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MMOZine

Issue 8 | December 2008

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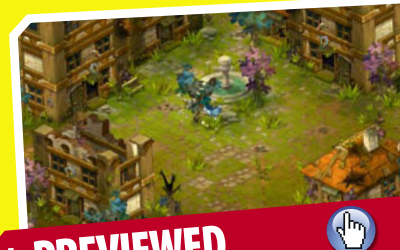
Exclusive The Vanquisher's Band for every reader!*



+ PREVIEWED

Jumpgate Evolution

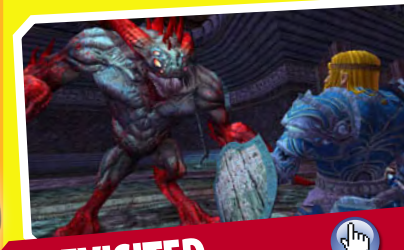
First Look at Netdevil's Elite-beater



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Everquest 2

The Shadow Odyssey

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Welcome to MMOZine



I look around and around and I see a lot of new faces. Must be all the download mirrors because *I'm* the new guy! What an issue to arrive on too! There's an amazing amount of info packed in this month. Not one, but three exclusive developer interviews. Our exclusive chats with *Warhammer* devs Mythic, champions of *Champions* Cryptic and all-conquering *Conan* creators Funcom bring you closer to the people that actually make your games. There's a definitive *World Of Warcraft: Lich King* review, the latest news and updates on next year's hottest titles plus tutorials, previews and more. How about 1,500 quid's worth of *WoW* goodies? Or a 6-months-free *Dofus* account? No? Well what about one of 50,000 exclusive in-game items for *WAR* then? It's all inside for the taking!

James Carey, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MMOZine massive

The MMOZine massive were told to go forth and multiplay, which they did…



Jonny Cuttell
The shades stop his MMO nous leaking from his eyes.



Ian Dransfield
Ian's knowlege is so great it shines from his eyes AND head.



Kieron Gillen
Kieron just needs glasses…

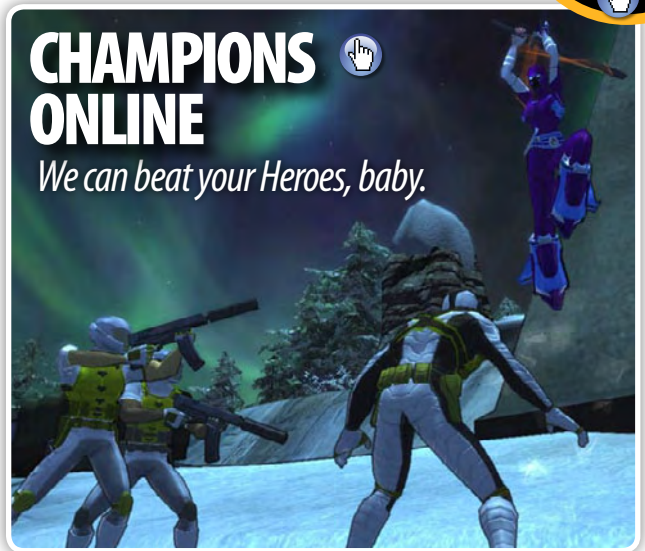
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This month's highlights...

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CHAMPIONS ONLINE

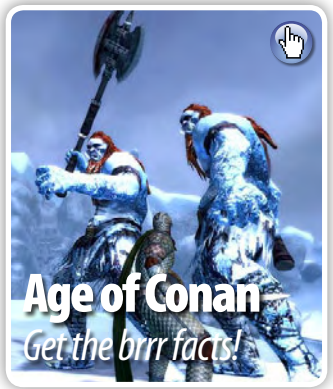
We can beat your Heroes, baby.





Dofus 2.0

New details unveiled



Age of Conan

Get the brrr facts!



PLUS! LICH KING TUTORIAL

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

Reviewed. Can the best get better?

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

- Jumpgate Evolution
- Star Wars: The Old Republic
- Love
- APB
- The Agency
- DC Universe Online
- Blue Mars
- Aion
- Huxley
- Football Superstars
- Champions Online
- Dofus 2.0
- Age of Conan
- World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King
- EverQuest 2: The Shadow Odyssey



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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.

JUMPGATE EVOLUTION

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: NetDevil
Heritage: Auto Assault
Link: www.jumpgate evolution.com
ETA: 2009

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Jumpgate: Evolution

Jumpgate: Evolution

FIRST LOOK

Could EVE Online's space monopoly finally be at an end?


Joysticks are supported – it's nice to see Old Man Stick get some rare lovin'.

"This is a classless game, so you won't end up stuck as a lowly miner while your chums are out shooting pirates"


You're not restricted to certain ships by classes.




Landing on that one's not recommended.

What's the story?

Space is far too big for just one game, and yet Icelandic uber-MMO EVE Online has somehow corned the market on the great beyond. Fortunately, this second Jumpgate game (fear not, you won't need to have played the first) aims to loosen this interstellar chokehold, albeit with a far more action-heavy approach to spaceshippery.

What do we know?

While this does retain plenty in common with the old Elite-based model chased by most space sims, it's also a lot more in line with MMO conventions – i.e. questing and looting. Don't expect a levelling grind, though. This is a classless game, so you won't end up stuck as a lowly miner while your chums are out shooting down pirates. You can switch between roles as you please, and when a spot of space fighting does tickle your fancy, it's real-time, reticule-based shooting, not invisible dice rolls and tiresome ability cooldowns. What Evolution will live or die on though, is its PvP. The skill-reliant combat will come into its own in an ongoing war between a trio of ever-antagonistic star empires. This also extends to the player-driven in-game economy – nobbling enemy merchant ships could, for instance, really dent their coffers.

When do we get more?

The beta's due next Spring. You can still apply at the game's official website to jon the beta and get a tase of the game for yourself.

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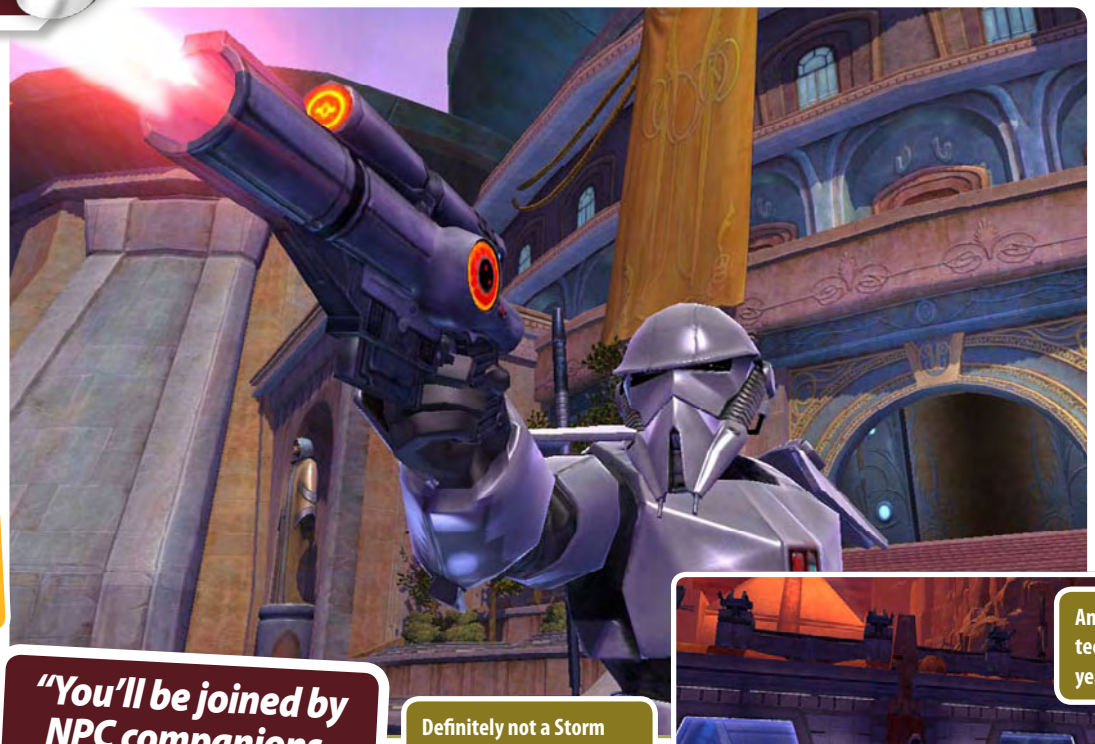
FIRST LOOK

Star Wars: The Old Republic

George's ailing empire strikes back

Publisher: EA
Developer: BioWare
Heritage: Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
Link: www.swtor.com
ETA: TBC

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Star Wars: The Old Republic



Definitely not a Storm Trooper with a slightly different mask. Not at all.



Amazing how little technology changed in 3,500 years of Star Wars history.

"You'll be joined by NPC companions, depending on your actions and decisions"



Your mana bar is weak, old man.

What's the story?

A Lucasian MMO for a post-Warcraft world. Star Wars Galaxies already took A Galaxy Far, Far Away online, but despite massive ambition, it was a confused and clumsy thing. This time, things are different. RPG veterans BioWare are at the helm, building a lavish online world out of their acclaimed offline role-player, Knights of the Old Republic.

