

"A big new addition to the game is the Achievements system"

Battle for Light's Hope



Click on the hand icon left to play this small version, or click right to see the enhanced version (req. fast internet)

Roll over screen for annotations



Torturing a prisoner, 24-style.



Infinite variety

One thing that Blizzard has got dead right with Northrend though, is the variety of locations and things to do. There's a lot of level 70 areas for example, including two separate landing areas that will take you all the way to your first new level. Much of it can be skipped first time round, but for players with a lot of alts – and there are more than a few of those these days – it's



It's like Viva Pinata, but with more axes and bloodshed.



MMOZine EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

"New ports have opened up around the world to take your adventurer northwards"

Flight and Achievements



Click on the hand icon left to play this small version, or click right to see the enhanced version (req. fast internet)

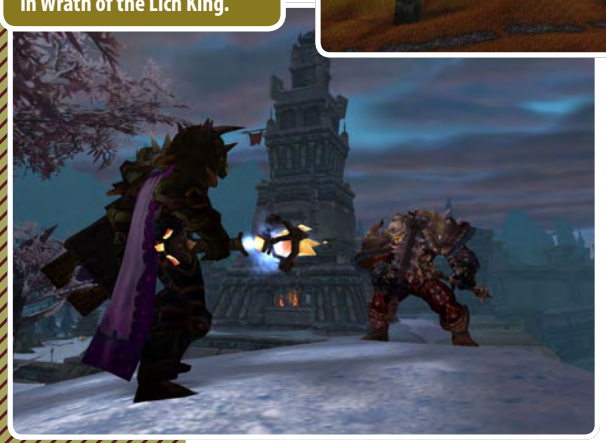
ROLL OVER THE BIG PICTURE



If he's about to knight us then we're genuinely fearful for our shoulders. Let's double cross him.

You might not be able to jump on you epic flying mount in Lich King, but there's still plenty of ways to see the skies, with flying missions like this one on a steam powered plane.

They grow them big and ugly in Wrath of the Lich King.





World of Warcraft cont.

looking like there will be several routes to work multiple characters through Northrend, at least for the early stages. And that's going to be appreciated quite highly.

The completed zones too, are full of different types of arctic terrain and places to visit. There's nothing like, say, Zangamarsh, which began as wonderfully abstract but soon became an overpowering place of purple monotony.

And there are changes coming through all the time. And a lot of stuff left to be done. Big things and small things – at the time of writing for example, the dragon on the log-in screen has just got his textures.

Some of the enhancements you won't even have to wait for Wrath of Lich King to launch for either. Blizzard has announced that, like the Before the Storm patch before Burning Crusade, it is going to make certain features available to all players. These include new class spells and talents, the Stormwind Harbour (though that will be for tourists only unless you've got the expansion), the new barber shops so you can change your haircut (see page 40 for more on this), two new arenas and the new Inscription profession (though only up to level 375). It's quite a generous amount of the new features for free, especially the giveaway of the new profession and arenas.

There's no indication that the new graphics will make their way into the main game though. Blizzard has confirmed the three areas we've all spotted in the Lich King expansion, namely the new shadow system, which shows both character and structure

MMOZine

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

KEEP GOING!

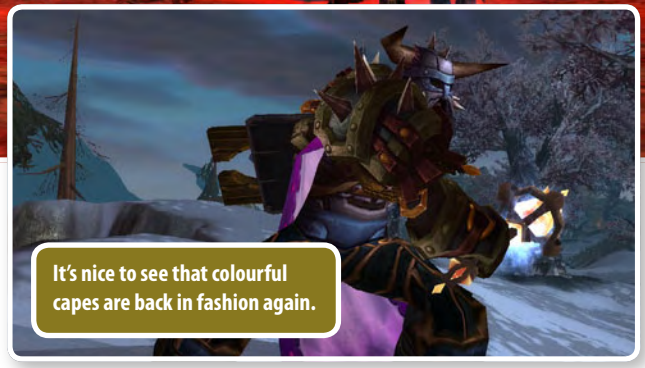
Click here to continue to "Welcome to Valiance Keep"

Spear Surfing



Click on the hand icon left to play this small version, or click right to see the enhanced version (req. fast internet)





World of Warcraft cont.

shadows, the shader technology which we've shown off in several screens on these pages and a an enhanced view distance. There's more graphical enhancements planned beyond those in Wrath of the Lich King too, though Producer J. Allen Brack has ruled out an entire new graphics engine saying that instead they are working feature by feature, looking for example at introducing new water visuals in a future update.

For now though, Wrath of the Lich King is already looking good. Some would argue that given the strength of Warcraft right now, better than it has to be. Kudos, Blizzard.





MMOZine Verdict

Even better than it needs to be, with more surprises coming all the time - warsome!

HOW COMPLETE

85%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

Valiant Effort



TAKE THE TOUR! Click on the hand icons for more details and a video of each section. Requires fast broadband.

KEEP GOING!

Click here to continue to the free desktop wallpapers!

Welcome to Valiance Keep, one of the ports through which you enter the Wrath of the Lich King. Both Valiance Keep and Howling Fjord are accessed from the Old World, from Stormwind's new harbour and Menethil Harbour respectively.

Currently Howling Fjord feels more complete with more to do and several ways to level your character. Valiance Keep still has more work to be done, but that doesn't mean there isn't plenty to explore here.

As you progress, you'll also be able to reach the city of Dalaran at level 74. Dalaran is a neutral city, like Shattrath City in Burning Crusade and like Shattrath, Dalaran has faction specific areas.

If you're worried by the news that you can't hop on your mount when you arrive, then fear not because you will be able to get back into the air when you attain level 77.

Horde players, of course, won't care what Valiance Keep looks like because they will enter Northrend by Warsong Hold, also in the Borean Tundra like Valiance Keep, or Vengeance Landing.

Take a quick look at the main keep by clicking the top left icon, while you can find out more about how we first got killed by hovering over the ship. The middle right icon shows your arrival and gives some more details on the taxi mounts available, while over on the right, the lighthouse gives you a bit more detail on the graphics.

