

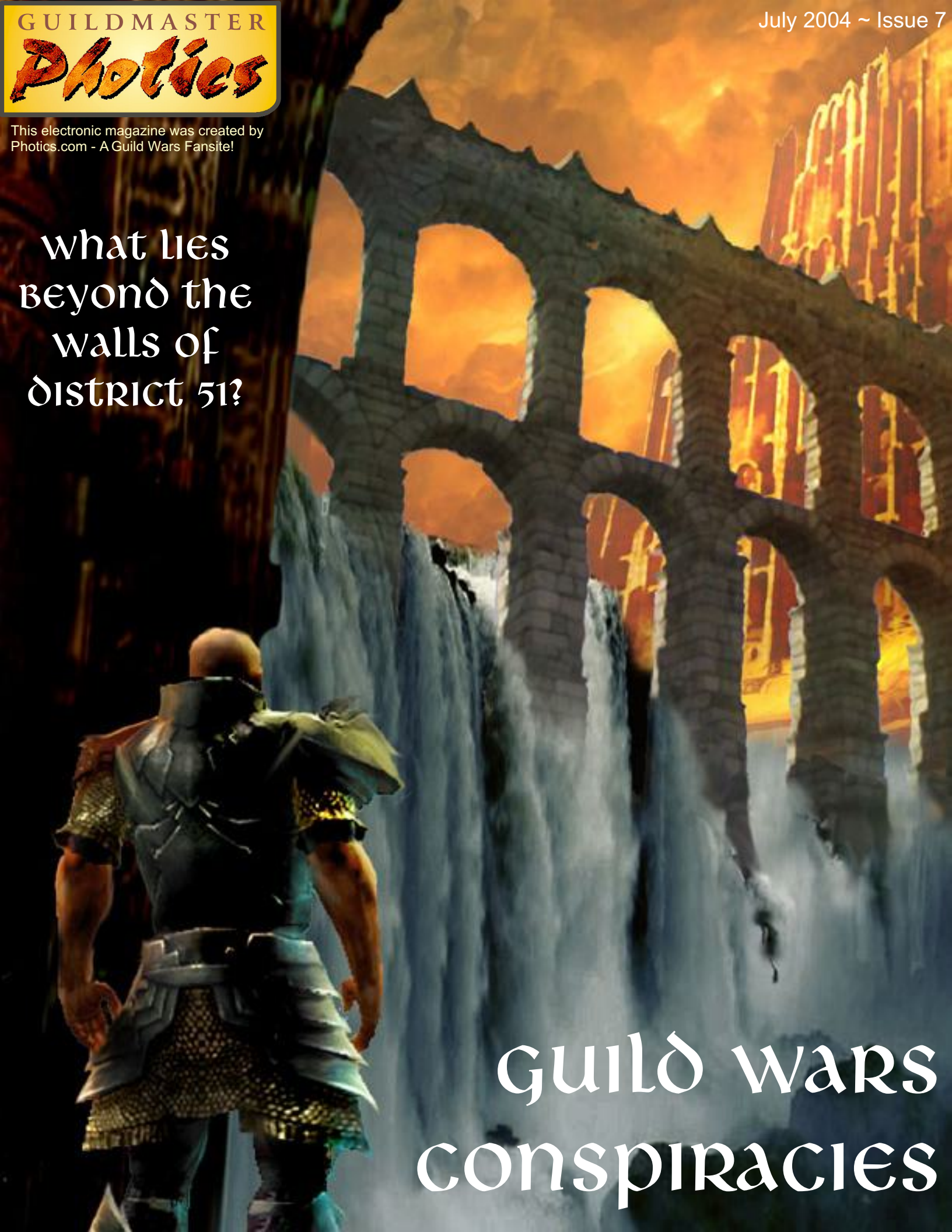
GUILDMASTER

July 2004 ~ Issue 7

Photics

This electronic magazine was created by
Photics.com - A Guild Wars Fansite!

what lies
beyond the
walls of
district 51?



guild wars
conspiracies

alpha shrouded in mystery

There's something I just don't understand about the current state of the Guild Wars community. Despite having access to tons of Guild Wars content, such as screenshots, lore, inside info, videos and more, the community is generally still hungry for additional Guild Wars info.

How can this be? 200,000+ accounts were made for the "E3 for Everyone event. If you've already played the game, wouldn't you already know all you need to know about Guild Wars? I mean really, what new information is going to change your impression of this game?