Unlike Galaxies' uni-Jedi Classic Trilogy timeframe, The Old Republic is set 3,500 years before A New Hope, during an age when Jedis were all over the damned place.

What do we know?

Don't go thinking this is Tabula Rasa with lightsabers. While its class-based structure means it's likely to have a certain amount in common with the Everquest-based play that underlines most of today's MMORPGs, BioWare are claiming this'll be a heavily story-based game rather than an aimless, freeform XP-'em-up. Each of the classes – split between Galactic Republic and Sith Empire factions – will have their own quests, complete with branching stories. You'll even be joined – or abandoned – by NPC companions, depending on your actions and decisions. This could be an ingenious hybrid of solo RPG's sense of purpose and the scale of an MMOs.

When do we get more?

Sadly, there's not even a whiff of a release date yet – the twin corporate behemoths of EA and LucasArts means we can expect a Vader-esque tyranny over the info-flow over the coming months. What we do know is that it's been in the works for two years already now, so it may not be that far off…



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Love

FIRST LOOK

As in 'made with'. Meet the MMO with art and heart

Publisher: N/A
Developer: Quelsolaar
Heritage: Impressionism, Loq Ariou
Link: www.quelsolaar.com
ETA: TBA

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



The idea of shooting monsters in a world like this seems absurd, but Steenburg promises the combat will be in keeping with Love's dreamy aesthetic.



The smoky, abstract style isn't high detail, so Love will love low-end PCs.

"Love is a one-man, self-funded project"



Yes, it really does look like this. Stop asking.

What's the story?

MMOs involve multi-million dollar budgets, hundreds of staff and the support of a major publisher, right? Wrong. Love is a one-man, self-funded project; the work of a sole soul, driven by the sort of bravura ambition the genre generally throws aside in favour of chasing the big money. Abstract in its presentation and procedural in its environments, it's quite unlike anything else.

What do we know?

Both a little and a lot. We have the facts, but the ultimate experience remains mysterious. The gloriously inventive creator, one Eskil Steenburg, is primarily a graphics programmer, which means the surreal, paint-like appearance of Love is its major feature. He wants to make a game that doesn't look like a game. For once, caring mostly about the graphics doesn't make you shallow. In terms of what you'll actually be getting up to, expect a balanced trio of free-form city-building, exploring and combat. The latter's a surprise, but we're likely to see something more akin to olde worlde shoot-'em-ups than to WoW or first-person shooters. What's key is that it's an ever-evolving and ever-expanding landscape, changed dramatically by players' actions. An online world in the truest sense, then.

When do we get more?

As this isn't currently signed up to a publisher, it's not beholden to the usual rules of ETAs. Steenburg won't release it until he's happy with it. However, he regularly chucks out updates on this mesmerising, unique project over on his blog (http://news.quelsolaar.com/#home), together with fascinating insights into his own game design theories.

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7 UP

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



APB

Developer: Realtime Worlds | **ETA:** 2009

More crime-themed shenanigans, though this time it's cops 'n' robbers rather than 007 archetypes – see The Agency below for that. As it comes from some of the folk behind the original GTA, the fact this urban crimescape features vehicles, third-person shooting and turf war perhaps isn't a surprise. It also means that we're now very excited about it.



Aion

Developer: NCSoft | **ETA:** 2009

The beta for this Korean fantasy MMO hit Korea a little while ago, and it's been a huge success. Whether the fairly generic art style proves so popular over here is less assured, but the fact that characters can fly from day one should charm people over in winged droves.

DC Universe Online

Developer: SOE | **ETA:** 2010

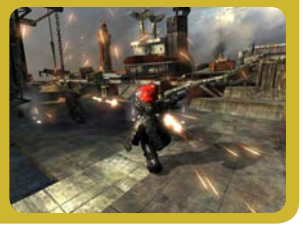
Forming a double-whammy of superheroic MMOs together with Champions Online, this one may not have the City of Heroes pedigree, but it does have Batman, Superman and chums. You don't play as the big guys themselves, but rather battle with – or against – them with a musclebound Spandex-wearing character of your own creation.



Huxley

Publisher: Webzen | **ETA:** 2009

Sooner or later, a glut of MMO first-person shooters will hit – the likes of Call of Duty 4's ranking system has laid the groundwork for persistent-world shooters. The Unreal Tournament-esque Huxley is like to be one of the first, with its promise of 100-man skirmishes, though it's been delayed so many times that nothing's guaranteed. It's just slipped to 2009, so it'll be a while yet before we know if it can match its own ambition.



Football Superstars

Developer: Cybersports Ltd | **ETA:** Early 2009

Britain's national hobby – apart from excessive drinking and complaining about radio presenters – gets the Massively Multi treatment. Notably, this is a footie game designed for the PC first and foremost, which means keyboard and mouse, not Xboxian gamepad. While there's plenty of hands-on playing, management elements provide the MMO giggles.



ON THE RADAR

2009 – Kickstar Online StreetSoccer

2009 – 7Million

SUMMER – Chronicles of Spellborn

SPRING – Gold Sam

The Agency

Publisher: SOE | **ETA:** 2009

Nasty gossipmongers caused brief fears that this spy-flavoured MMO had been benched, but word is it's due to be a not-so-secret agent next year and possibly on an ad-funded model, emerging from the shadows to be potentially one of 2009's biggest onliners. Expect slick squad combat and stealthy espionage in real-world locations such as Prague and Panama.





Blue Mars

Publisher: Avatar Reality | **ETA:** Late 2009

Based loosely on Kim Stanley Robinson's acclaimed Red/Green/Blue Mars novel trilogy, it concerns building a life for yourself on the newly colonised planet rather than lasering monsters in the face. Beauty and brains, then.



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Champions Online

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Cryptic Studios
Heritage: City of Heroes
Link: www.champions-online.com
ETA: April 2009

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

Calling all the heroes


And now it's got armour-plated dinosaurs. See what we mean about letting the creativity run wild?

It's not often you get to see a man in lime green spandex battle his way through hordes of armoured dinosaurs to reach the lair of a mad scientist. But in Champions Online that sort of thing is a fairly regular occurrence. Similarly, blasting robot cowboys away with a freeze ray seems like a completely normal thing to do.

So yes, Cryptic Studios latest MMO offering can be a little on the crazy side. But then the same could be said of its previous hits – the massively successful City of Heroes and Villains. It would have been easy for Cryptic to take a similar approach for its first MMO which will be simultaneously released on a console, with Xbox 360 players getting the rare chance to join PC owners online. Yet Champions Online is a very different beast – one which is well-suited to console users while still providing the stat-building depth beloved of PC gamers.

It's the combat that's seen the most noticeable changes – Cryptic has created a system that is at once very console-friendly, but also manages to retain a tactical edge. There's a degree of hacking and slashing to be done, and indeed that's often the best way to get rid of a bunch of generic enemy cannon-fodder, but each enemy also has special attacks, which are usually telegraphed to give the player a chance to block. It's a world apart from the click-tastic combat seen in most MMOs, and it seems entirely fitting given the nature of the characters – if superheroes can't provide some spectacular action, who can?

Of course, you'll have your own powers too, which can be pulled


Fake Wolverine sure can run fast.


The blue eyes must be significant for something…

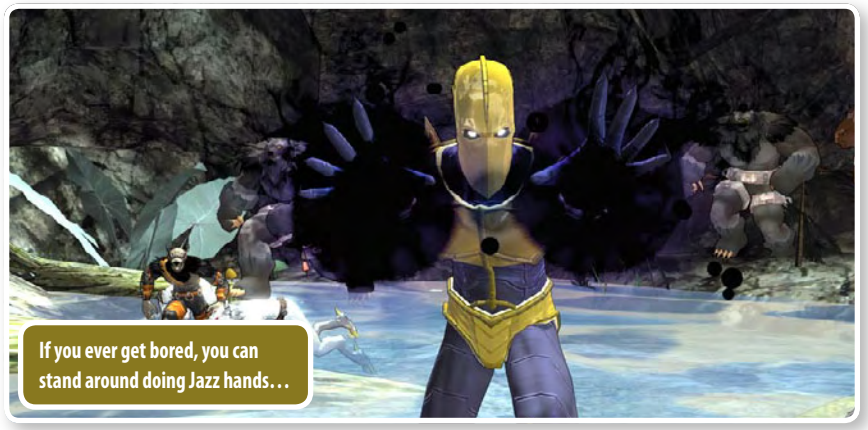
CHAMPIONS ONLINE

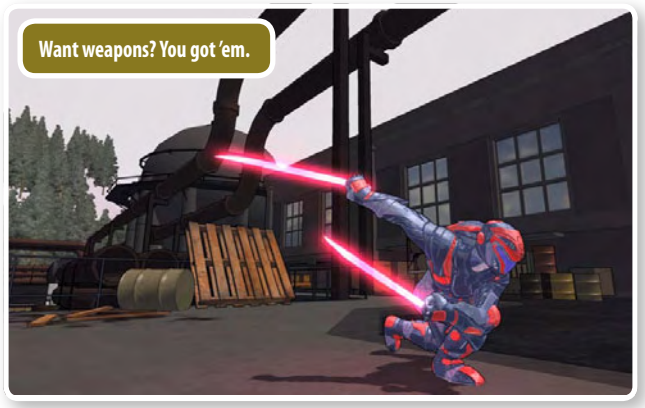


Champions continued

off once you've built up a special meter. Successive smaller attacks make that bar rise, and once full you simply press the associated button for that power to let rip, whether it be a fiery blast or a bolt of electricity. You might think that this more action-focused combat would make healing and buffing difficult, but Cryptic has a solution for that, too. Instead of plunging into menus for potions, downed enemies will drop 'boosts' which can increase your health, strength or increase any other attributes. Yet you still have to be careful, because some of these drops can actually do you some damage – meaning you can't just collect everything a dead foe leaves behind. Picking these up is simply a case of running over them, and if a boost isn't needed or can't be used by a particular character, then it won't be collected.

