



RIFT™

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF PCGZINE AND MMOZINE

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW!

Find out how Rift will revolutionise the online experience as we know it!



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

Rift's Lead Designer, Hal Hanlin, talks to us about what has propelled this unique MMO's development

Five copies of the game to be won!

CONTROL →



WELCOME

The MMO genre is one of the most competitive in all of gaming, and sometimes it can be hard to know which titles are worth investing hours in and which ones most definitely are not. That's why we decided to give Rift some special attention, not only because it's trying something new in a genre which is traditionally very 'by the numbers', but also because it's rather good.

We've been sampling this MMORPG from Trion Worlds for several months now, and even though it's finally been released to eager anticipation, we still have plenty of questions: what was the creators' inspiration? Why did they decide to mix up the typical class system, and how do spontaneous PvE Rift events transform the game world? This special magazine will answer those questions and better prepare fans for their first excursion into the world of Telera.

Finally, we have five copies of the game to give away too, so be sure to sit back, make yourself comfortable and enjoy the magazine.

Andy Griffiths, Editor

CONTENTS

Playtest 03

Hands-on with Rift's Beta

Interview 07

What makes this MMO different from all the others?
We grill the creators

Competition 10

Win one of our five copies we have to giveaway

"We've been sampling this MMORPG from Trion Worlds for months now"



RIFT

PREPARE FOR CHANGE

PREVIEW

Whenever any developer dubs their particular MMO 'next generation', it's perfectly natural for gamers to shrug their shoulders and move on, but with Rift that would be an unmistakably heinous error. Even though the marketing hyperbole talks a good talk, when you actually sit down and log on you suddenly realise this really is a cut above and beyond most of the other online experiences out there. It provides

a setting which is familiar enough not to alienate newcomers, yet still revolutionary enough to eliminate the bugbears many players have to endure over the years. Don't believe us? Well, gather round ladies and gentlemen, as we're about to educate you.

The setting for Rift, Telera, was created by mysterious Gods millennia ago and is experiencing one of the most turbulent times in its entire history. Split into several

different regions, players will visit wintery towns, mines, grand cities, desolate deserts and many other enchanting areas.

This MMO isn't just about enjoying the scenery however, as this world is in a state of aggressive transition with different planes crashing through the world's reality creating rifts. Planes of Life, Death, Fire, Water, Earth and Air are encroaching





Format: PC
Publisher: Trion Worlds
Developer: Trion Worlds
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.riftgame.com
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> Preview continued

on this planet's existence at all times, in localised spots. If that wasn't bad enough, the survivors of these events have split themselves into two different factions: Guardian and Defiant. The former, principally High Elves, Dwarves and Mathosians, believe they are the chosen people of Telera and have thus become devote to the gods. The Defiant on the other hand – Bahmi, Eth and Kelari – care nothing of the Gods or their punishing of Telera and are merely seeking to fight back the reality-breaching hordes delivered via rifts.

The titular features allow various monsters to spill out into the player's world, changing it over time. Groups of players are usually needed to take them down, but these PvE (People vs Environment) events happen spontaneously in specific areas of the map, and questers will

usually immediately begin fighting with you against the threat, collecting grand amounts of XP and impressive loot while doing so. We were shocked just how epic these eruption-like moments felt when Silverwood – High Elves country – was besieged by fiery Goblin monsters. It was only by taking down the minions' Commander that we were able to reclaim the location. Other MMOs have live public quest events but they don't feel anywhere near as dramatic as RIFT's, and the spoils aren't anywhere near as significant, especially if you leave the Commander

"Other MMOs have live public quest events but they don't feel anywhere near as dramatic as RIFT's"





“Having access to three different career moulds holds great promise for the potential and longevity of PvP”

ability to change them whenever not in battle. The benefits of such a flexible system allows any team member to switch their play style in accordance with the needs of their squad.

For instance, if you're trying in vain to recruit a Healer, simply access the character menu and adopt the Cleric skill tree to heal your compatriots, or if you're looking for a more aggressive mould to increase the damage potential of your team against a challenging boss, change to the Warrior path. Having access to three different career moulds holds great promise for the potential and longevity of PvP (Player vs Player) battles, as the right character setup may not hold true for every situation, and the optimum build won't be a given in skirmishes due to the sheer number of skills available.