"Oh look, Seagulls! You know, I wasn't going to buy Guild Wars. Seeing those adorable birds fly around the palm trees really changed my mind." Does this sound plausible? Does your future purchase hinge on realistic wave effects? "Dude, I'm so not buying this game unless I see some sea foam!" (Don't worry. There are some impressive water effects, which can be found in the new lands of Kryta.)

There are minor changes to Guild Wars that occur daily, but it doesn't always get front page news coverage. Even with this in consideration, the community is rarely out of the loop. The Guild Wars information flow exceeds that of most, if not all, traditional video games. How many alphas have you played lately?

There should really be only one question left.
When is the Guild Wars release date?

For many, buying Guild Wars is a no-brainer. The true problem is having to cope until release. Maybe there will be a reprieve from the waiting, with an open beta or



Go in there
and check out
the Alpha!



No way. I ain't going in
there. It's too scary!

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"GuildMaster Photics"
is a Guild Wars Fansite
Electronic Magazine,
by Michael Garofalo.

another promotional event. Until then, the community is left to endure. This downtime can do terrible things to a mind.

Even though the alpha testers are permitted to share their experiences from alpha, there are still tiny secrets not yet told. This leaves non-alphas with nothing to do but fill in the blanks. When secrets block the consciousness, imagination is left to theorize. The information left unknown is replaced with educated guesses and some off-the-wall speculation.

I have an interesting perspective on the matter. As an alpha tester, I can see when members of the community are guessing correctly. "Hey, good guess. Of course there are going to be different types of hammers." Then there are other times with horrible guesses. "No, Guild Wars will not be \$90 per box, not unless ArenaNet wants to go out of business."

Sometimes the theorizing is so intense, so insane, that you'd think ArenaNet was organizing a conspiracy to destroy MMORPG players everywhere. That's the theme of this issue. It is a spoof on the preposterous delusions, formed from rabid projections, of a community starved for exceptional gaming. Don't fall into a vicious bout with doubt. I'm here to smite the paranoia. Guild Wars is moving along smoothly. That won't stop me from poking a little fun though. That is why this is entitled "Guild Wars Conspiracies".

Some of the articles in this issue are a bit outlandish. If you're expecting all of the dark secrets of Guild Wars to be revealed, this isn't the issue. This is a slow period and there's not much I can do about it. Last month, I wrote a 3000+ word preview for Guild Wars. The feedback was of two basic comments. It was either "Nice review dude" or "Where's the new info?". THERE IS NO NEW INFO! Now is the time of NDA's. Well, maybe you will find some new information in this issue. Just read carefully. Maybe there are some encoded messages here somewhere. See if you can find the hidden secrets.

Oh, and you might be wondering what exactly is District 51. It's a spoof on Area 51. District 51 doesn't exist. There hasn't been so much as a district 3, not since the "E3 for Everyone" event. The truth can be rather dull sometimes. Hey, this isn't an easy time for me either. For the next few months I'll have to make up stuff to keep you entertained, but we all know it is the game you'd rather be playing.



A big concern of players seems to be about different choices of weapons and armor. Don't panic! There will be many different implements of destruction to choose from!



Here you can see a wacky hat, from conceptual drawing to in-game artwork. All the fashionable warriors will be wearing dead Charr on their heads. Strike fear into the hearts of your enemy. Let them know you turn your foes into fuzzy earmuffs and fluffy slippers.

the case of the missing emote



Is this Female Mesmer cheering or is she in the middle of a healing animation?
Can you solve the case of the missing emote?



In the previous issue, I sported some nifty screenshots from the "E3 for Everyone" event. One page was dedicated entirely to emotes. The top picture caught my Warrior roaring, the bottom screenshot had my Ranger laughing and the middle image, had the Female Mesmer cheering. I didn't think much of the screenshot. I posted it in my magazine and I went about alpha testing as usual. Then one day, at an All Call, I ran into a developer. He told me what a great job I did, making it look like the Mesmer was cheering.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! SHE IS CHEERING!

A lengthy debate ensued. Much to my surprise, Female Mesmers couldn't cheer anymore. I kept typing /cheer, /roar, /beckon, /laugh... NOTHING HAPPENED! I was shocked. What happened? Did the developers take out the emotes? From what I was told, the lady Mesmer emotes were never in the game. The developers, to this day, claim the screenshot was nothing more than a frame of animation from the heal kit.

To do what the developers described would take very fast reflexes. That would be something too involved to waste time on. When I took my screenshot, I was in a group. An ominous message appeared, "Only one more day to play the Guild Wars ALPHA TEST PREVIEW." I certainly didn't have time to fake a cheer emote. I remember seeing the Female Mesmer doing emotes! So what's going on here? Did I stumble on a really wacky bug? Did I imagine the whole thing? Did the developers put in Female Mesmer emotes, but then take them out again? With 200,000 accounts created at the E3 for Everyone event, maybe someone saw something. Can you solve the case if the missing emote?