As you'll be able to tell from the screenshots, heroes can vastly differ in appearance, and that's thanks to the incredible character creator which is so thorough that you'll probably want to spend hours in there before you even start. The ability to choose an arch-nemesis and even to flesh out a backstory for both superhero and supervillain is very welcome indeed, and that's just one of the myriad of options





HEROES AND VILLAINS

A very different kind of Champions League

BETA BY FAR **THRILLS & SKILLS** **GET CREATIVE**

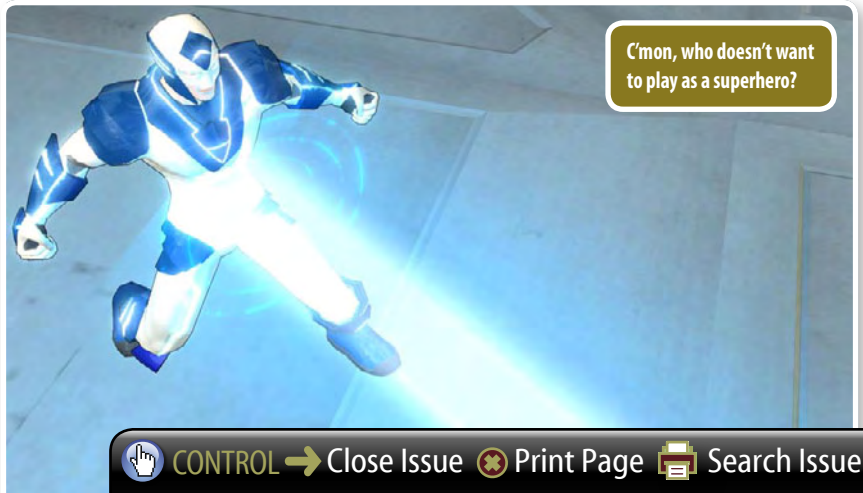
The current beta for Champions Online looks set to shape the game's development, as there are a number of features which haven't been fully finalised. While the game's engine is very smooth and its central mechanics all seem to function very well, it won't be until the beta's over that many of the minor tweaks and so on will be evident.





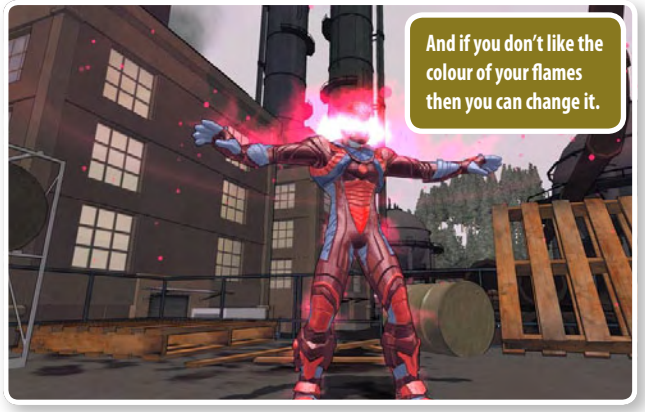
Champions continued

available. As well as choosing your champion's build, height and weight, you can also choose how they move – hulking great brutes will obviously have a different gait to smaller, faster characters, and you can even have them galloping along like beasts should you prefer a hero that's less recognisably human. There's an amazing array of costume parts which you can piece together to create a suitable super-outfit. Naturally your get-up can be any colour you choose, and you can even change the appearance of your selected special abilities. It helps make the game feel more personal, as you'll almost certainly never encounter a hero identical to your own.



Once you've created your hero, you'll need to work on increasing your repertoire of super-powers – using existing abilities rewards you with a resource named Equilibrium which allows you to start bringing up your other powers to the same level, or you can use earned skill points to add more abilities to your collection. And when you feel sufficiently powerful, you'll probably want to tackle one of the many enemy Strongholds, which play host to the game's super-villains. With some it's simply a case of fighting your way through to the inner sanctum of your foe, while others require environmental interactions to bring their fortress crumbling down.

With industry veteran Bill Roper recently brought on board as Cryptic's new Design Director, things are looking extremely promising for Champions Online. One potential banana skin is whether Cryptic can balance the game well enough to be accessible to console owners while providing the kind of deep, tactical experience PC gamers are accustomed to. The evidence so far seems to suggest Cryptic has pulled it off, which means DC Universe Online will have its work cut out in the battle of the superhero MMOs.





MMOZine Verdict

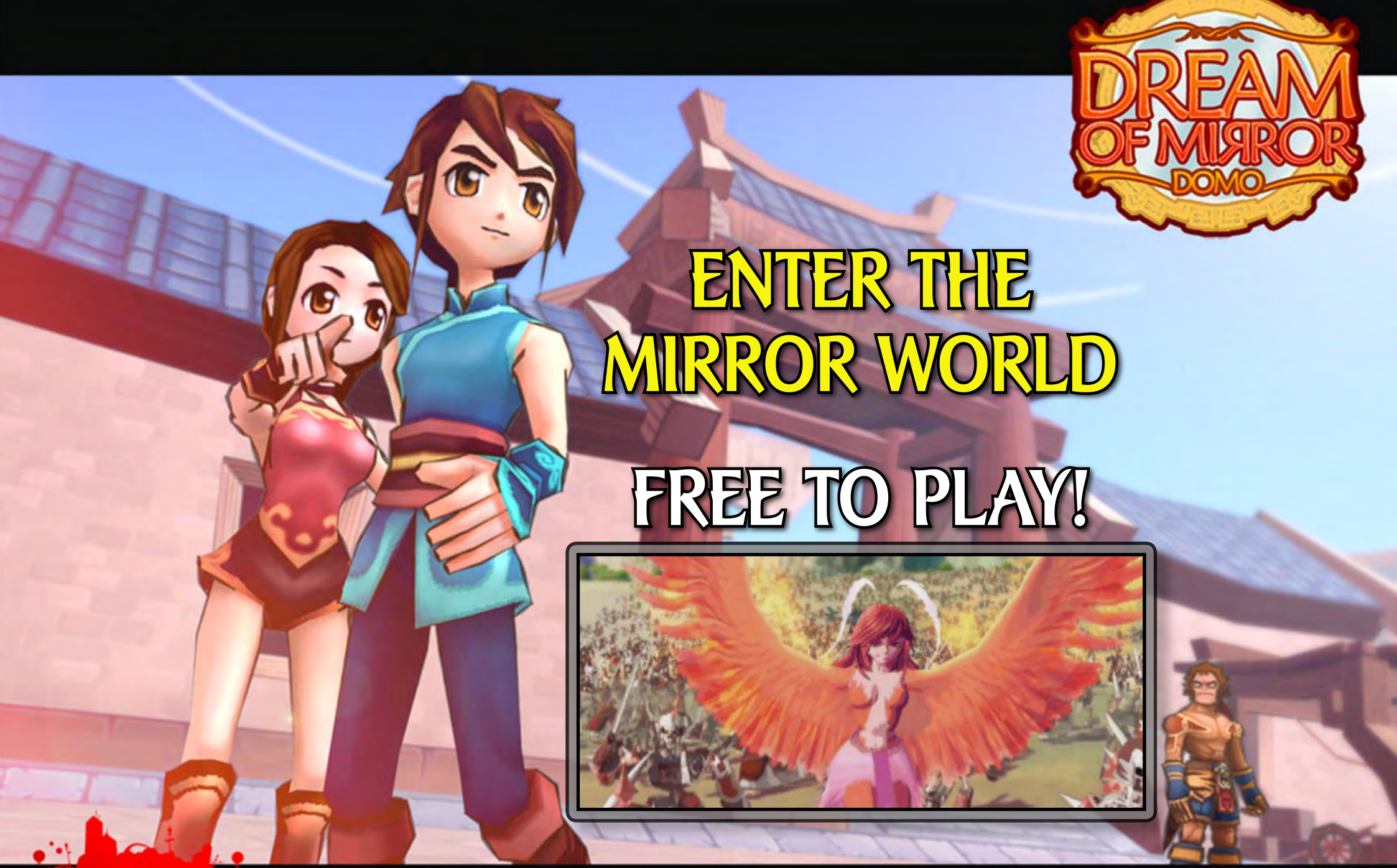
The Champion of the MMO genre? We'll find out soon