This system also means characters aren't bound by the

> Preview continued

lingering around long enough to call on more challenging enemies. Trion Worlds were very wise to build an MMO around this system, as it gives the world a great sense of persistence. For example, any area which is liable to rift invasions will leave itself open to being taken over. You could go there at one point and the settlement could be thriving with vendors, but venture there at a later date and the area could be burnt asunder. The last thing you want to feel like when questing is that you're merely treading in the same steps as

those who came before you, and in Rift that certainly isn't the case. A huge part of that impression is thanks to this ground-breaking system.

The other factor that eliminates that 'me too' feeling is Rift's class system which is mind-boggling in its scope. After a player chooses his or her race they are offered four different class archetypes, each of which are very similar to the typical fantasy fare – Warrior, Cleric, Rogue and Mage. From here your character can be allotted three souls from a choice of nine for each archetype, with the

WELCOME TO TELERA

Gaze upon our favourite lands...



Scarlet Gorge

Deepstrike Mines

Iron Pine Peak

Scarlet Gorge

Home of the great Fire Rifts, this mining area is a surprisingly idyllic place, with giant rock workers going about their business and plenty of opportunities for combat between Defiant and Guardian forces.

“As an online fantasy experience, Rift has all of the facets necessary to keep players entertained for months at a time”

CLASS OF ITS OWN

How Rift is fundamentally changing the idea of MMO classes with the soul system



Creation

Soul trees

Flexibility

Creation

When creating a character, your first act is choosing either the Guardians or the Defiant faction. Then you have the option to specialise in any of four different archetypes: Warrior, Rogue, Cleric or Mage.

> Preview continued

early choices, if you're at level 20 and you decide you want to switch up your game, simply elect for a different career. We're absolutely in love with this system and it'll be very interesting to see how it evolves once numbers swell in the game's world.

Other nice touches include a very accomplished graphics engine which produces a world which we loved spending time in, and a loot system which boasts as many weapons, armour and trinkets as you'd expect, but interestingly, players don't have to click on an item to pick up their loot, as the auto pick-up will do that for them. It's a fine example of a seemingly minor design touch having a massive impact when introduced. No longer will you be accused of stealing others' loot, or wonder whether you've not grabbed something on your trail. Best of all, you won't have to hammer the left mouse button as much!



The UI is also very friendly and accessible, with moveable windows and the ability to tidy up the display, whenever you want to fully appreciate the world which, trust us, you'll want to do a lot.

As an online fantasy experience, Rift has all of the facets necessary to keep

players entertained for months at a time. Even in a lengthy preview such as this, it's difficult to communicate all of Rift's clever features, as it's so much more imaginative than the term 'fantasy MMO' suggests. Telera is a fascinating world to be a part of, and its charms easily excuse the monthly fee – especially if you bring a few buddies along for the ride.

Trion Worlds have tried to implement plenty of new aspects into this genre space, but most of all, the level of polish and high calibre of content are exactly what you'd hope to see at the launch of any big-budget online experience. Perhaps 'next generation MMO' wasn't just marketing speak after all. ●



CONTROL →



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

We discuss all things Rift with Trion World's Design Producer, Hal Hanlin

What has been the philosophy that has propelled Rift's development?

Every segment of the development team believes that good is not good enough. It's great or it gets redone. We have thrown out more content and assets than some MMOs have shipped with because they did not meet our quality bar. Every step of the way, we have been brutally honest with ourselves and with each other. I've never worked with a team more willing to give and receive pointed, detailed

criticism and then act on it to make the game better. Look at our art, our class system, the rift/invasion/event tech, our incredibly stable servers that let people come together and really experience a massively social game... Those are some of the things that have grown from this willingness to grow a thick skin and constantly improve.

Rift has been described as a 'next generation' MMO, which aspects of the game are worthy of that tag?

'Next generation' means different things to pretty much everyone that hears the phrase, and usually it means some amount of new features. Is Rift an evolution on existing MMOs? Yeah. We built on proven MMO principles and added unprecedented dynamic gameplay, a huge amount of polish,

HD graphics, and the most robust class system available in MMOs. But Trion and Rift have grown beyond that simple phrase. We are bringing a new mindset, not just an improved feature-set.

