

GUILD WARS

BEACH

PARTY

World Preview Event
Review





Guild Wars - World Preview Event Tremendous success!

The morning after the World Preview Event, I felt very sad. I logged into my Guild Wars account. It felt like I was stealing. I shouldn't be able to log in, not when all my friends cannot. Then, I found out I really wasn't that privileged. None of my guild members were online. No one was on my friends list. This is a far cry from just 12 hours earlier. The guild was so popular, we didn't have enough room for all the people. I went from not being able to keep up with all the chat messages, to not seeing anyone chat at all. Guild Wars alpha is a lonely place. Fortunately, alpha is not going to be around much longer!

Beta starts in the first weekend of November

After such an amazing weekend, I find it troubling that some players are not pre-ordering. Is it not obvious that Guild Wars is worth it? Didn't I tell you all along? Although, many of the people who are not pre-ordering have valid excuses. Some simply cannot get the pre-order in their area. Others are afraid of the loss of time. Guild Wars has a way of making your weekends disappear. The World Preview Event started early. When I got home from work on Thursday night, I didn't leave my chair much at all. In fact, as I type this on Monday morning, I'm still in the same spot. I went out on Halloween, but it just wasn't spectacular. Is an imaginary world more alluring than the real one?

"Hey dude, can you come down here and let me in? I left my keys in my other set of armor. DUDE?! I'm locked out. Can you let me in? I know you're up there. Let me in!"



I can fly! I can fly! No... wait... I'm just dead.

GUILD WARS

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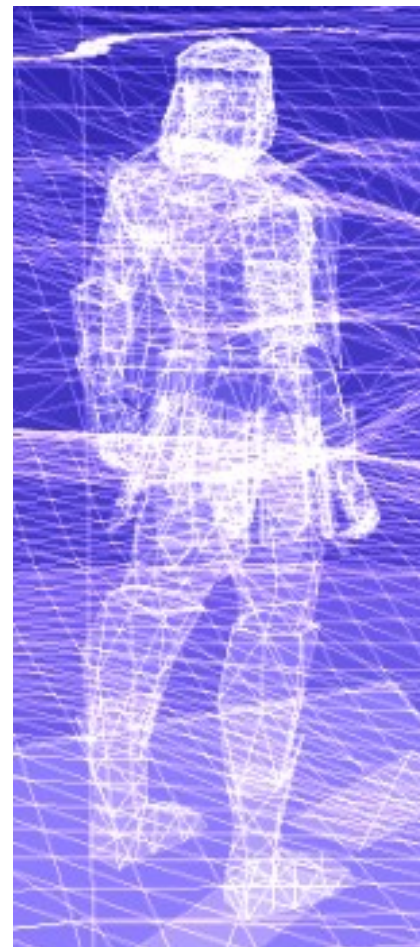
It is said that obsessive MMORPG players are trying to compensate for things they cannot do in the real world. Well, yah, that's probably true. I normally don't lead people into battle. It was great. Everyone was so friendly, and so eager to play. ArenaNet was preaching all along - Guild Wars is a game based on skill, not time invested. This weekend proved it. Before the event was done, my guild - The Crusaders - claimed the Hall of Heroes as their own. We ascended to the highest spot in the whole game. Many of these players I did not know a week earlier. There was no planning time. We just played. We chatted. We laughed. We fought. We won. It was good stuff! Many other guilds were doing exactly the same thing.

In town, people were crafting. They were talking of their tales of adventure. They were learning about the game. They were saying how other games just didn't compare to Guild Wars. Here's another fun quote...

It is keeping me up at night, for good or ill.
- Patrick Kingsley aka THX @ [OGaming](#)

...Guild Wars is a powerful game. The MMORPG genre has not known action like this. Incase you didn't already know, I deleted my primary character. "Guildmaster Photics" got deleted. He was replaced with "T A N K". This brand new character was the one standing at the Hall of Heroes. That should tell you, the game is not about time invested. It's about skill and teamwork. But anyway, I'm starting to sound like a commercial for ArenaNet. So... I'll just tell you more about the event.