HOW COMPLETE



FIRST IMPRESSIONS





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Warhammer: Age of Reckoning

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Warhammer Art Director, Adam Gershowitz

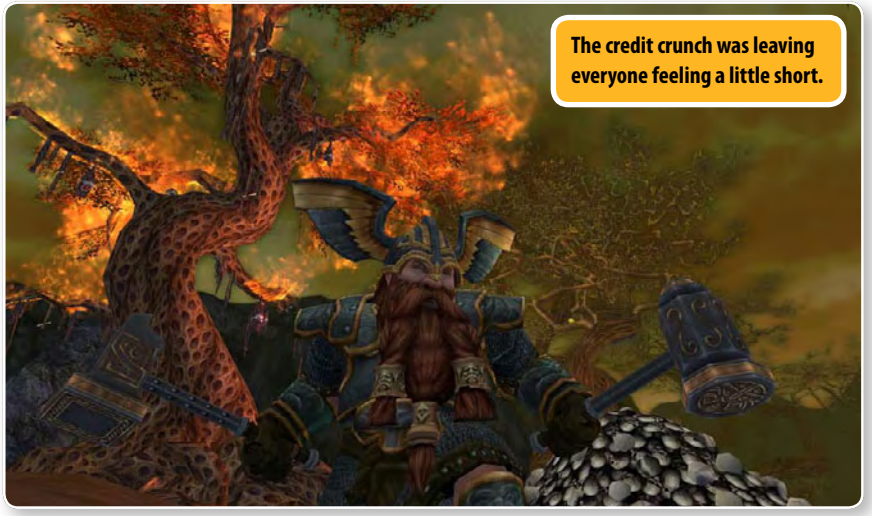


Warhammer Associate Producer, Josh Drescher

We've bagged an exclusive interview with WAR Art Director Adam Gershowitz and Associate Producer Josh Drescher to celebrate the Heavy Metal patch for Warhammer: Age of Reckoning, and we've also got a chance for you to grab an in-game item that's exclusive to MMOZine readers! We've got 50,000 Vanquisher's Emerald Band items waiting for you on a first come, first served basis – check out the boxout at the end of the interview for details on how to collect it. But while you're waiting for that key to arrive, why not catch up on the exclusive goss below?

So the tanks are coming in with the Heavy Metal patch. Why did you decide that out of the dropped character classes, you'd work on re-integrating the tank classes first?

It's pretty simple, really. They were the first careers that we're working on that we felt were ready to go. They look great, they're fun to play, they add useful mechanics to each realm and they can be integrated in a way that's exciting and fun for our players. As a result, we launched them first.



The credit crunch was leaving everyone feeling a little short.

What was the original problems with them – you've said the dropped classes weren't fun, which is why they weren't included. What was wrong with them and how has it been fixed?

They didn't meet our internal expectations for our careers. There was no one thing that was 'off' with all of them, but rather a collection of variable things about each that we simply felt was wrong for launch. With the Knight and the Black guard, we've addressed our concerns with those careers issues and are happy with how







As doorways go, that's a rather impressive one.

Warhammer cont.

they now look, feel and play. So those careers are ready to launch.

People may look at the armoured forms of the Knight of the Blazing Sun and the Black Guard and think they're similar. How do they differ from each other in terms of style?
Mechanically, they're quite different. The Knight is a 'battlefield commander' of sorts that helps to support and improve the performance of his allies and groupmates, while the Black Guard is more focused on damage absorption and building up offensive momentum over the course of protracted encounters. Each of them has an analogue on the other side – for the Knight, that would be the Chosen, and for the Black Guard it's the Iron Breaker. While they're certainly not mirror images of each other, players who are familiar with those careers will find that those basic types of roles are now available for the opposing Realm.

Warhammer includes all sorts of PvP and RvR gameplay. How is the scenario play working out? As you have a new map for the Heavy Metal live event, they must be very popular?
Scenarios have proven extremely popular, and we've been very pleased with the positive response we've seen to them since launch. Players really enjoy earning XP, renown and cool loot via RvR, and the scenarios have offered a really streamlined, scalable method for doing that. If you've got 30 minutes to play, you know that you can get in a couple of scenarios in that time.

We've made some adjustments to try and incentivize openworld RvR a bit more in recent patches, but we remain committed to offering new and exciting scenario combat to our players both now and also in the future.

Have you any plans for the remaining two character classes? Presumably in another large content patch?
As we've said for some time now, we'll only ever release new careers if we're completely happy and confident about how they look, feel and play. We'll never add them simply for the sake of 'checking off' an arbitrary box related to post-launch content. That applied to the Knight and the Black Guard and that does (and will) apply to potential future career additions.

Care to talk about the highlights of the Halloween event?
The Witching Night Public Quests in open RvR went over really well – players just loved it to bits! There's always something special about time-limited, unique events that players enjoy taking part in. The experience itself is memorable, but it's always nice to have something special to show for it to remind you (and other players) about your participation. We dropped a series of rare masks (some more rare the others) around the world that gave players a way to remember (and also brag about) what they did during the event.



Is there any innovation in the game that you don't think you've got enough credit for?
We've been getting really positive reviews, and people have been



Warhammer cont.

pretty good about recognizing all the ways that WAR has helped to push the genre forward. That we're already seeing our competitors adopt some of our innovations is certainly amusing as well.

You've confirmed the existence of the first add-on pack. Anything you can say about it?
I continue to lobby heavily for the addition of edible Halflings , but it's very slow going with the lot of Moot-fanciers we've got lurking around this place…

How did you decide what to include in the Warhammer game from the off. There are many races, so what made you focus on the six you chose?
That was a tough choice, since the Warhammer world is so vast and has so much to choose from the quarter century of development that Games Workshop has done. Since RvR was a core component of our designs from the beginning, we knew we wanted to pick strong, iconic races that made 'sense' in terms of how they'd pair off against one another. The races we chose were already linked together in ways that formed the foundational conflicts in the Warhammer world, so they made sense for our type of game. We're now looking forward to building on that foundation in the future.

What do you see for the future of Warhammer? How does the change from a new thing to a service alter how you do things?
In many ways, getting to Launch Day is just the beginning of the work you do on an MMO. The challenges you face once you're live are significant and ongoing. As a result, we continue to focus 110% of our effort and energy on WAR – both in terms of ongoing maintenance and quality of service provision, and also on expansion and future development.

Our dev team has expanded since launch and we've got a lot of cool stuff planned for the future. There are things we've got planned that are really going to get players excited about playing in our world for a long time to come.



Publisher: GOA
Developer: Mythic
Heritage: Dark Age of Camelot, Ultima Online: Kingdom Reborn
Link: www.warhammeronline.com
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THE VANQUISHER'S BAND

AVAILABLE FOR ALL EUROPEAN SERVERS

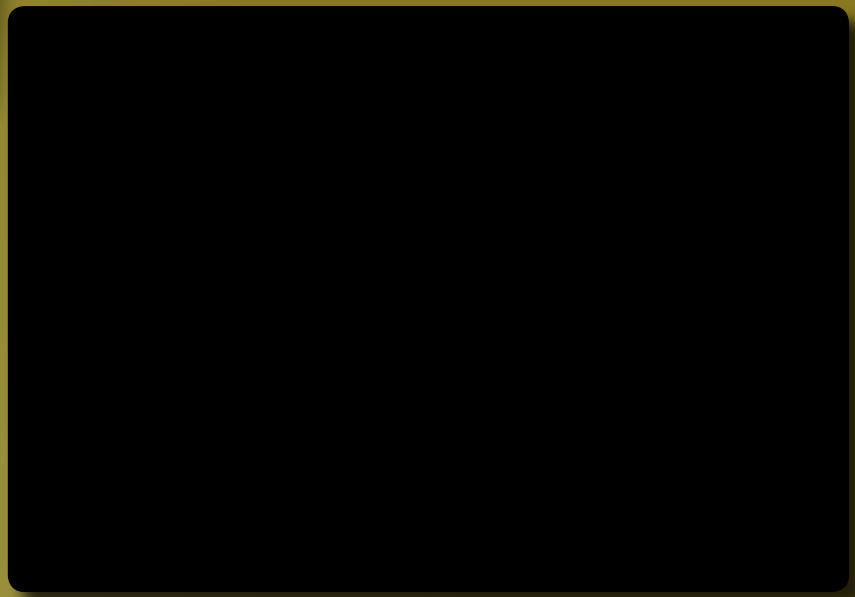
So what exactly is this item, and how the devil do I get it?

Enhance your stats and cast Touch of Nature, increasing your chance of doing additional corporal damage with each hit. (Usable in PvE combat only.)

The Vanquisher's Emerald Band can be used straight away on a Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning account. If you don't already have one, you will need to create one on the www.war-europe.com website, and enter the activation code on your game box or license.