Finally, you can click on the video icon on the Arrival at Valgarde image to the right to see a video of the arrival at the other Alliance port.

Arrival at Valgarde



FREE! EXCLUSIVE WORLD OF WARCRAFT WALLPAPERS

Only available here, give your desktop the Lich King treatment with these hot artwork downloads!



KEEP GOING!

Click here to continue to our Wrath of the Lich King interview.

The awesome Wrath of the Lich King expansion is fast approaching for World of Warcraft, and to get us even more excited (if that were possible), Blizzard has created some exclusive wallpapers for our readers. So get them now, only with this issue of MMOZine, paste them all over your desktop and just hope that your PC doesn't faint with all the excitement!

To download and install these exclusive wallpapers, follow the directions opposite…



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MMOZINE EXCLUSIVE

Aion: The Tower of Eternity

Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: NCsoft
Heritage: Tabula Rasa, Auto Assault, Guild Wars
Link: www.aiononline.com
ETA: Spring 2009

We continue our in-depth look at one of the most exciting role-playing games you'll see next year

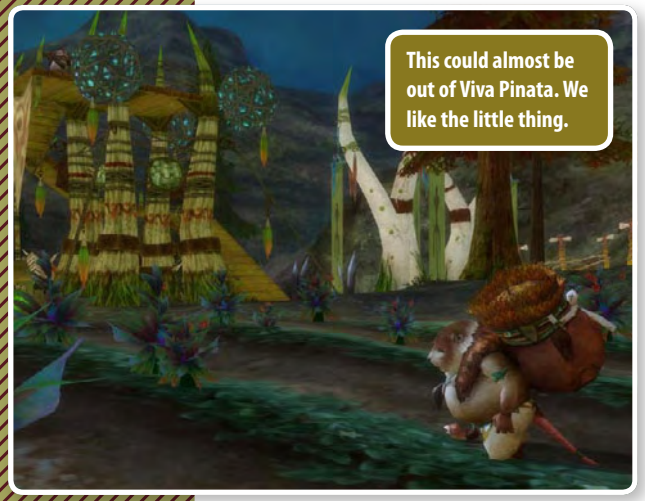
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Aion: The Tower of Eternity

Following on from our preview of Aion in the last issue of PCGZine, we've delved even further into the bizarre quazi-world of Atreia to bring you the latest information from the frontline. In case you missed that preview (and shame on you if you did), let's let Aion themselves get you up to speed.

"In the beginning, five Dragon Lords were created by Aion, but they became hungry for power and decided to overthrow his rule. In return, Aion created twelve Imperial Lords, who fought the Dragon Lords."

This conflict was a hell of a fight, which actually caused the world to split in two. The Imperial Lords were split evenly between the upper and lower halves of the world, forming the game's two factions – the Asmodian and the Elyos – while the Dragon Lords, now called the Balaur, inhabit the bit in the middle, called the Abyss.

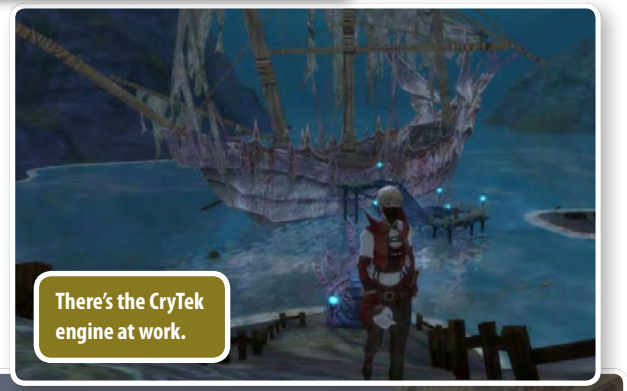
And it's the factional split that will concern you when you first start the game. While Aion's character creation system is phenomenally broad in scope, letting you create all manner of customised characters, the class system is incredibly slim. Once you've picked either the light (Elyos) or the dark

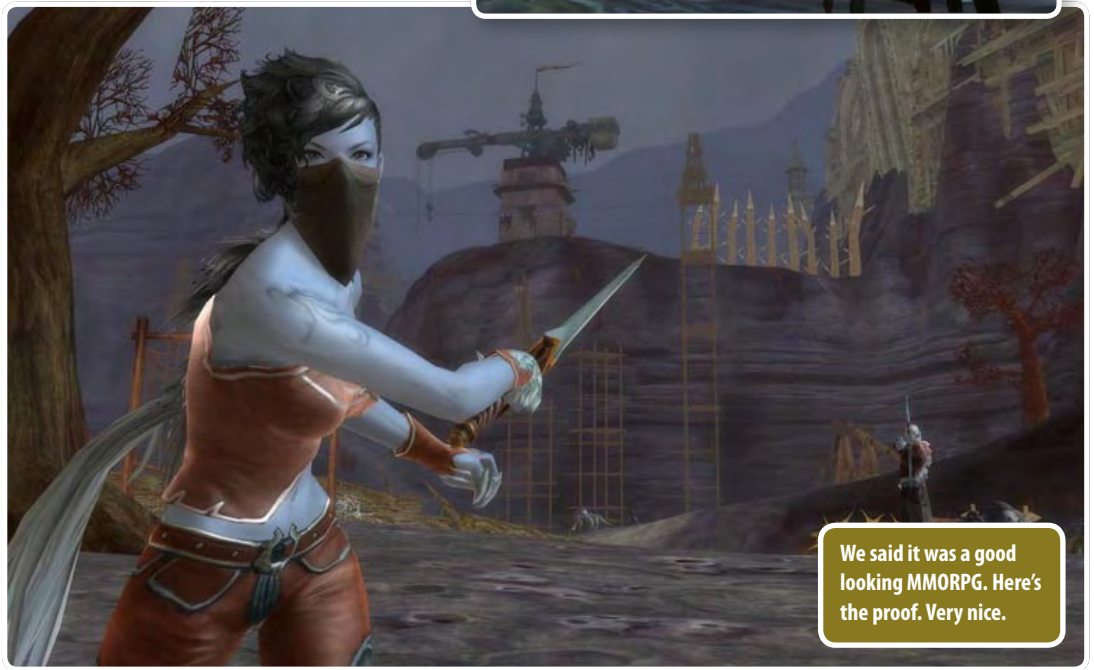

This could almost be out of Viva Pinata. We like the little thing.

