

The Burning Crusade warms my loins, heart

Blood elves and Dranei and Outlands, oh my! WoW's first expansion will eat up more of your precious time than you were expecting

World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

PC and MAC
Vivendi Universal
Blizzard Entertainment
Rate T for Teen
On sale now

MIKE KENDRICK
Design & Production Editor

They came for the midnight launch, they saw the massive lineups and they conquered the masses of new villains upon finally getting their copies. *World of Warcraft's* first expansion, *The Burning Crusade*, is here, and hundreds of thousands of virtual heroes are once again confined to the dungeon-like solitude of their basements. But was the hours-long wait in the thousand-person lineups, braving the sub-zero temperatures worth it? Read on, brave adventurers and discover just what Blizzard truly has to offer to its hordes of MMO (massively multiplayer online) gamers.

The servers were clogged on launch night as thousands of eager players logged on to a flashy new intro screen and ran, rode and flew towards the Blasted Lands in southern Azeroth to be among the first players through the Dark Portal and experience the Outlands for themselves. I shed a little tear as my frame rate took a painful drop while my system struggled to process just how much was going on around me, and narrowly avoided being ganked by a troupe of bloodthirsty Tauren warriors. But there it was: the portal,

which had for months been kept closed by conscripts of the Burning Legion's demonic forces, now fortified by the combined efforts of both Alliance and Horde armies. Stepping through, I felt a little chill as a brand new loading screen popped up, signalling my entry into the Hellfire Peninsula, the Outlands' ravaged province connecting the two worlds.

And it was spectacular.

And did I mention you can fly around on your very own lion-bird now? Gryphons for the win!

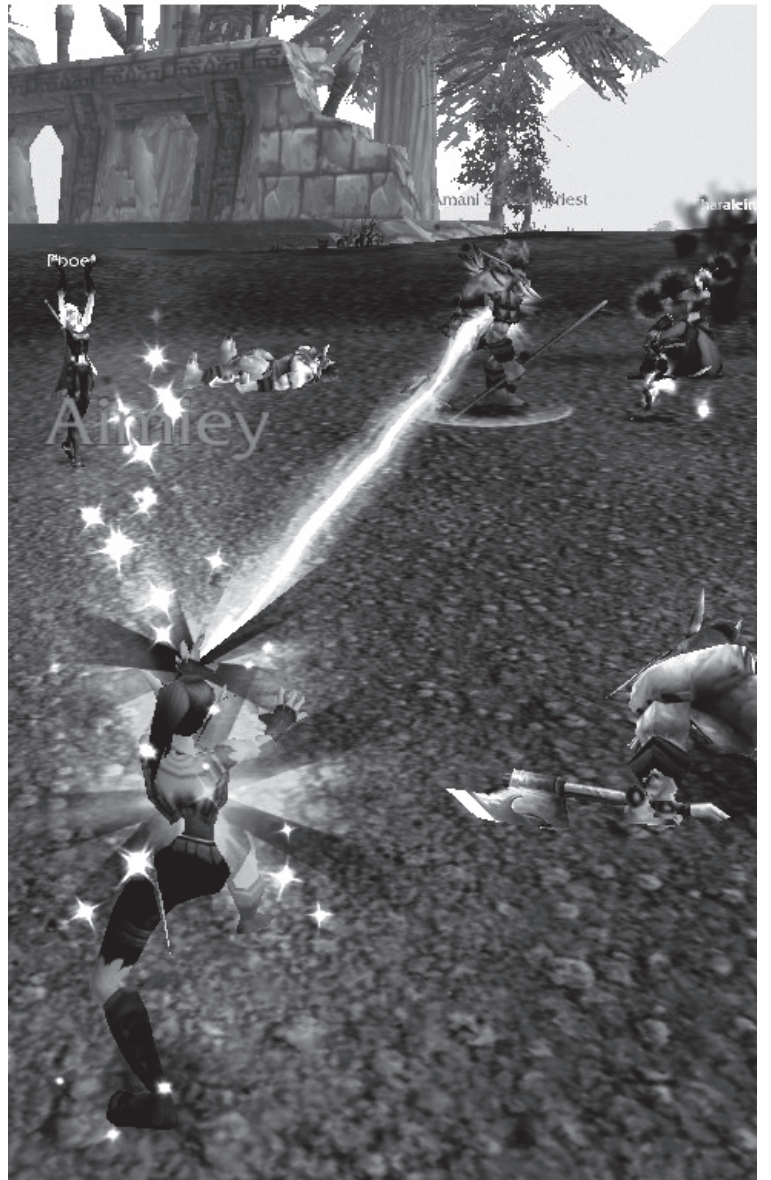
Battalions of humans and orcs charged forth against colossal dragon commanders, an epic battle for supremacy of worlds as players took their first baby steps into this strange new land. And this was just a microscopic portion of the gigantic new continent offered by *The Burning Crusade*. In the hours and days that would come to pass, I revelled in the countless new quests offered by defenders of the Outland fortresses, and whimpered a little as the easily obtainable quest rewards replaced the epic equipment that I had spent months trying to collect.

Of course, for those who haven't yet reached the milestone level 60, there are two whole new races to start new characters with. By allowing the Horde Blood Elves to roll

Paladins and the Alliance Dranei play Shamans, there seems to be a much steadier balance between the factions, giving those loyal to one or the other a chance to dabble in previously unavailable classes. There are dozens more quests available in the new starting areas as well, offering a sort of levelling fast track to the new races for those concerned about falling behind their existing comrades.

Unfortunately, *The Burning Crusade* doesn't offer a whole lot to those stuck between the low and high ends of the spectrum. Indeed, the world is massive, but it's still nice to revisit old dungeons with my level 40 rogue. I was a little disappointed and perhaps over-eager to reach level 60 again so that I could push forth into the Outlands once more. To those without the luxury of a high-level character, or the desire to start from scratch with one of the new races, it's best to hold off picking up TBC until one of those options is viable.

With new characters, new monsters and an entire new continent to explore, *The Burning Crusade* brings more than its fair share of content to justify the \$50 price tag—normally unheard of for a simple expansion pack. The new environments are as beautiful and diverse as the enemies are fierce and savage. Blizzard has clearly put in endless hours of effort into polishing this expansion, and the result might even justify the torturous delays we've all had to endure. And did I mention you can fly around on your very own lion-bird now? Gryphons for the win!



What's myspace done for you lately?

Join the U of A's own online community
and enter to win a 30 GB video iPod!

Just visit www.ualberta.ca/olc
for contest details.

It's the easiest assignment
you'll get all year.



FACT:

Daniel Radcliffe is throwing off his magic robes in order to show some skin—actually, a lot of skin—for Peter Shaffer's *Equus*.

POSSIBLE FACT:

Daniel Radcliffe naked + bareback horse = riding sexyback?

GATEWAY A&E
Coining new phrases since 1910.