Then, in order to take advantage of the game bonus…

- Fill in the form to the right and click submit. We will send your unique code directly to you via email. If you do not receive an email shortly, please check your Junk email folder, in case it has mistakenly been moved there.
- At the same time, you can choose to subscribe to our magazines, and receive free emails when a new issue is published. If you choose to do this, you will receive an email that will require you to confirm your subscription, separately from your Warhammer code.
- When you have your code, visit the www.war-europe.com website and enter your login and password. Please note this item is only available to players on European servers.
- In the menu on the left, select the 'My profile' section, then 'Enter a code' and follow the instructions.
- Once the code has been validated, the bonus is automatically credited to your game account.
- Log on to Warhammer Online and enjoy!



Remember the codes are only valid on European servers.

Should you encounter any persistent problem during the validation of your code, please contact our customer support, and you will find the help form on the www.war-europe.com website in the 'Help' section.

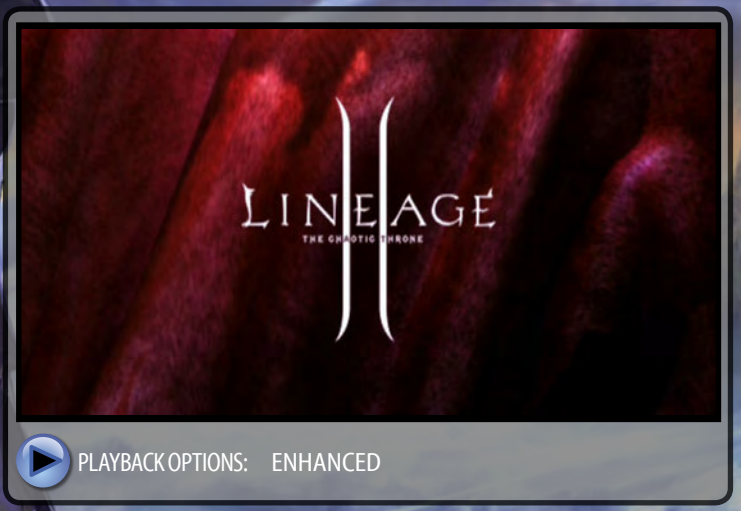
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Dofus 2.0

And the award for the most unusual name goes to…

Publisher: Ankama
Developer: Ankama
Heritage: None
Link: www.dofus.com
ETA: Q2 2009 (v2.0)

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

First of all, we need to get one thing off our chest – who calls their RPG 'Dofus'? Conjuring up images of Homer Simpson, or freshly baked bread – neither of which have anything to do with the game – it doesn't exactly lend itself to mainstream credibility. A much more descriptive name would have been 'Flash-based free-to-play MMO that's about to get a rather impressive overhaul in the form of Version 2.0'. But we can see why they wouldn't go with that.

What Dofus actually is, is a visually impressive, cutesy MMORPG with more than a hint of personality. Hailing from the land of Asterix and co (France), the game oozes Gaulic charm, as everything's so unmistakably French – from the character design right up to the environments.

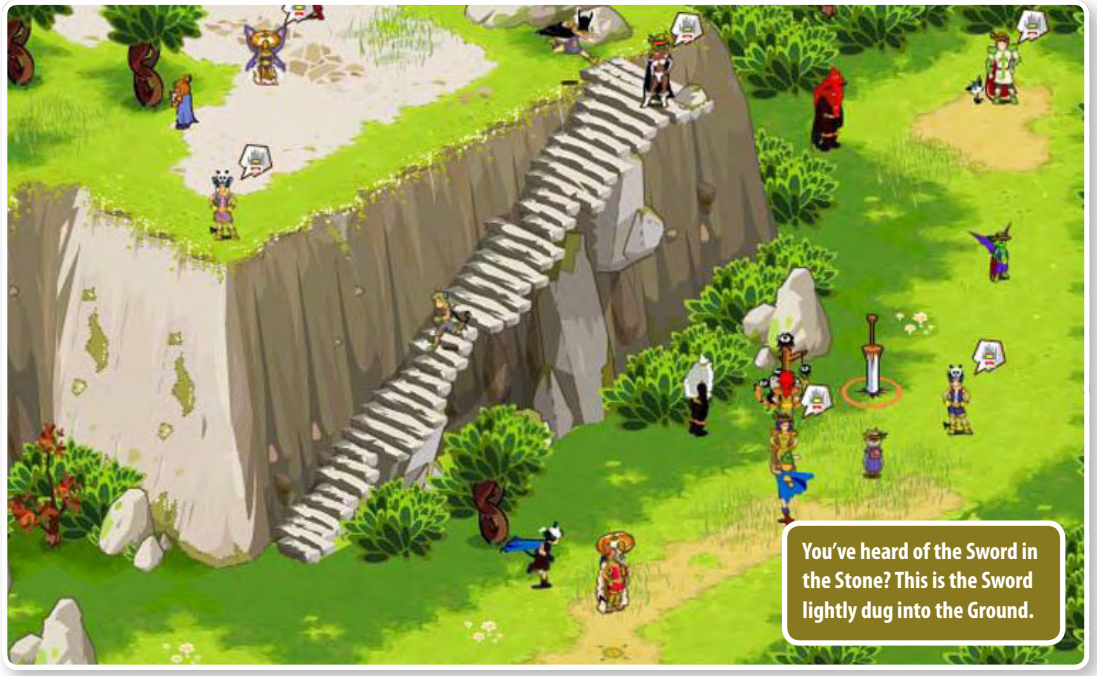
"Having built up a playerbase of over 10.5 million players, Dofus must be doing something right"

Having built up a substantial playerbase of over 10.5 million players – 1.5 million of which are fully paid subscribers – Dofus must be doing something right. Dofus 2.0 is set to make this passionate group even more fanatical.

Much like EVE's recent Trinity expansion, Dofus 2.0 is a complete graphical overhaul, taking it from an impressive Flash game to gorgeous, stylised MMORPG. It'll still all be rendered in Flash, and impressively, the system requirements are expected to remain the same, showing that the developers are looking to push the technology to its limits, and not your PC.



We presume the spikes are there to see off pigeons.



You've heard of the Sword in the Stone? This is the Sword lightly dug into the Ground.



You'll find the towns to be pretty busy places.



Grid-based combat? That sounds good to us.

Dofus continued

You'll be able to scale back certain visual features if you have any problems with performance, though the developers are remaining quietly confident that the majority of players will take full advantage of the new graphical goodness immediately.

Also of note to old and new players alike is the redesigned server code, which promises to speed up the connection between game and the server, resulting in a better experience for everyone involved. With more responsive battles, less lag and a complete graphical overhaul, Dofus 2.0 is looking like one of the best free MMO expansions yet seen.

If the community do have one bone of contention to pick with the development team, it may be the decision to completely redesign the characters. This doesn't mean everyone will have to start from scratch – your level, abilities and items are carried over, but you will have to redesign your looks – and many aren't happy with the new visual style that's been implemented.

The developers, however, have a good history with the game's players, having only recently launched the well-received Heroic Server, which introduced hardcore features to the game, such as upgraded drop and XP rates, and (gulp!) permanent death. This was a rather unique step for an MMO to take, but its gone down well with the community, with the top-performing players earning their place in the online leaderboard, the Cemetery of Heroes, cementing their place for the world to see. At the time of writing, close to half-a-million people had fallen to their doom online. We can only expect that many more will try.

> *"The game's recently seen a spate of new additions, including the inventively named Heroic Server"*


Mine carts stuffed with goodies. Looting ahoy.

MMOZine Verdict

Beautiful and stylised, hopefully with gameplay to match

HOW COMPLETE
90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS
80%

WIN! ONE OF 13 FULL DOFUS ACCOUNTS!

Enter the wonderfully bizarre world of Dofus for free!



We've got 13 full subscriber accounts to give away for Dofus. 10 winners can try the extra features available on full accounts for a month, 2 will get 2 full months and one luck reader will get a full account for 6 months completely free!

Full subscribers get special access to many features unavailable to free accounts. For starters you can explore the entire gameworld rather than a limited sector. You're also able to create and join guilds, craft items without limit, pick from any of the character classes, raise any pet participate in the ongoing PvP wars between Bonta and Brakmar, and much more!

To be in with a chance of winning one of these fantastic free accounts just answer the painfully simple question opposite…

Competition closes 13th Januray 2009. See website for full T&Cs.

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Age of Conan

The Barbarians are at the gate. They want to chat...



Craig Morrison, Game Director on Age of Conan.

It's been a few months since Conan burst onto the stage, brandishing a broadsword and inviting all-comers into a full-on brawl. Now's the time to talk to game director Craig Morrison and see where it's heading next.

While not announced in detail, the expansion pack has been confirmed. Is there anything you can reveal about it?
I'm afraid it's a little early to get into the details on the expansion. We are currently working on the early stages, and there are some really cool areas of Conan's world that we are looking to explore, but we aren't quite ready to go into the details just yet.

While Conan got enormous initial figures, there's been reports of some drop-offs in the player base. Talking to lapsed players, what would be the biggest reasons to re-subscribe?
I think that largely depends why any given player left in the first place. What I can say is that many of the areas that players identified at launch have been addressed already. The game's performance has vastly improved, and the memory leaks that plagued many users around launch have been resolved. There is also a fully functioning PVP system already live that was missing at launch, and on top of that there is a lot of revamped and new content for players to enjoy.