"Aion's character creation system is phenomenally broad in scope, letting you create all manner of custom characters"



Did you foolishly miss our massive hands-on with Aion in PCGZine? Click here to get it now for free.


There's the CryTek engine at work.


We said it was a good looking MMORPG. Here's the proof. Very nice.



Beast men roam these planes. Avoid.



We went to a nightclub that looked like this once.

Aion continued...

(Asmodian), and one of the four classes on offer, you begin your quest into the game's world.

This all leads toward a special event that happens when you reach level 9, an almost coming-of-age quest called an Ascension Quest, that will define what your character will become. For the Asmodians, this quest begins when a strange Daeva (a god in Aion) sends you on a quest to find three fortune tellers who can help you decipher your future.

After finding all of the items the fortune teller requests, you're greeted with a fancy cutscene – starring your own character. NCsoft has been very specific in wanting to provide a more story-driven quest than is usually found in MMOs, and to this extent, cutscenes are found more regularly than they are in other titles in the genre, though never enough to hamper the action.

Without wanting to throw too many spoilers into the air, at the end of this quest, you eventually

"NCsoft has been very specific in wanting to provide a more story-driven quest than is usually found in MMOs"

THE ABYSS

One of the game's biggest features explained

LOWER ABYSS **UPPER ABYSS** **MIDDLE ABYSS**

The Abyss is the zone you reach at 'level 20-ish' that'll contain one of the biggest features of the game – PvPvE combat. The Abyss is also split into three levels, each of which is different. The first level is the Lower Abyss, which contains three castles, and the lowest level content.





Farmers go to new lengths to defend their crop during the grain shortage.

Aion continued...

become a Daeva – an immortal, basically – and are granted your wings, along with the ability to specialise your character class. For most, we're assured, this is where the game will begin proper, as you begin to reap the true potential of your abilities. Best of all, we're promised it'll only take nine hours to get there – the rest of which is spent being slowly introduced to the world and the new sights and sounds.

And once you've become a Daeva, you can begin exploring…

"When you reach level 20-ish, you gain access to the area we call the Abyss. This is the main area of the game." The Abyss also doesn't exactly sound like the nicest of places.

For a start, this is where you find Fortresses – huge player-controlled castles that factions will be in a constant state of war over. Of course, controlling the land comes with huge benefits, and not merely financial – when you own the fortress, your faction gains exclusive access to the land and hunting ground that surrounds it, deep in the land of high-level territory.

"To make the matter of capturing fortresses even more deadly, a third ingredient is added to the mix… PvPvE"



Purple sky at night… we don't know what that means.

As the fortresses are player-contested, it's a pretty safe bet they'll be constantly changing hands, but if you're looking to capture a fortress then there is help for you. "To help you conquer the fortress, you have what we call artefacts. These are very small islands around the castles that can be claimed separately from the fortress. Once claimed, you have an item that you can activate, which will have a zone effect – we have one that turns every enemy into a frog."

Of course, these island artefacts also add an extra layer of strategy to the proceedings. When you're capturing a fortress, where do you go first? Do you send a unified force to besiege the castle? Or do you split into two groups, and risk meeting a huge resistance and being overwhelmed before your second group can capture the artefact that'll give you the advantage you need?

To make the matter of capturing fortresses even more deadly, a third ingredient is added into the mix… PvPvE. The Abyss is where most of the PvPvE action happens, as it allows for player versus player, with the possibility of being attacked by a common enemy.

THE ABYSS

Developer chat…

MMOZine EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

How do the Asmodian and Elyos quests differ?
The main difference between the Ascension quests for the two factions is background related. The Elyos need to recover their memory to remember that they were once Daeva. The Asmodians, however, need to prove that they are worth the status of Daeva, so they're trying to accomplish a destiny if you prefer.

Do your wings grant you any extra powers?
The wings themselves do not grant the player any extra powers, but the ability to fly obviously unlocks a number of unique 'flight based' skills that are not available on the ground.

Using the Far Cry engine seems an unusual choice. Why did you choose that to power the game?
The CryTek engine is an incredibly versatile game engine that offers the development team the creative freedom to envisage their most wonderful visual fantasies without the technical restraints. The engine is very powerful at showing intricately detailed worlds, while still having reasonable system requirements.

What is the Stigma system?
The Stigma system is the ability for a player to utilise skills from other character classes than the one they have chosen. The following is a good example of how this can work:

Imagine you are playing as an Assassin and sizing up a Spiritmaster's back for a stealthy dagger stab. The Spiritmaster turns at the last moment and your cover is blown. No big deal, you think and continue the attack. The Spiritmaster summons a Fire Spirit then equips a Polearm. Things just might have gotten interesting for you. Taking cues from dual and multi-class ideas, the Stigma system allows you to change skills, stats or buffs that wouldn't usually be available to a particular class. Players will have freedom to experiment with different play styles based on the Stigma Stones they select.

Aion continued...

Picture the scene, if you will… You're engaged in a huge battle against the other faction. There's upwards of fifty people involved. It's creating a huge scene. Swords and shields are clashing; players dropping everywhere, but you're at a stalemate. Then someone always has to come and spoil the party.