Looking back on all of this now, I should have done a /roar instead of a /cheer. There would be absolutely no confusion between a /roar and a casting animation. Just look at that Ranger. There's no mistaking that's a /roar.

understanding the expansions

You'd think after impressing the world at the May 2004 Electronics Entertainment Expo, the skepticism towards ArenaNet would cease. Nope, the latest kick seems to be about doubting the Guild Wars business model. Apparently, some Guild Wars fans are concerned about the expansion pack - even though the original game isn't even released yet. For some reason, the doubt lingers on. There are concerns about forced upgrades. There are concerns of astronomical prices. Are these doubts and concerns justified?

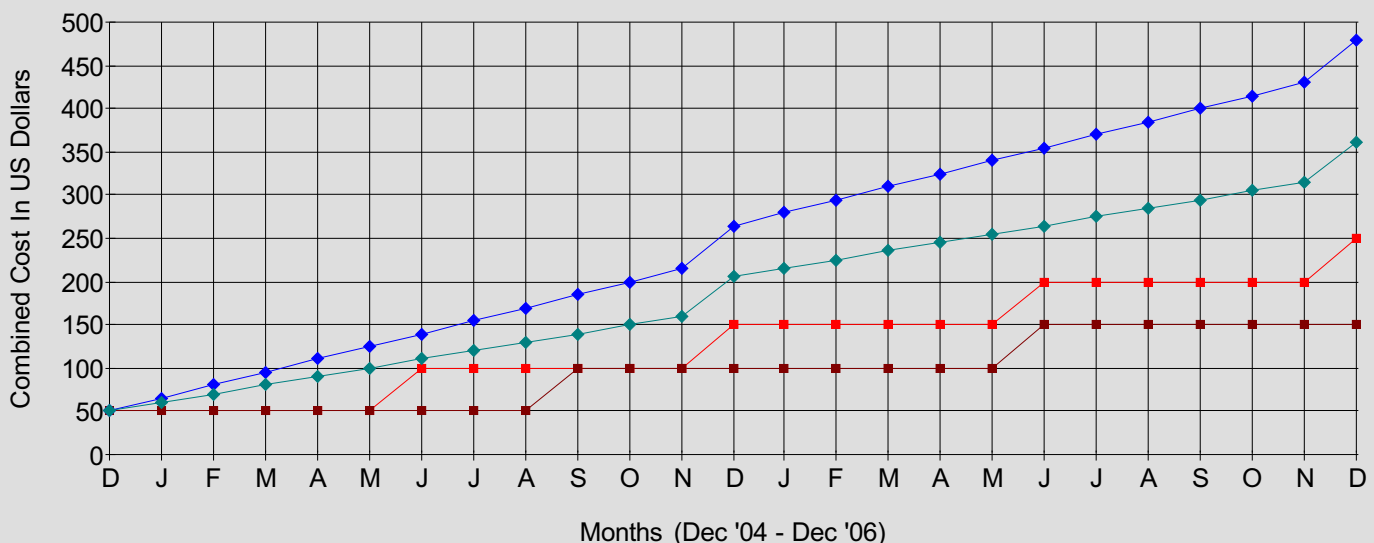
First off, ArenaNet publicly stated that Guild Wars, and the expansions, would be competitively priced. I don't know where this uncertainty is coming from. ArenaNet can't sell their game for \$90 and be successful. Competitively priced means \$50 and under. If ArenaNet priced Guild Wars much higher than that, they'd price themselves out of existence.

My words alone won't convince people, so how about pretty charts? It is common for people assume the worst for Guild Wars, while assuming the best for the current MMORPGs. Everyone knows video game expansion packs usually don't sell at \$50 each. They usually sell at \$35 a piece. Guild Wars expansions are scheduled to be released every 6-9 months. Most traditional MMORPG subscription rates are \$10-\$15. Even when you figure an expensive path for Guild Wars, and compare it to lowball MMORPG rates, Guild Wars is STILL significantly less expensive. Over the course of two years, the difference in saving can be \$100 and up.

Usually at this stage, people wonder how do they do it? It's all about economics. Traditional MMORPGs count their installed base in the thousands. I have good reason to believe ArenaNet will count their players in the millions. Guild Wars has no handicaps. There is no credit card needed to play. Guild Wars will have customer support, but supporting Guild Wars isn't as demanding as with many other MMORPGs. (Even in Alpha, I never got hopelessly stuck in a wall or lost my corpse.) Instanced zones help manage the population flux. Streaming technology conserves on bandwidth. With less overhead, and a larger install base, Guild Wars can afford to be less expensive.