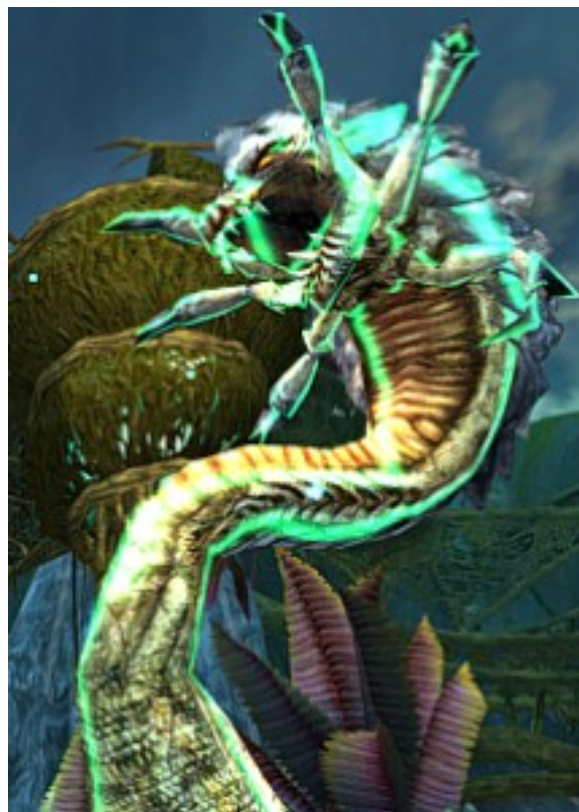
First off, you see the cover of this issue? That's my guild! Traditionally, the cover of this magazine is graced with Guild Wars concept artwork. Well, I ran out. During the event, I realized I didn't have anything spectacular for the cover. It's a funny story on how that screenshot was taken. First, we started in our Guild Hall. I suggested that everyone grab their best gear, then get together for a group shot. The Guild Hall, while an impressive zone, just wasn't producing the kind of shot I was looking for. That's when we all went to Lion's Arch (District 13). It was pandemonium. There were dozens of guildies, wearing nothing but their undies and a Guild Tabard. The idea was that a beach shot



SHIFT+F12 brings you into something of a developer mode. I'm surprised this feature wasn't disabled for the World Preview Event.

would look sexy. After running around for several minutes, I found a good location for the shoot. It was at the docks. It was estimated that everyone cheering would look good. This did nothing more than spam everyone in the zone. After all that zany arm waving, I realized a serious shot would look cooler. Everyone just stood still. That's the cover of this issue. It's not concept artwork. It's not pre-rendered. That's an actual in-game screenshot, as are the other shots in this issue.

See, I upgraded my computer before the event. I'm now running with an Overclocked GeForce 6800, 512 DDR and 2.0 GHz CPU. That let me roam around with 1600x1200 resolution. This is with incredible frame rates. That's what's nice about Guild Wars, the requirements are pretty low. I didn't hear too many people complaining about the hardware requirements. However, you can bump up the graphics. Even high end users can be amazed. The visuals are lush, vibrant and impressive. I ended up taking over 200 screenshots during the event... more than I would ever need for this issue. One unusual thing about the event, the TRI, FPS & BYTES counters were gone. I thought ArenaNet would like to show off the power of the engine. The game is not a bandwidth hog, as it usually runs well under 1K per second. The frame rate



Halloween wouldn't be complete without an assortment of Monsters.



Monsters... AAAAAHHHH!



is also stellar, as I can hit well over

80 FPS @ 1024x768. Players asked why they couldn't see their frame count. That's when I told them about a little trick - SHIFT+F12.

The developers didn't take out this little goodie. Pressing SHIFT+F12 brings up a chart, which graphs your performance - in real time. The performance is displayed in milliseconds. This can be used to figure out your actual frames per second. It's also something of a debug tool. By pressing SHIFT+F12 again, you can view the game in wacky modes. Now that I've brought attention to this hidden feature, I wonder if it will be available for Beta Testers? It's not like you can really cheat with this tool. It just looks cool. If it's still in the game, give it a try. I did mention that the pre-order beta event is during the first weekend of November... right?!