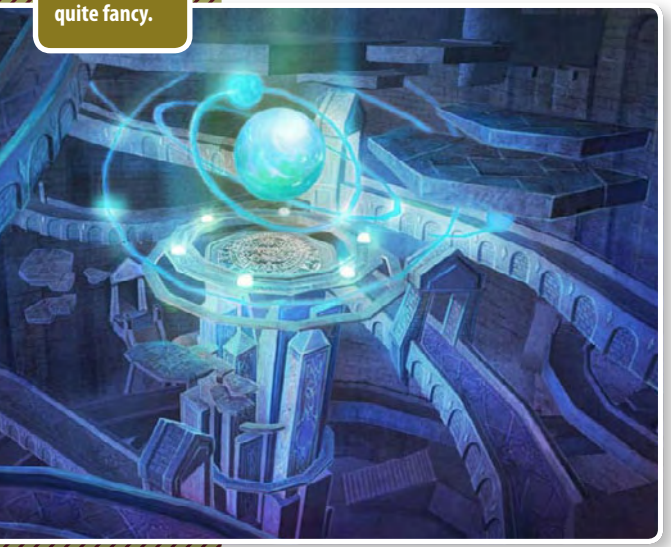
The Balaur, as we mentioned earlier, are a race descended from the Dragon Lords that made their home in the Abyss after the Millennium War. Presumably because they inhabit such a nasty place, they currently spend their time picking fights with anyone and anything that happens to look at them in the wrong way. And you don't even get a warning they're coming. "It adds an unexpected element, because they could just turn up in the middle of a battle and wreak havoc. You never know what's going to happen."

"The Balaur are a race descended from the Dragon Lords that made their home in the Abyss"

And that, we think, is one of the most appealing things about Aion. It's a brand new MMORPG and it looks absolutely stunning, yet we're still not sure what's going to happen. With the focus on story-driven gameplay, and the promise you could solo your way through the whole thing if you wanted to, this is sounding like a really impressive game. You can rest assured we'll be keeping a close watch on it.



When Lord of the Rings goes bad…



The inside of the Fortresses are looking quite fancy.



The environments in Aion are looking nice and varied.

MMOZine Verdict

One of the most exciting games to look forward to next year in vision and content

HOW COMPLETE

75%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%



GUILD WARS

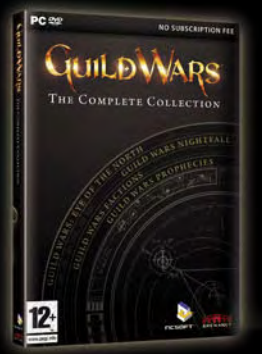
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MMOZine EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

World of Talkcraft: Chat of the Lich King

Our exclusive Blizzard interview reveals a THIRD expansion!



Tom Chilton is the Lead Designer for WoW: Wrath of the Lich King.

After immersing ourselves in the Lich King beta, we caught up with Lead Designer for World of Warcraft, Tom Chilton and Production Director Jay Allen Brack.

We're presuming that there's no release date set yet?
Jay – Not yet… Tom's joke is that it'll be the 'next Tuesday after it's done'.

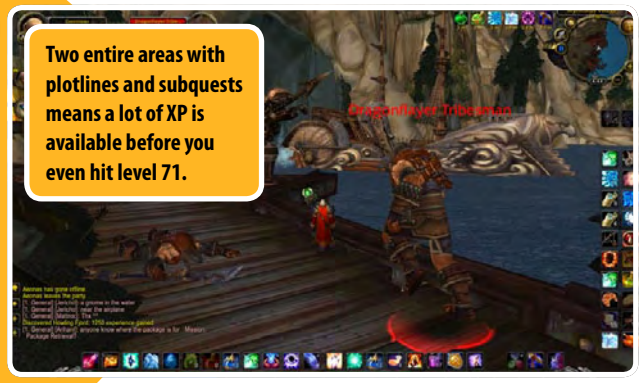
What features are going to be added next into the beta?
Jay – Soon we'll release the level cap up to 80. We'll also open one or more zones at the same time. We've got Lake Wintergrasp, Storm Peaks and Icecrown Glacier currently unexplored at this point.

How long will it take someone to reach level 80 from starting in Northrend?

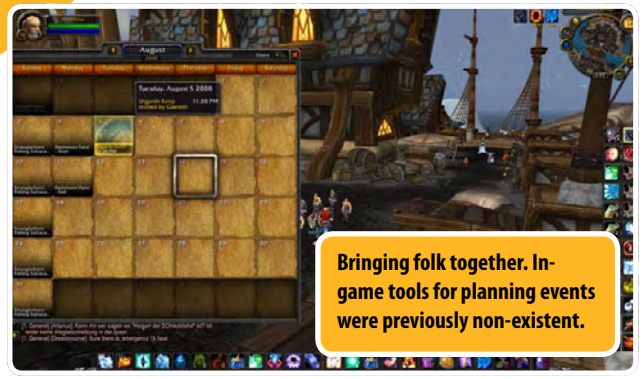
"Soon we'll release the level cap up to 80"

Tom – We're still in the process of tuning levelling speed, although I suspect it will be somewhat slower than it was for getting from level 60 to 70, because we have substantially more quest content in Northrend than we ever did in Outland.

As a starting point, we tried to mirror the 60-70 XP curve, but people were getting to level 77 before the end of the second zone. It was kind of silly that they were getting close to level 80 without really seeing around half of the new continent.



Two entire areas with plotlines and subquests means a lot of XP is available before you even hit level 71.



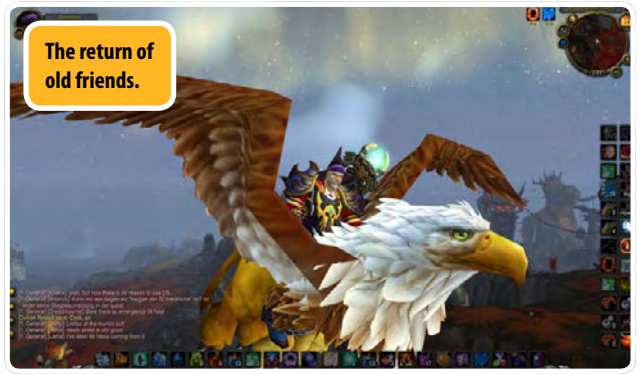
Bringing folk together. In-game tools for planning events were previously non-existent.



Winterspring is the new zone full of new PvP battle types.



The Lich King. Doesn't look so frightening close up, does he?



The return of old friends.

Interview cont.

If reaching the next level is always a distant goal though, won't players get bored?
Tom – We are worried about whether or not the game rewards you too slowly. We'll peel it back a bit from what's in the beta right now, but to where we just don't know yet. Another consideration we have is the amount of time it takes to get from level 1 to whatever the current maximum level is. In order to make sure that doesn't change too much we've narrowed the amount of XP that you will need to get from levels 60-70.