This still leaves big a question. How will ArenaNet implement Guild Wars upgrades without forcing people to upgrade? An expansion is new content, but it will also respect existing content. Just because you didn't upgrade, that doesn't mean you're going to automatically lose PvP matches. Word is everyone will stay the same power level. But without the expansions, you won't be able to try the new adventures, new skills, new professions or new whatever.

Guilds Wars vs Monthly Fees



This chart assumes \$50 for Guild Wars Expansions, but only \$35 for competitive expansions.

— GW 6 months — GW 9 months
— Typical \$35/\$15 — Typical \$35/\$10

This chart clearly shows how Guild Wars can save you money versus typical MMORPG subscription fees. In two years, you could save \$300 or more with Guild Wars.

fighting the flavor of the month



See, not all of the Female Elementalist armor is candy like.

With so many fairies of death buzzing about, did the developers nerf Pixies? Not exactly. They added additional armor that makes the Female Elementalists look less candy like. You rarely see a Female Elementalist sporting the pixie armor these days. What of the PvP characters? Oh they're still there. The PvP characters would eventually foster the next flavor of the month - The Mesmer.

Previously, you would never see a primary Mesmer. It was rare. I mean it was really RARE! If you did see one, you felt pity. In fact, whenever I saw a primary Mesmer, I quietly thought to myself, "noob!" When the developers added a primary-only attribute to the Mesmer, that all changed. Fast Casting was added to the Mesmer arsenal. WHOA... and did this attribute rock!

I made a Mesmer / Elementalist. I went with full Fast Casting and full Fire Magic. I also picked up Fire Attunement and Flare. It was like playing a human artillery canon - boom boom boom boom boom! I had unlimited fast fireballs of death. After I laughed manically at my new found power, I posted a head-up message to the Alpha community. This seemed a bit unbalanced. Before my post, few had known the Mesmer even had Fast Casting. When I first heard about Fast

Shortly after the "E3 for Everyone" event, pixies began appearing everywhere. It was the cutest thing. Alpha testers were making Female Elementalists. While donning the upgraded armor, the Female Elementalist looks like a pixie. It was so precious, so adorable. I wanted to hug my monitor. There were these sexy ladies, with pixie wings on their back. Their garments resembled ballroom dresses and they had the snazziest little shoes.

Just about everyone wanted to make one - even Gaile Gray!

Yes, making a pixie Elementalist became the "Flavor of the month". Well, at least it was the flavor of the week. Guild Wars updates much faster than traditional MMORPGs. Shortly after the pixie craze, the developers implemented PvP characters. What's a PvP character? I'll explain! After the E3, hardly anyone wanted to return to tournament. Could you blame them? 200,000+ active accounts suddenly dropped to roughly 400 active accounts. It made returning to combat rather dull. This downward spiral festered on itself. The more people who didn't want to bother with PvP, meant there would be less competitors. If there were less competitors, there was less to do. Even for the diehard PvP players had no one to fight against. They too began to feel the futility of PvP.

The developers realized they needed to rejuvenate the competitive missions. That was when they implemented PvP characters.

The idea is really simple. When an alpha makes a character, with the first name of "Pvp", they get a character with all the best gear and all of the skills. There is one penalty. PvP characters forsake PvE maps. PvP characters are prohibited from entering most of the cooperative missions. PvP characters became the next flavor of the month. Everyone was making PvP characters. (I'd imagine something like this isn't going live, but who knows.)

Can you picture this? You're in a world with hostile PvP Pixies. They may look delectable, but they launch detestable attacks at you. Flavor of the month had taken full storm. There wasn't a PvP match without a flowery little sprite, hurling elemental death at your general vicinity.



"E3 for Everyone" File Photo

Grrrr! The Lynx looks quite mad there. See the teeth? What could I have done to anger this Lynx? Keep reading to find out!

Casting, I had my Female Mesmer ready to go. Previously, you could find Valkyre Valery becoming emotional for no reason - /cheer, /laugh, /roar. She was a dedicated emote bug finder. I recreated her as Lady Pyromancer. Reconstructed for devastation, she became the destroyer of worlds. She would march unimpeded towards victory, leaving miles of melted Charr in her wake. How's that for a mental image?