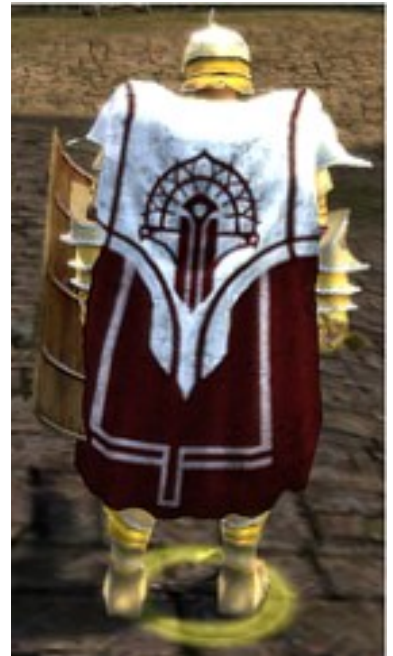
When I wasn't putting my photojournalism degree to good use, I was running missions. Yah, I'm a slacker. I only posted four of the six strategy guides. The Monk & the Ranger were not included in the Photics.com strategy guide section. I just ran out of time. I suppose I could

have spent my weekend putting something together. Yah right! I wanted to play! I was out there, running maps, farming loot, slaying monsters and having a great time. Considering only a fraction of the content was available, there was still plenty to do. I played every day, four days in a row. Think of all the video games you got tired of, just after four hours of playtime. This is four DAYS! Guild Wars is just getting started.

You have played for 30 hours 33 minutes since creating this character 3 days ago.

Was all perfect? Well, no... not exactly. There are some things I would like to see changed. For one, if NPCs can have capes, why can't we? I think tabards should be an option, but not the only option. Let's be honest here. ArenaNet has created female characters with really impressive breasts. It would be a shame to cover them all up. One might argue that with capes you can't see the guild emblem from the front. This is irrelevant to me. In PvP, I hold down SHIFT+CTRL+ALT. This lets me see who's in the area, way before I see their emblem. If their name is in a different color than mine, it's an enemy.

Another thing I can't understand is the tiny guild cap. There was only room for 50 players, plus the guild leader. This was rain on my parade, as I thought the cap was at least 100 people. I'm used to MMORPGs with unlimited guild caps. To compensate for this, The Crusaders implemented a rotating roster. If you were off-line, you got kicked out of the guild. When you returned back online, you would be re-invited. All throughout the event, people were sending me requests for guild invites. If I missed you, I wasn't being rude. I just didn't see you. Trying to organize a large guild was cumbersome, as the system is not designed to handle uber guilds. I think it should. There's no mistaking the benefit The Crusaders had on the game. Without the great friends I met through the guild, the World Preview Event weekend could have been very dull. With hard caps on PvP



On the left, we have "TANK" with a Monk Henchman. On the right, an NPC with a cape. Why can't I have a cape?



Here's a shot of The Crusaders, hanging out in the Guild Hall. This area became a central meeting ground for our guild.



battles, smaller guilds don't have to worry about being "zerged". That's why I think Guild Wars should be accommodating to both large and small guilds.

ArenaNet proved there is such a thing as being too popular. On Friday night, an emergency ISP problem was announced. Not too long after, severe lag issues occurred. Players started getting locked out of the game. This technical issue was well handled. Later that night, everything was back to normal. The problem only seemed to last about an hour or two. As a result, my site enjoyed higher than normal traffic. By Saturday and Sunday, the game was performing significantly better. This shows how ArenaNet can resolve network issues. There was no 8-hour patch fix either. The game can be updated on the fly.

Here's something I don't understand though. It was Halloween. This was no ordinary Halloween. It was a Halloween weekend. That doesn't happen every year. I thought for sure there would be some type of Halloween related content. It didn't happen. I ended up spending Halloween being the terror of PvP. Warriors seem a bit unbalanced. Now that I'm a Warrior / Elementalist, you can be sure that they will be "nerfed". In fact, we didn't lose the Hall of Heroes to a team. We lost it to a bug. While waiting for an opposing party, the clock froze at zero seconds. Stuff like this is expected. It was an alpha after all.

POWER UP!