We really have put in a lot of effort into ensuring that the areas players felt were lacking were where we concentrated our effort.

Could you talk a little about the crafting in the game now?
Crafting is one of the areas where we have put a good deal of focus in expanding and offering more with. With the trade skills that have been introduced in the latest game update, we wanted to add more meaningful options for players, and introduce new crafted items that offered some alternatives to other armour and items. It allowed us to add more goals and objectives for those that want to pursue trade skills and some value to those tradeskills that we felt were lacking a little.

How has Patch 3's launch gone?
It's gone very well. With it seeing both the release of the PVP consequence system and the launch of Ymir's Pass, this update was the culmination of a lot of hard work by the developers, and it has been very good to see the positive reactions of our players to the new content.

We managed to add a lot of quality to the new areas and include some very cinematic experiences – the type that we delivered so well in the early part of the game at launch, but was probably lacking at higher levels. It really is a huge content addition, the largest playfield yet added to the game and complete with a climatic dungeon experience.

It was also great to be able to tie it in with one of the most popular of the original Howard stories and tell the story of the Frost Giant's Daughter in a manner that worked with MMO gameplay. Seeing the way that our players have reacted to it has really driven it home in terms of what we can achieve with the combo of license and gameplay.







Some of the creatures you'll meet are, well, hugely impressive.

Interview continued

Could you explain the changes to combat in Conan since launch, and why you made them?
It is mainly about maintaining the immediacy and pace of the combat system. We have received very good feedback from players, saying that we've created a compelling and faster paced, more visceral combat system than you find in other games of this type. At the higher levels however, and especially in PVP, the length of some of the combo moves meant that we lost a little of that. So we looked at ways to reduce the number of steps required for the higher level combos in order to keep the pace and feeling of the combat. We didn't want players to feel like they had to work around it to be effective in PVP, and I think the new changes have achieved that nicely.



What's been the effect on the team (and the game) of the resignation of Gaute Godager?
I think it will always have some effect to lose someone of his experience, drive and creativity. Age of Conan wouldn't exist without his dedication to the project down the years. He did leave me with a fantastically talented team on the project, though. A project like this is always about more than one person, and while it is a shame, – both for us and the industry as a whole I think – to see someone with his vision move along, I think the team have reacted superbly to the challenges of moving from a development environment to a live game.

Where do you see the direction of Conan now in terms of tone – there seems to have been a step away from the adults-only content that was talked about pre-release?
Firstly there is a misconception there. The game was never intended to have any adult-only (AO) rated content in it. We set out from the very start, even when the game was first announced, to maximise what we could do by aiming for a mature rating. There was never any attempt to push beyond that into AO-rated content. I think we use the mature setting extremely well, and that is one area of the game that I think was executed exceptionally well, and we are continuing to do so.

I think that we have used the mature rating very well. The world is really well realised, with very mature themes and dialogue throughout the games content. Hyboria is a harsh and dangerous land, and I think that comes through in


Not every creature you meet wants to slice you into pieces.


Rave parties definitely weren't what they used to be.

Interview continued

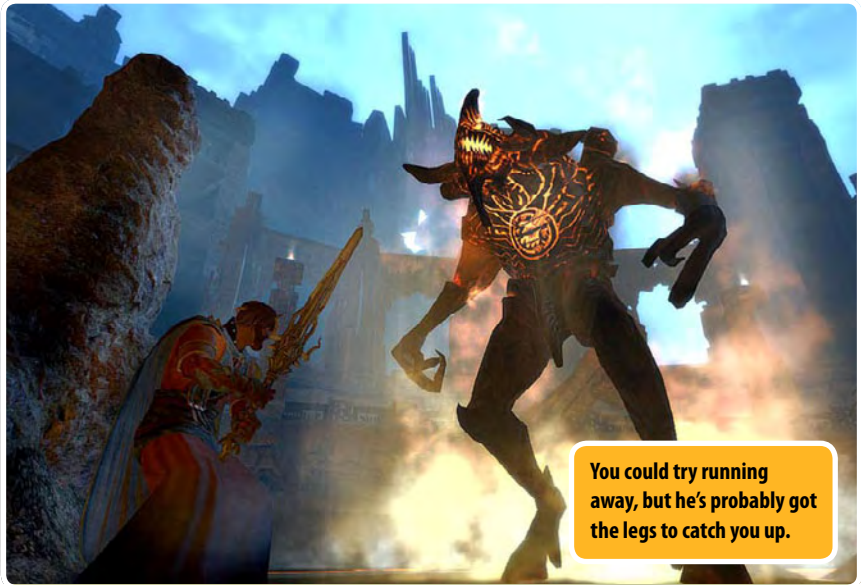
all the dialog and storytelling really well. We obviously also pushed the violent and brutal nature of the combat system as far as we could so that it would be in keeping with the essence of the Hyboria as described by Howard. The combos, and in particular the fatalities, are really at the limits of what is allowed within a mature setting.

The mature content of Age of Conan was never just about sex and nudity, it was about being true to the world created by Robert E Howard and using our mature rating to allow us to explore that world and depict it as faithfully as the rating would allow.

So I actually don't think there has been any change of direction there at all, with all the new quests and content added to the game we are following the same guiding vision that was in place for the game's tone and setting from the very start.

What are your feelings looking back on the launch?

To be honest, it's a little different for me, as I wasn't directly involved in the game's launch. I think having that perspective in some ways helps as well because I viewed the games launch a little more like the players did. I played through beta as a player and played the first few weeks of launch as a player even before I started to get more actively involved with the team again. I think we did an awful lot of things right. People were certainly captivated by the themes and concept of the game.



You could try running away, but he's probably got the legs to catch you up.



Hyboria is a massive world in scale, giving you plenty to discover.

Obviously there were also then the issues. The stability of the client wasn't where it should have been, the pacing and longevity of the games RPG system didn't provide enough motivation for players and there were gaps in the levels of content to some degree.

I don't think that very much of the constructive criticism of the game was unfair. There were clearly areas that we didn't get right in terms of long-term enjoyment for players. It did give us a great base to work from, though. The areas that needed addressing were prioritised and those that still do are being worked on.

And looking across the field of the MMO right now, where do you see Conan?

As I said above, I think we got a lot of things right. The game looks amazing and is probably the most well-realised and crafted virtual world yet released. The combat system is different and more action-orientated that many games that have come before it. So building on those core strengths, I am confident that we can continue to produce a lot of great content for players to enjoy, and can then add more systems on top of it over time to further expand the way they interact with the world. Developing an MMO is a long-term project and I think there are many exciting areas that we can explore yet.

We have some very good strong gameplay elements set against that fantastically realised world that has already captivated many players. We know that there is definitely space for us in the genre, as we do offer gamers something a little bit different, both in terms of gameplay style and in setting. ●

CONAN

Publisher: Funcom
Developer: In House
Heritage: Anarchy Online
Link: www.ageofconan.com
OUT NOW



Publisher: Blizzard
Developer: Blizzard
Heritage: Warcraft, Diablo, Starcraft
Link: www.wow-europe.com
OUT NOW

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

11 million gamers can't be wrong, can they?

Who, exactly, is this review for? If you've been playing Warcraft solidly for the last few months, then it's not for you. You've already set sail from Kalimdor or the Eastern Kingdoms to join the battle against Arthas Menthil, the erstwhile Prince of Lordaeron and now sinister Lich King, leader of the Scourge. You're loving the chance Lich King offers to explore new areas. Setting foot in Arthas' home continent of Northrend feels like a real adventure again, and the quicker pace and strong backstory remind you of all the reasons you started playing WoW in the first place.



"Thanks to graphics engine tweaks, the World looks prettier than it did, but it's still Warcraft underneath"

If you've never played Warcraft, or are one of the many gamers for whom its blend of accessibility and repetitive structure does not gel, this review is not for you either. There's nothing in Northrend that will change your mind.

Beautiful world

Thanks to graphics engine tweaks, the World looks prettier than it did, but it's still Warcraft underneath. If you didn't like the cartoony feel of it before, you won't be persuaded by the even brighter colours on offer with high dynamic range lighting and shader effects.

Your interest may be piqued, though, if we say it feels like Blizzard has addressed the quest structure. One of the biggest problems with The Burning Crusade was that it began strongly in Hellfire Peninsula and ended with style in Netherstorm, but seemed to lack inspiration between the two.

Zangamarsh's weirdness soon became a relentless gloom, and your heroic demonslayer was all too

Roll over screen for annotations





The new major city, Dalaran, is huge and eerily beautiful.



Ship to shore combat isn't a standard, but is the goal of one cool pirate quest.

The Lich King cont.

often reduced to fetching flowers or wolf ears once too often.

With the exception of the Grizzly Hills zone, from the moment you land in Northrend you never lose the sense of being involved in the larger battle against the forces of the Scourge. Of course, there are still ancillary quest hubs of unrelated content to discover and take part in, but these tend to service either as a quick introduction to a new race or transport hub, or be independent sojourns with an enjoyable lore all of their own. A pirate enclave off the coast of Howling Fjord, for example, provides an excellent sequence of comic relief as well as a good wedge of XP.