It didn't take long for the community to jump on the Mesmer / Elementalist bandwagon. Before my post, not too many people knew of this exploit. Afterwards, the world was filled with chain-casting freaks. That was when the developers did what developers do - they nerfed. Fast Casting is not so fast anymore. Lady Pyromancer is no longer the destroyer of worlds. She's back to her old emotional self.

The whole ordeal changed my perspective on my primary character. I had been playing a Ranger / Warrior since day one. After enjoying the deadly accuracy of Elemental magic, and the responsiveness of Mesmer Fast Casting, I was about to do something a little crazy. I deleted my Ranger/Warrior character.

I had become mesmerized by the latest flavor of the month. Oooooohhhh... pretty fireballs. That looked like fun. So with one brutal delete command, 450+ hours of game time (roughly 19 real life days) was forever lost. Eh, a player wipe seems inevitable anyway. So now, my primary toon became "Guildmaster Photics". (I'm still rather annoyed by the forced first and last names.) At least now I have the character I was looking for from the beginning - a fire wizard!

Male Elementalist just looked plain weird to me, but Male Mesmers look cool. One style of hair even has a ponytail. It was settled. I was now a Mesmer / Elementalist. Err, just like everyone else? Before Fast Casting, you'd have to go on an archeological dig, just to find proof of the Mesmer's existence. Now, you can't throw a rock without hitting one.

It's pretty obvious the developers are still working on profession balance. Also, it shows how the Alphas like to try new things. Considering how easy it is to roll up a new character, I wonder how the retail version will handle "Flavor of the Month". I imagine profession hopping will continue into the next few months. Rangers don't have stealth. All the attributes have not yet been added. New skills are changed or added all the time. However, I imagine professions will solidify by retail time. For now, it's just too tempting to play the "Flavor of the Month" game.



Where do MMORPG characters go when they die?

where are the guilds in guild wars?

"E3 for Everyone" File Photo



Technically, two guilds exist, ArenaNet & Alphas. Tabards are symbols of guild status.

There's been a concern of mine since the first day I started alpha - where are the Guilds? It was the guild features that endeared me to this game - Guild Chat, Guild Forum, Guild Hall. It is called GUILD Wars after all. Guild Wars is being promoted as a competitive game. I really couldn't care less about that. Sure, PvP can get the heart pumping, but online games come and go. I look at Guild Wars for it's unrivaled social value. In Guild Wars, never will a friend be lost to a monthly fee.

It a beautiful thing, when you really think about it. Guild Wars represents your online home. Imagine always having a place to meet up with your friends. That is what a Guild Hall can do. With no monthly fee, you are never separated. For as long as the game exists, you only need an Internet connection, a decent computer and your copy of Guild Wars. With the years I've spent playing other MMORPGs, I've left behind many friends. It may seem trivial how \$12.95 a month is what stands between me and them, but that's the reality of the situation. This is why Guild Wars is great! Even after you buy Guild Wars, other games may catch your interest, but you can always get back into Guild Wars. You don't need to pull out your credit card, just for a 10 minute hello.

Is it really strange to think of a game called "Guild Wars" as a social game?

Every time I log in, I look for signs of guild features. I click the 'Guild' tab, only to find the words "Coming Soon!" This is disheartening. It really feels weird playing a game called Guild Wars without guild features. Sure, there are guilds floating around. They're just not officially recognized in the game. Right now, the developers are strongly encouraging players to team up as guilds. This is even though no actual guild features exist. My guild played along. There are currently 16 alphas in The Crusaders. There are about 5-10 similar guilds in Alpha.

As encouragement, strong participation is rewarded. Active guilds can invite additional guild members into alpha. That's right. Guilds can get alpha invites. So for an hour on Wednesdays, and another hour on Fridays, guilds tear each other to pieces. Guild features may not be in the game, but PvP has certainly evolved. Forget tournament. Alphas now fight on a map called "Coastal Guilds".

For those of you that like siege warfare, Coastal Guilds is for you. Picture a tropical island, with two forts at opposite sides. Your objective is to kill the opposing Guild Lord, while protecting your own. In order to break into the enemy fort, you must safely guide one of your two Guild Thieves to the enemy gates. There are also other NPCs to help you out. The battles last REALLY long. It's not uncommon for a Coastal Guild match to go for 30 minutes or more.

Are there guilds in Guild wars? Technically, yes. The features are not yet implemented, but many alpha testers are playing as if they are in their respective guilds. When are guild features going to be implemented? Considering how the developers are currently focusing on guilds, it could be any day now.



OK, so I don't have a screenshot of Coastal Guilds. If you can picture the background here, just with stone walls, ramparts, wooden doors and stuff like that, then you've got Coastal Guilds.