One thing we did notice is that Northrend is 'alt friendly' – with two entry points and lots of content, you won't necessarily have the same journey through with a second character.
Tom – That's definitely our intent, and we're trying to map our levelling curve under the assumption that you will only do one of those two starting zones.




A human Death Knight, the first Hero class so far announced.

The other thing that's obvious is that there isn't the big gear reset that there was at the start of The Burning Crusade…
Tom – We really have to use our gut to figure out at what point do people feel their epics have served them well enough. I think we're hitting a good balance though, if you have high end epics they'll last you until the late 70s.

It must be very hard trying to take everyone's views into account. Do you ever get


This Orc's pint is definitely one that you don't want to spill.

Publisher: Blizzard
Developer: Blizzard
Heritage: Warcraft, Diablo, Starcraft
Link: www.wow-europe.com
ETA: Late 2008 (TBC)

Interview cont.

tempted to say 'We have 10m subscribers, we must doing something right' and ignore all of your critics?
Tom – That would certainly be entertaining, but the reality is that we get really good feedback from the community and it gives us a really good sense of what's going on. We always try to understand the perspective from which feedback comes. If you don't, you dismiss what people are saying, even though it may be very valid.

Our feedback would be 'Are you going to fix Blink'?
Tom – (Laughs) I totally know what you're talking about. It's not working as well as we'd like it to.

It feels like a lot of effort has been put into the talent trees to challenge peoples' play styles and move them away from one button spam. Is that a conscious design goal?
Tom – It is to a degree. At the very least we know that as we tweak the talent trees and add new levels we know that a lot is going to change, one way or the other. Things won't feel the same, new choices will present themselves and old choices will become irrelevant.

Do you aim to stay ahead of the theorycrafters who write simulators and find out that the best way to play a character may be just to spam one spell?
Tom – We try as much as possible, but inevitably we miss a few things.


There ain't no pot of gold at the end of this rainbow.



If those long, flowing locks start to bother you then you can even take yourself off to the barber's.

Publisher: Blizzard
Developer: Blizzard
Heritage: Warcraft, Diablo, Starcraft
Link: www.wow-europe.com
ETA: Late 2008 (TBC)

It takes a lot of time to do those kinds of full analysis.

How aware are you of games like Star Wars Galaxies, where changes to the class mechanics drove people away in swarms?
Tom – It's definitely something we've paid attention to. One thing I can't put a price on is that most of the people on the team play the game for fun, in their own time. It really keeps you in touch with what's working, and without it we'd be more likely to make those mistakes.

Do you feel the world-based PvP is working at the moment?
Tom – We want to do more of it with Wrath of the Lich King. With Burning Crusade we felt we hit on some good spots – the Auchindoun Spirit Towers worked well, and the Halaa objectives were okay in some ways. We wanted to take the elements that worked really well and concentrate them into one zone – Lake Wintersgrasp – rather than spread them out.

How big can Warcraft get? Have you reached saturation point yet?
Tom – There's a good chance Wrath of the Lich King will see us add more players, but historically we're not very good at predicting how many.

Do you kind of give up guessing?
Tom – To be honest, it's never been our focus. We just make the game as well as we can and the numbers that want to turn out will.

Are you working on expansion number three yet?
Tom – We have started some early concepting work, but our focus is on Wrath of the Lich King right now.

But we can expect to see more World of Warcraft in the future?
Tom – That's certainly the idea, and all we have to say on it for now.

KEEP GOING!
Click here to continue to our Wrath of the Lich King tutorial.

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Publisher: CCP
Developer: CCP
Heritage: EVE
Link: www.eveonline.com/empyreanage/index.html
OUT NOW

System requirements: Windows 2000/Vista/XP, PIII 800 MHz Intel/AMD CPU, 512MB RAM, 6GB disc space, DirectX 9.0, 32MB 3D video card. Minimum screen resolution is 1024x768. DirectSound Audio

EVE: Empyrean Age

REVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of EVE: Empyrean Age

Space just got a whole lot tougher

EVE Online is easily one of the most established MMOs on the market. With a hardcore, and loyal fanbase, CCP has gained a well-earned reputation for listening to its fans, and providing exactly what they want. Even going as far as appointing a Council of Stellar Management – a group of democratically elected players, who'll form a bridge between the paying community, and the developers, all has been well in EVE for some time, and the economy has been booming.

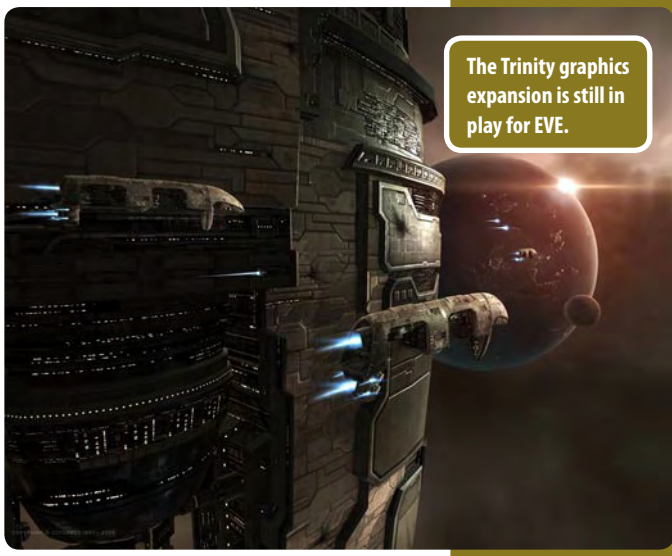
But every good thing, as Gordon Brown is quickly finding out, has a downside. EVE has been quiet – too quiet, for too long, and now things are starting to heat up. The game's four factions, the Amarr, Minmatar, Gallente, and Caldari are heading for an all out war, in what's possibly the biggest change to EVE since its inception. The only question is, as EVE's been such a quiet place for so long, how is the arrival of war going to heat things up?