Not only WAR

Always, though, you are serving in the campaign against Arthas. More often than not, the next destination on your list is a military outpost, and the next task a strike against the Scourge. But WoW doesn't fall into the same trap as the mid-level areas of Warhammer Online, which eventually fell victim to the ironic ennui of its tagline 'Only War' – relentless and ultimately futile war. Instead, in WoTLK almost every quest hub has its own series of stand out set-pieces of the like which appeared just a few times in whole the original game. Each is a reward in itself just as valuable as the next level or talent point.

In fact, if there was one word to sum up Lich King, it would be that. Rewarding. Whether its a quest line

DRIVE TIME

Hop on board for a tour of WoW's new chariots

VEHICLES IN WOW? **TANKS FOR THAT** **GOLEM HEIGHTS**

A big change in The Lich King is the number of vehicles there are to drive – these include tanks, aircraft and gun points. They're usually part of a quest chain, unless you commandeer one in the new PvP area, Wintergrasp.





The Lich King cont.

finale, or seeing one of the beautiful new instances in Azjol-Nerub for the first time, WoTLK is full of breathtaking surprises. That's before you even get to the new achievements tab, which can unlock titles for completing in game tasks, and the new honour and badge reward systems that now extend into profession materials too.

Even the level grind seems to have been sped up, no doubt inspired by the fact that so many people stuck around for the end game dungeons and heroic or badge loot armour sets in TBC and want to get there again. That's not just the hardcore either – and Blizzard has recognised this by making every end game raid available as a 10-man instance as well as a 25-man one too. Unlike toppling Illidian, there's now no reason why anyone who wants to shouldn't be able to conquer Icecrown Glacier here. The flip side is that there's far less chance you'll see everything on your first pass through Northrend. With two entirely separate starting areas – Howling Fjord and Borean Tundra – either of which can take you to level 72, WoTLK is also very, very alt-friendly. You can take multiple toons through in different routes and only begin to see the same content halfway through.



The world is full of small details for the adventurous to discover. There's no other MMO like it.

This is for you

Even with all that and the introduction of the new hero class, Death Knight, if you're a dyed-in-the-wool WoW hater then nothing this review can say will convince you to give it a go.

So this review is for the many people who've played WoW and left for one reason or another. You may have seen all the game had to offer, or just got felt you had to get out of the time sink. Should you risk going back in? Our advice would be absolutely, yes. We haven't even had chance to talk about the new profession (inscriptions) or the cool new motorcycle and mammoth mounts – the latter even has its own travelling shop on board.

Give it a go and you'll reconnect with the world of Warcraft – and your characters to boot. It won't take long to remember just why Blizzard's universe is much more popular than its rivals.

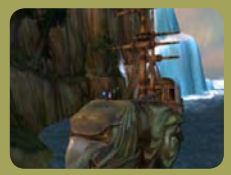
Andrew Alcott

PULSOMETER: Signs of life



FREEZE FRAME

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



5 MINUTES
Start off by setting out on one of four boats to Northrend. You'll get your instructions on arrival.



6 MINUTES
The Borean Tundra is a full scale military offensive against Scourge forces.



2 HOURS
Take a break from levelling your toon and roll a brand new Death Knight.



3 HOURS
Back in the Borean it's time to enter your first new instance, the Nexus.



10 HOURS
For the Alliance, one of the highlights is entering Wintergarde Keep for the first time.

MMOZine Verdict

Another excellent addition to an already excellent game

- Clever new features
- More accessible
- New Death Knight class

PLAY AGAIN

EverQuest 2: The Shadow Odyssey

The fifth EverQuest 2 expansion gets nostalgic



Publisher: Koch Media
Developer: Sony Online Entertainment LLC
Heritage: EverQuest 1&2, Planetside
Link: www.everquest2.com
Released: 2008
System reqs: PIII 1GHz, 512MB RAM, 10GB HDD, DirectX 9 compatible video card

REPLAY FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of EverQuest 2


'Dramatic' is, somehow, just too small a word for this.

There's been an archaeological dig going on in Norrath. Those with no natural interest in history have been attracted to the area by quests and curiosity, and in November, the dig finally uncovered the areas that form the fifth EQ2 expansion, The Shadow Odyssey. Areas that were buried 500 years previously, at the end of the first EverQuest's timeline. Explorers will start off in Innothule, the Gnomish outdoors area, which provides access to the rest of the world. Packed with vendors and quests – including the start of the new crafting quest chain that will allow craftsmen to make some highly sought-after new items.

Of the less spectacular dungeons, Lower Guk will be familiar to anyone who played the first EverQuest. It's an area famous for its population of undead Frogloks, but there's also Minotaurs and slightly bewildering platforming elements in here, not to mention traps that are difficult (if possible at all) to spot. The huge hands scuttling around the place make for a great 'Wish You Were Here' screenshot though, and it's great to see an old location spruced up so lovingly.

Renovated it may be, but it's still pretty much a traditional


Presume he's not friendly, and don't be afraid to run.

Roll over screen for annotations




Not everyone was happy with the all-over tanning salon.

EverQuest 2 continued

cavernous dungeon. The Befallen area – also rich in EQ lore – is a fortress once populated by the living Knights of the Order of Marr's Fist. Sadly (and you'll have to excuse the names, this is a fantasy game) Gynok of the Bone-bladed Claymore cursed the place, leaving them dead. Dead, but still defending the fortress from invaders such as you. Undead mobs form a strong thread through the Shadow Odyssey expansion, and named mobs like The Bonegrinder will show off the new snap-on armour system, which allows for more complicated and impressive textures, and combinations of kit.

Then there's Mistmoore, and the undead theme shifts towards the Vampire, Mayong Mistmoore, and his ghostly staff who still tend to his needs in Mistmyr Manor. An area populated with spiders and enchanted mannequins, with six treasures spread across its numerous rooms. These dungeons will tune to the level of the person first entering them, so make sure you plan who goes in first.

Other levels include the staggering Najena's Hollow, a lava-filled laboratory filled with fire and



air elementals, and the first location to warrant its own introductory cinematic. The entrance staircase alone is enough to get you worked up, but even Najena's Hollow pales next to the Void locations. This is where the recent lore, written by Morgan Lockhart and available online, will reach its end. EverQuest may be one of the older kids on the block, but with the locations and monsters on display in the void, it still feels like a power player.

With the reintroduction of two of the two Prime Healer gods back to Norrath (lore fans will remember the gods huffed off at the end of EQ1's timeline, and have been trickling back since), there's new things to worship and new miracles to learn. Shadow Odyssey may have more resonance with long-established fans, but the sheer spectacle of some of the locations can't fail to impress newer players, too. ●

"EverQuest may be one of the older kids on the block, but it's still a power player"


My wish? I wish some trousers...

TOMB WITH A VIEW

Look out for these impressive sights

HOT STUFF **HANDY MOUNT** **ENTERING THE VOID**

The entrance staircase to Najena's Hollow is initially covered in lava. You'll need to complete puzzles to gain access to the laboratory, but don't worry if you're not that clever, as 'puzzle' means 'pressing a switch'.



MASSIVE WARCRAFT GIVEAWAY! £1,500 OF PRIZES TO BE WON!

NOW JUMP TO THE NEXT PAGE TO ENTER THE COMPETITION!

You know what's better than World of Warcraft? More World of Warcraft. More World of Warcraft that doesn't even need an Internet connection to play. Yeah, that got your attention didn't it? Those enterprising and clever folk at UpperDeck have produced what could be the finest cards-and-miniatures-based games known to man, being, as they are, physical versions of the almighty MMO itself.



But you know what's better than that? Getting the stuff for free! Yeah, you heard us right. We've teamed up with Blizzard and UpperDeck to bring you around 1,500 quids-worth of WoW Minis and WoW Trading Card Game goodies. Well, it is nearly Christmas after all…

TRADING CARD GAME

The phenomenally successful card game spin-off has just seen the release of a seventh booster pack, Drums of War. The thundering drums of war echo throughout the land of Kalimdor. New warlords ride through the gates of Orgrimmar, eager to serve the warchief and leave their marks on the pages of history. Small battalions of Alliance soldiers arrive at outposts throughout Azeroth. They solidify their footholds in contested areas as marshals draw up strategies to defend their territories and press any aggressors who are foolish enough to cross their paths…

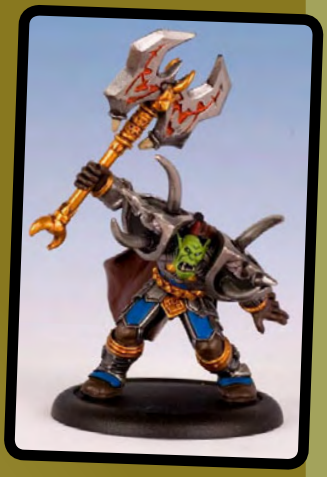
The WoW TCG is a great way to continue your WoW adventures offline, especially as each pack might contain rare Loot cards, which can be used to upgrade your Online WoW Character!