There was something else that was special about this weekend. Halloween was when daylight savings time ended. If there was ever a weekend where I could use an extra hour, this was it. Plenty

of people thought the event would be over an hour earlier, but they didn't realize that Bellevue, Washington observes daylight savings time. For that last hour, I was hanging out in Lion's Arch (District 81). Jeff Strain was holding an informal question & answer session.

A text logging feature would have been handy, because I was just too busy to keep track of everything that was said. There was some good information revealed. There were two questions discussed, which I was particularly interested in. A guildie asked if the guild cap would be higher than 50. The response - they're going to look into it. Also, there was a discussion about other MMORPGs. That's when I brought up "lofty goals". Will Guild Wars have that pie-in-the-sky type of objectives? Reaching level 20 can be done in a single day. This is not going to be enough to satisfy traditional MMORPG players. I was told that there would be additions to PvP, which would make me very happy. I was logged on as "T A N K", so I don't know if Jeff knew it was me, but he seemed to speak directly at me. I have been



Conquering the Hall of Heroes is not all fun and glory. There's often a lot of waiting involved, waiting for that next challenger. This is a perfect time to take screenshots!

highly critical of certain features of Guild Wars. The developers seem aware of player concerns. It was as if they knew exactly what I was talking about, and that they were preparing to resolve it.

As an example of this, there was a pleasant change to PvP. On Sunday, players began to receive exp for PvP combat. That's how I went from level 19 to 20. There are two forces at odds here. There are the players who like a good leveling grind. They are players who like to pursue lofty goals. Then there are the players who hate any form of leveling. They only want to PvP. This was an interesting compromise. Exp for PvP is not a new debate to the genre. What surprises me is how quickly ArenaNet addressed the issue. Did you see a big lengthy patch update? Did you have to wait months for balancing issues to be resolved. Noooooo... I just logged in, read the message of the day and I thought to myself, "Neat!"

Voice acting was brought up during the informal interview. Obviously, the players want it. The developers stated that this would be a problem, as NPC dialogue is going to change so dramatically. Having to constantly

send new audio data would be very taxing. Although, they acknowledged that this is something

they're looking into. The cut scenes just seem so lifeless without voice narration. I don't see why the core missions should be void of voice acting.

I imagine the basic missions quests will be pretty much the same. This seems like a great place for narration. I think a mix of voice and text is probably the best solution.

Thanks to a cut scene, an interesting "feature" was discovered. Well, I'm calling it a feature because it helped my team. We were out of resurrection kits. Most of our party was dead. Nevertheless, our remaining team pushed on. Me, I was already dead. I was just a spectator. When suddenly, a cut screen jumped on my monitor. There's a spider. It was crawling around. It looked like it was going to eat someone. Blah blah blah... we must save them. When the cutscene was over - POOF - I was brought back to life. Yeay cut screen!



Don't they look like a cute couple. I wonder what they're saying to each other. "I love you." "I love you more." "No, I love you more." "No... I love YOU more!"



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You know, looking back, the four days of the event seem like one big blur. I really cannot remember much detail of the 80 hour event. All I do know was that it was great fun. The end had a somber feeling to it. Two-for-two, ArenaNet likes to start these events early, but shut 'em

down on-time. Now, it's time to look forward to

Guild Wars Beta. I wonder how many people are going to pre-order now.

Shortly before the World Preview Event ended, I asked, "Do you think ArenaNet's - Guild Wars World Preview Event was enjoyable?" An overwhelming 94% said, "Yes!"

This is a good time for Guild Wars. Finally, the world will be forced to admit that Guild Wars is a reality. Rival MMORPG creators will have to acknowledge that an online roleplaying game can exist without monthly fees... that a game doesn't need excessive travel time, insane downtime or other such tedious nonsense. Now is the time I get to act all smug and say, "See, I told you so!" Ahhh... these are happy times indeed!

It won't be long now. Soon Guild Wars will be a 24/7 affair. I look forward to seeing you at the Beta Event. If you need to find me, I'll be going by the name "T A N K".



Roleplaying can be lots of fun. Why look, that's me. I'm cooking dinner. Mmmmm... good. Do you see the footprints in the sand? Now that's sweet detail.



The sun has set on the World Preview Event, but don't worry. There is more fun on the way