Brilliantly, as has always been the way with EVE, the answer depends entirely on how you want to play. If you don't want to get involved in the war, you don't have to, and you can simply carry on in your own way. Dividing the galaxy into hotly contested war zones, and places that are still relatively safe, it's entirely possible for a rookie trader to simply potter about his business, and avoid the war all together.


The Empyrean Age expansion brings combat to the forefront.


Graphically, it's hugely impressive.


That's your squad of ships, that is.


The Trinity graphics expansion is still in play for EVE.



War can only mean one thing: big, meaty explosions.



You'll have to amass a big militia before challenging for one of the systems.

EVE continued

But of course, you're not going to want to do that, as the addition of the war mechanic adds the extra level of intrigue and hook that EVE's been looking for. So long as you meet a certain set of requirements, any player can sign up to join one of the four factions' militias, and from there on in you'll be a hired gun. An instant target for players from rival groups, you'll be handed missions from one of 320 new agents, that ask you go in search of other players – setting you quests that actively challenge you to seek out, and defeat real life people, in PvP combat.

If your faction defeats a certain number of enemy players in a certain area within a certain time limit (it's less complicated than it sounds), your faction will then gain the ability to challenge for occupancy of that system. This requires a hugely co-ordinated militia force to attack the System Control Bunker within 24 hours of receiving authorisation to do so, and is easily one of the most exciting moments of the expansion.

Beyond the thrill of the hunt, being part of a militia also has its benefits. Acting like one huge corporation, each militia has a ladder you can climb, and ten levels of ranking for you to attain. This system also increases the sense of camaraderie between you and your fellow militia players, as you're now all fighting for the same cause, and therefore even more likely to help each other out.

MERCENARY DEALINGS

Fighting the good fight…

SIGNING UP **FACTION FIGHTING** **RISE TO THE TOP**

Enlisting for the war effort is easy. If you've got a full account, and a standing of above 0.5 with your faction, you can sign up to 'fight the good fight' by simply selecting the militia control panel from any station.



EVE continued

But the Empyrean Age expansion breaks the rules of EVE ever so slightly, by adding a whole new area. Called the Black Rise, this is a collection of 49 star systems and nearly 40 stations, which play host to many of the battles of the new war. With a new area for the war to spill into and a new place to explore for the more experienced pilots, the addition of the new area is almost as big as the addition of war, and is sure to be appreciated by all kinds of players.

Unfortunately however, while this EVE expansion is undoubtedly great, it still does nothing to make EVE any easier to get into. While it's certainly found its niche with the sci-fi hardcore, at the moment EVE has next to no mainstream appeal, due to its huge learning curve and generally unfriendly nature. The challenge of making EVE accessible to the masses, while also retaining its fan base is a huge question for CCP, and one they ought to address sooner rather than later, if it's going to make the jump to the next level.

Ian Morris

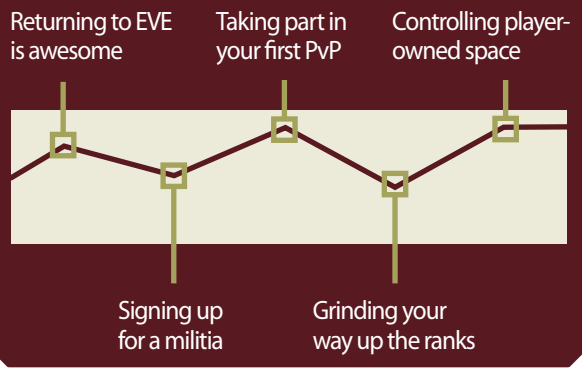


There are 49 star systems in this expansion pack.



It all starts when a ship is flown into a space station.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life



"The Empyrean Age expansion pack breaks the rules slightly by adding a whole new area"

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game, one step at a time…



STARTER'S ORDERS
From humble beginnings, you nervously step foot into the new, hostile world of EVE.



CHOOSE SIDES
Enlisting for the war and getting missions through is easy, and you'll soon start climbing the ladders.



FIRST CONTACT
But, for newbies, the war makes things even more exciting, and possibly even more petrifying.



NOT SO SAFE
Things explode all around you – innocent players are now able to be killed in 'safe zones'.



RANK UP
It's a war out there, soldier. You'll need all of your wits about you if you're going to survive.

MMOZine Verdict

Good things just keep getting better

- War really shakes things up
- Many new missions
- Is accessibility the next step?

REVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Lineage II: Gracia



Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: NCsoft
Heritage: Guild Wars, Tabula Rasa, City of Heroes, Aion
Link: www.lineage2.com/gracia
OUT NOW

System requirements: Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, P3 800MHz CPU, 256MB RAM, NVIDIA GeForce 4 or ATI Radeon 8500 video card, 8GB HD space

Lineage II: The Chaotic Throne: Gracia – The Perils of Kamaloka

Massive overhaul sends a tidal wave of fun crashing through this fantasy world

Faster levelling with an all-new Vitality system, more inventory items, overhauled areas, upgraded crafting and boosted rewards… These are just a few of the host of massive improvements that have been made to Lineage II in Gracia, its latest and farthest-reaching expansion. And, best of all, this is just Gracia Part 1, with Part 2 then Final to come at a later date.

Gracia is an incredible and laudable about-face for Lineage II, which has long been a critically acclaimed but undeniably hardcore grind of an MMO. It's to NCsoft's credit that they recognised the limiting nature of the game for newcomers, with the astonishingly brave admission that: "the process of building and levelling characters can be a very long and frankly tedious process in Lineage II".

Gracia has redressed the balance and then some. Now new players can level up in a few minutes, reaching high levels within a few weeks rather than several months. To ensure faster levelling, XP rewards have been increased throughout for killing creatures and completing





MEET THE KAMALOKALS

The new instance has plenty to offer…

THIS IS A RAID! | BIG GAME HUNTER | IN THE BUFF

Kamaloka is a raid instance, and adventurous parties entering the new zone will face one Kaneus raid monster and some of its minions – the type depending upon instance level.







Lineage II: Gracia cont.

quests (which have also had repetitive quests added to further ensure fast progress). Running out of quests and resorting to tedious creature farming has been practically eliminated, which is great news.