MINIATURES

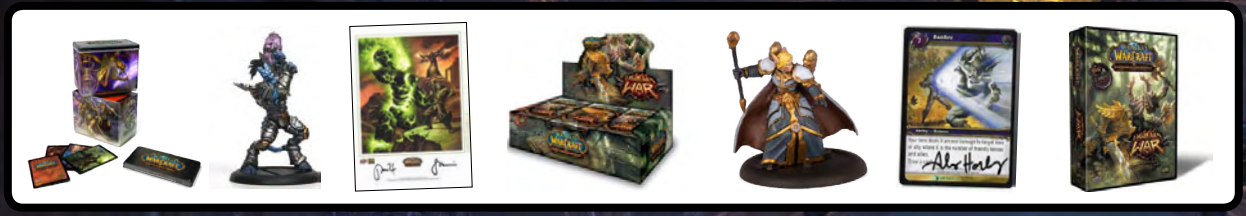
If the card game doesn't do it for you then the brand new WoW Miniatures game is an ideal accompaniment to the WoW universe. With over 70 unique miniatures to collect in the core set, designed by world-class sculptors and painted by Studio Mcvey, the 'I want one of those' value is already so high you'd need a flying mount to reach it. But these miniatures aren't just mantelpiece fodder, there's a deep and challenging game underneath them – quite literally, on the bases. The unique game mechanics are designed for fast-paced PvP skirmishes as well as epic cooperative raids against bosses like Onyxia the Dragon. The WoW Minis booster packs may also contain Loot cards to upgrade your in-game characters, too.

We've got a staggering prize list for one luck winner, and five runners-up will also be in for a Christmas treat, too.



WIN! WARCRAFT BUNDLES!

Take the Warcraft world offline with our stunning prizes!



So what can you win? Plenty. One lucky winner will walk away with a staggering array of booty, containing this lot…

- Set of DoW Loot Cards
- Box of DoW Boosters (24 packs of 19 cards)
- DoW PvP Starter Deck
- WoW Minis Deluxe Starter Deck
- WoW Minis Boosters (x5)
- WoW Artwork Tin (signed!)
- WoW Print (signed!)
- 'Sunfire' card (signed!)
- Burning Crusade Collector's Edition
- Wrath of the Lich King Collector's Edition

But that's not all, as we also have five runners-up bundles to give away, too. Each one is made up of…

- Wrath of the Lich King Collector's Edition
- WoW Minis Deluxe Starter Deck
- WoW Minis Boosters

All in all, that's a staggering amount of kit that, if you wanted to buy individually, would set you back a whopping £1,500!

The question is though, what do you have to do to stand a chance of winning all this? Ah, that's easy. All you have to do is answer the question on the right and that's it! And the very best of luck.

Competition closes 13th Januray 2009. See website for full T&Cs.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Deluxe Starter Set
6 random, premium figures
6 character cards
12 Action Bar cards to customise your characters
6 Faction-themed, 10-sided dice
6 Ubase Miniature bases to tack game stats
1 random Deluxe game board
1 Core Set Miniatures checklist
1 WoW TCG sample pack with a guaranteed Loot card for online character customisation

Booster Pack
3 random, premium pre-painted figures
3 character cards
6 Action Bar cards
1 WoW TCG sample pack that may contain a Loot card for Online character customisation

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

Make the best even better with our ultimate add-on guide...



GOING, GOING, GONE...

Auctioneer is the best of all add-ons

One of the oldest and best known add-ons, Auctioneer (auctioneeraddon.com) scans the Auction House every time you visit and works out average prices for all the items it sees. It'll tell you the lowest, highest and median costs of kit over all time, and what the most recent market valuations are. It's invaluable for anyone who sells a lot of mats on the Auction House, and comes with optional features which will tell you how much an item is worth if it's disenchanted into materials and sold, or – for prospective traders – what's a good deal today if you want to sell it for a profit tomorrow.

It also batch processes many tasks, letting you post 40 stacks of cloth in one click, for example.



Far be it from us to suggest that Blizzard isn't perfect at polishing every aspect of its mega MMO, but the default interface hasn't really changed in four years, and it really doesn't cope with the rigours of day-to-day life in the World of Warcraft.

There's a very good reason why it's so customisable, and that's the fact that Blizzard wants you to find the perfect set-up for yourself. And there are hundreds of add-ons available, which add new features and buttons to the basic layout in front of you, and even more which allow you to completely rebuild the whole thing to your own taste.

We couldn't possibly hope to cover every one of those add-ons in this small amount of space, but we are going to give you a taster of some of the stalwarts that have helped raiders through raids for years, as well as some of the most up to date Death Knight-specific mods for giving you lots more power over your ghoul.

Add-ons aren't cheating – they just add utilities to the basic Warcraft front end. More often than not,

Lich King tutorial cont.

they're simply ways of adding class-specific action bars or making in-game alerts more visible in combat. For example, one might show you what enchants you can do without you scrolling through your entire recipe book, or switch you into PvP gear if it detects that you've entered a battleground.

If you're a Mage or Warlock, Cryolosis or Necrosis are absolutely essential for adding new buttons to your display to manage all your pets, portals and food stuffs without using up action bar room.

Once you've tried out a few, and seen how easy they are to install, you can check out the massive repositories at www.curse.com or wowui.worldofwar.net until you find one that adds in exactly that thing that you, personally, feel the game has been missing.

Installing an add-on is easy. Just navigate to the /Interface/Add-ons folder of your World of Warcraft directory and unpack the files for your new add-on there. Uninstalling involves simply deleting them. You can switch add-ons on or off from the Character Select screen in-game.

Just remember that the important thing about add-ons is not to go mad with them. Blizzard's UI coding language is fairly straightforward to write, but there are a lot of badly scripted mods out there that will just cause your game to crash. And never download anything from a source you don't trust!

THE KING HAS LEFT THE BUILDING...

A few more golden nuggets to help you get the best out of your add-ons

Showing off
No-one likes a selfish show off. Add-ons that add damage meters to your interface can be very useful for working out whether you're underperforming for your class, but people who just aim to be top of the damage meter rather than generally helpful in a raid soon find themselves kicked out of guilds.

Check for updates
Before installing an add-on, check that it's been recently updated and works with the latest version of World of Warcraft. Right now, then game client is on version 3.0.3. Many add-ons created before the launch of WoTLK won't work.

Configuration files
Many add-ons store configuration files alongside your game profiles in the World of Warcraft/WTF folder on your hard disc. You can back this up in case you have to reinstall, or delete it to force everything back to defaults if you're having problems with in-game crashes.

"Before installing an add-on, check that it's been recently updated and works with the latest version of World of Warcraft"

Roll over screen for annotations



MORE ESSENTIALS

Finding your way around Warcraft

IT CHEATSIES | THE MINIMAP | GATHER STUFF

Can't locate the next NPC in a quest chain or pack of wolves you must kill? Are you tired of Alt-Tabbing out of the game to Thottbot? Quest Helper will tell you exactly where you need to go to complete all the tasks in your log. Takes a bit of the fun out of the game, though.



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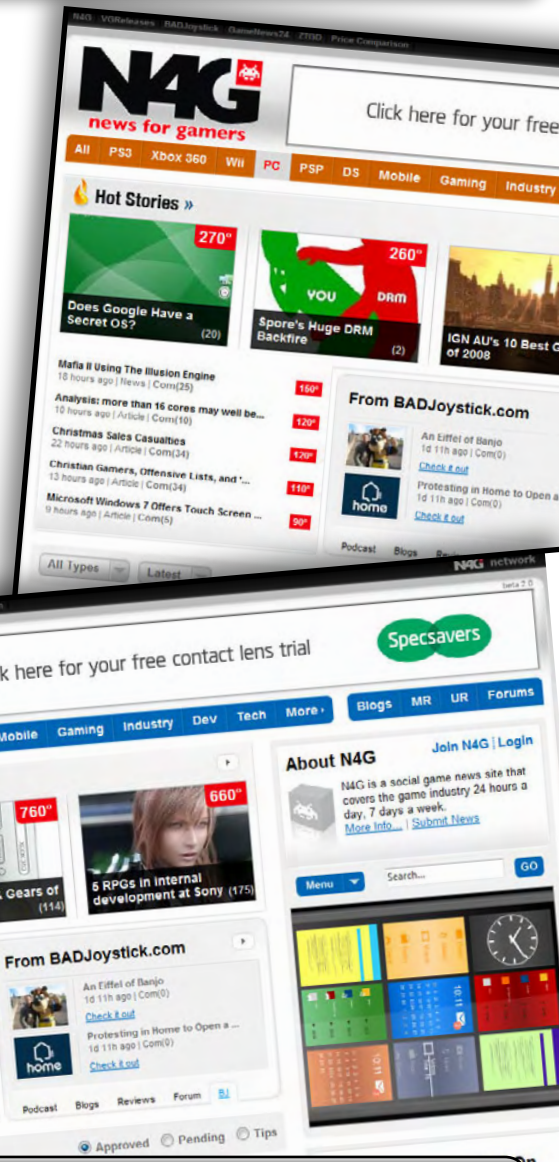
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