The new Vitality system works brilliantly, racking up points while you're not logged in, or when in a peace zone, or hunting boss and raid monsters. You'll even start this expansion with full Vitality – Vitality is run down by killing standard creatures and gaining XP. It multiplies XP gain depending on how much you have, so it's well worth accruing, especially as it's so easy to earn.

It remains to be seen how the established Lineage II hardcore will take to such a massive opening-up of their world to the masses, who should flock here now that the game has become so much more forgiving and even welcoming – a novel way to describe Lineage II! But there's no doubt in our minds that this is just what the franchise needed to establish a broad and far more entertaining platform for future growth. Fun has arrived in Kamaloka!

Steve Brown





MMOZine Verdict

Lineage II is now officially fun for everyone!

- Much faster levelling
- Goodbye to the grind!
- Clever Vitality system

PLAY AGAIN

City of Heroes & City of Villains



Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: Cryptic Studios/NCsoft
Heritage: Star Trek Online, Champions Online
Link: www.cityofheroes.com
Released: 2005
System reqs: PIII 800MHz, 256MB RAM, 2GB HDD, GeForce 2

REPLAY FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of City of Heroes

Supers, troopers, fights are gonna grind you…

"Both Heroes and Villains can now create characters from both factions"

Although there are many MMOs now planned in the superhero bracket (including DC Universe Online and Cryptic's own Champions Online), it was City of Heroes in 2005 (for Europe) that introduced this new concept in MMOs. And there's never been a better time to get involved, now that NCsoft has taken the generous decision to provide new and existing City of Heroes subscribers free and full access to the partner game, City of Villains (and vice versa).

So whether you're buying the game at retail or online, you'll now get twice the value out of this excellent MMO, with even more slots for the most popular aspect of this game: superhero character creation! And even if you're a lapsed player, you'll still be able to retrieve your old characters from storage.

The franchise has benefited from 12 updates over the years, the latest, Issue 12: Midnight Hour, ushering in a fantastic new Greek and Roman zone, Villain Epic Archetypes and more. Now that the games are merging, Heroes players will for the first time be given the power to build bases for the good guys, something that was previously open only to the Villains. Both Heroes and Villains can now create characters from both factions and experience unique game content previously restricted to one or the other. It's all good stuff!

So why the sudden generosity? No doubt it's partly to firm up the City of Heroes offering before the next wave of superhero MMOs hit, particularly Cryptic's upcoming Champions Online. But it's not just an exercise in consolidation. NCsoft tells us that this is the final preparatory step before they launch some major development plans for the franchise, and while we don't have any details yet, you can expect massive improvements and evolution of Supergroup bases and raids, offline character rewards and the new Mission Maker. We can't wait for more.


Looks like he had his Ready Brek this morning.


The Olympic Mind Control event saw everyone get a gold, funnily.


At last – now we can be good and evil at the same time!

ON A MISSION

The next giant step for the twin cities…

MEET YOUR MAKER Full details of this user-content generator known as Mission Maker have still to emerge, but we do know that there will be a sensible cap on the number of enemies that you'll be able to drop into your custom missions, so this won't be a licence to award your party infinite XP!

EASY AS NPC It's also thought that through the Mission Maker you may be able to add NPC allies to fight alongside your party, and this would add much-desired complexity to this editor. The community's hope is that there will be some real meat to Mission Maker, that it will allow us to affect the living city around the players and that it won't be a basic radio/newspaper mission generator that only really changes NPC dialogue.

WIN! 10 CITY OF HEROES AND CITY OF VILLAINS PACKS!

Game bundles, T-shirts and Artbooks to be rescued by budding superheroes!



To celebrate the combination of their two MMOs, City of Heroes and City of Villains, NCsoft has generously set us up with 10 superb superhero bundles to give away. 10 lucky winners will each receive a retail copy of the new City of Heroes/City of Villains Good vs Evil Combined Edition, a City of Heroes or City of Villains Artbook and a City of Heroes or City of Villains T-shirt. Unfortunately, capes were unavailable.

To be in with a chance of winning one of these fantastic superhero bundles, simply answer the question opposite…

Competition closes 16th Ocober 2008. See website for full T&Cs.

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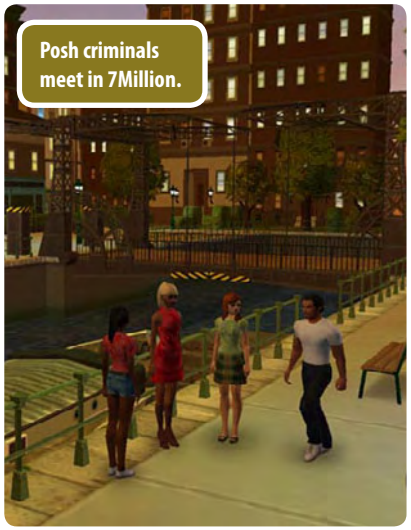
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SPY VS SPY
THE AGENCY SOUNDS LIKE a really different approach to the MMO genre and I'm really looking forward to some online espionage. However, I'd like to know more about how PvP combat will work in the game.
> Doug

>Actually, if you think along the lines of Counter Strike or Team Fortress 2, you wouldn't be too far off the mark. Apparently maps will be multi-purpose, so in effect you'll end up with several optional game modes like Capture the Flag (with team bases), Bombing Run (with explode and defuse objectives), Team Deathmatch (red vs blue elimination). The developers are also looking into ways in which they can tie these PvP modes into the wider mission structures for much greater cohesion overall.


Posh criminals meet in 7Million.

CRIMINAL TENDENCIES
APB IS GOING TO be absolutely awesome I reckon, but are there any more crime-focused MMOs on the horizon that you know of?
> Kat

> Actually, there's a really interesting new MMO that's come to our attention, known as 7Million. It's a free-to-play game where you take on the roles of 'daring thieves', or 'glamorous lady larcenists'. Think David Niven in the early Pink Panther films or Cary Grant and Grace Kelly in Hitchcock's To Catch a Thief. The objective is basically to become as notorious as possible while undertaking your spectacular heists throughout Paradise City. A high degree of character customisation is promised, which will be key to this egocentric gameplay. There will be a mix of mission-based play and action-packed puzzle games.

CONANDONANDON...
AGE OF CONAN HYBORIAN ADVENTURES may not have been the World of Warcraft slayer that it set out to be, but it's a great MMO and I've been loving it! However, surely it's time for Funcom to spice things up a bit for the loyal fans and begin to introduce some major new content. I hope they're not going to forget about Conan and just crack on with this Secret World business now. That would be a real letdown and Conan does need to maintain its momentum.
> Mickey

> We agree, Mickey – it's vitally important in the MMO market to have the constant promise of something fresh and then delivering upon that. Funcom certainly aren't sitting on their barbarian thrones while swords rust and capes gather dust though.
There are very few details yet, but a teaser image is about to be revealed publicly that indicates the first expansion pack for release some time in 2009. To give you a heads-up, it's basically concept art which depicts three warriors wearing green masks and looking very much like ninjas. Behind them wave green pennants decorated with oriental dragons, and there are also pagoda-like buildings, too. So let the speculation commence!
Is this a ninja-themed expansion set in an Orient-styled land, or is this Age of Conan: China's Olympic Games Adventures, where we'll get to compete in Camel Punch events?

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MMOpinion

Our new regular columnists are the gaming staff of www.MMOSite.com This month MMOSite's Tob and Nera ask Atlantica Online to maintain its stamina…

If you read our MMOSite debate on the Stamina system implemented in the Atlantica Beta, you now know both the good and the bad that has come of it. But what's the verdict? What is the final answer? The initial backlash to the Stamina system was near catastrophic for Atlantica. The inclusion of a system that limits freedom and forces players to complete tasks not of their choosing was one that came both as a shock and a realisation for many people.

It was a bold move, and as the system was not implemented in the original build, it was a nasty surprise for the legion of fans that Atlantica had already earned. We have collaborated on our ideas and come to a solid conclusion: In the hope to better the F2P MMO Industry as a whole, the Stamina system should stay.

It not only helps the developer to sustain a regular profit margin from a F2P game, but it also provides a balance between the casual and hardcore gamers, allowing a playing field that caters to all game styles. However if it is not used carefully it could destroy this upcoming game even before it begins.

Atlantica – keep the Stamina system, take a stand here and now and better the F2P gaming market for everyone, gamers and developers alike.

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

Roll yourself a Death Knight



Roll over screen for annotations



The Death Knights are battlefield corpses that are imbued with the souls of another, more malevolent character. Apparently, Teron Gorefiend, who is the object of a quest chain in Shadowmoon Valley, was the first corpse to be 'turned'.

Unfortunately though, you are not the powerful Teron Gorefiend. You are a hapless newbie, who just happens to have been born/created at level 55. When you start off, you won't even have your Runeblade, let alone know how to use it. Which clearly isn't a good thing.

It's not all doom and gloom though, as there is help at hand to guide you around your new body, oh troublesome spirit…

Welcome to the World of Warcraft. Again. Doesn't matter if you never left, because a lot is about to change in the expansion. In many ways, we're all n00bs now.

Right now, everyone seems pretty happy with their lot. Mages get more things that go bang, Shaman totems have a raid-wide effect and Paladins – well, Paladins are always happy aren't they? Big holy monkeys with the imba 'I can do anything' sets. Even retribution Paladins – or LOLadins as they're known for their pointless DPS output – are getting some loving in WoTLK.

What do you need to know? Well, some of the basics have changed: the interface has been tweaked and refined somewhat, Death Knights have a whole new way of casting magic and most importantly, how do you use your pets?

"Mages get more things that go bang, Shaman totems have a raid-wide effect and Paladins – well, they're always happy, aren't they?"

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

There are controversial changes in the way that stats are handled

One controversial change is the lumping together of old items stats into new uber-numbers with a far reaching mechanism. It may seem terrifying at first to see 'Spell Power' instead of 'Damage and Healing', but underneath the game mechanics have been cleverly changed so that everything acts just as it did before.

Spell power
Replacing the separate 'Spell Damage' and 'Spell Healing' stats, Spell Power is one number for all. The healing co-efficient is higher though, so the overall buff is the same as it was. This means that priests no longer need to carry around a separate DPS set.

Crit Chance
Now universal, the same crit rating (with different co-efficients) applies to spells, ranged and melee. So a caster can hit with a staff for a lot more. Still not scary though.

Haste
And you'll find that the same principle also applies here – there's one haste stat for melee and spells rolled into one.

Hit
Are you seeing a pattern forming?

> *"The best part about the beta is people asking where their pets and mounts have gone"*

Roll over screen for annotations



The end boss of Utgarde Keep, Ingvar the Plunderer, is a fearsome foe. All the more so because when he dies, he doesn't. Or at least, he has no free resurrection ability. Bloody Shamans, eh?

Once you've got him down, Annhylde the Caller will appear in her Valkyrie finery and bring him back to life. Only now he deals more damage and blasts out shadow spells right, left and centre. Keep him tanked facing away from the party, and when he brings his hammer down a forward cone of AoE deals up to 22K damage to anyone in its way.

HAIRCUT 100

The first cut is the deepest

One much anticipated feature is the barber shop, and you will find one behind the auction house in Stormwind. Fashions have changed considerably since WoW was launched all those years ago, and being able to walk into a hairdresser and put right some of the wrongs you inflicted on your character is something of a blessing. So if you're in the unfortunate position of having to stare at the same mullet for 48 months, then the goblin barber is definitely for you.



SOUND FAMILIAR?

Finding your way around the new stuff

INTERFACE **NEW SYSTEM** **PETS**

The interface is largely the same, with extra buttons for Achievements and a missing network performance meter. Those now appear when you scroll over the System icon.



MMOZine Next Month

In MMOZine Issue 7



REVIEWED...

WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING

It's WAR! We send our correspondent into battle!

PREVIEWED...
DC Universe Online
Aion – Factions and Classes
LOTRO: Mines of Moria

TUTORIALS...
EVE Online: Empyrean Age

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