Rift is not a boxed product that we put out there, hope people buy and then move on to develop something else, leaving a skeleton crew behind to stop leaks. Rift is a service. Because our tech allows us to be nimble and respond quickly to community needs, Rift itself can evolve. Ask someone who played in Beta 1 and then also then played in Beta 7 how much our team can get done with good feedback and a little time.

The MMO genre is so competitive at the moment, how will Rift stand out from the crowd?

Rift will do well because of the things I mentioned above, but mainly because we have an aggressive plan to continually bring new gameplay and new excitement to the world. The thing that continues to amaze





> Interview continued

me is how quickly people who play our game go from 'seen it before' to 'ZOMG!' We have a terrific retention rate. When people play our content and find themselves caught up in how the events reshape the world, and suddenly a few hours have gone by.

The thing that is setting us apart right now, frankly, is word of mouth. People who played in a Beta event came back and brought their friends, their families and their guilds. No question, we have an awesome marketing department, but that really gets people to recognise the name. It's the game and the fans that are driving interest. Our fan-base is absolutely amazing.

How will certain areas in Telera change as players explore, and will there be any motivation to go back to visited areas?

As I mentioned, we have an aggressive schedule to reveal new content to the players. End-game is critical of course, and will continue to get a lot of new content, but players of all levels can look forward to seeing new things and facing new challenges, too. Unlike most MMOs, we do not put all of the really cool stuff at the end and expect people to race to end-game before they get to see the cool stuff.

Our events unleash zone- or even world-wide onslaughts, where players of all levels can participate in raid gameplay to take down cool boss encounters. In addition to making our world exciting, this will have other benefits – people who may not have been interested in raiding will have had 40 or so levels of experience doing so in the open world before they even reach the first tier of expert dungeons.

How big is Telera? How does each continent differ?

With the exception of the new player areas and instances (dungeons, raids, Warfronts), our world is contiguous. Also, because our server technology is better than current-day MMOs, we have not had to lay out our content in a way intended to drive players apart, so we were able to create a large continent with a huge amount of content without having to create a jogging simulator.

We chose to create a world with exceptional detail, relevant gameplay, and continually refreshed dynamic content. As you run through Telera, each zone looks radically different from the rest. We don't suffer from the same-forest-different-color syndrome of some fantasy titles. Our art team has created a unique environment for every zone.

Why motivations will players have to partake in PvP? How does Rift's differ from other MMOs?

We've actually experienced some emergent PvP during Beta. When we launched major events on both the Guardian and Defiant areas, and if

one side finished theirs, they rolled over to attack the other faction at that critical point in the story. There is alternate currency that you earn from PvP that can be used to purchase PvP equipment, as well. Also, each Calling has a PvP soul that the player can acquire, which lets them fine-tune their combat against other players.

How is Rift's class and levelling dynamic different from other MMOs?





> Interview continued

We have Callings, which are the core-four: Mage, Warrior, Cleric and Rogue. Each calling has nine Souls (including the PVP-centric soul) and you create your character by combining any three of those souls at a time. You then spend points (acquired by levelling up) into a specific soul to unlock deeper and deeper abilities for that soul. The combination of three souls, the points spent into those souls, and your action bars is something we call a Role. You can have up to four Roles, which you can swap between any time you are not in combat. This allows us to create souls with really specific mechanics that may not be useful for every scenario. In games that lock you into one class choice, the developers basically build in the

requirement that every class be one that you can do everything with. Things become very bland. In our game, because we let you swap between your roles, we can have souls such as the Saboteur and the Void Knight, who are super-specialised and offer a lot of distinctive gameplay.

The system is as simple or complex as you want it to be. If you are happy with only ever playing one combination of souls and specialise in doing that well, great! My son does that and has a great time. I swap between Roles often, as doing so gives me a tactical advantage, which can be three or four times in one encounter area.

How will new content be delivered to players? Will it be offered for free or via expansions which have to be bought separately?

We have not formally announced our roll-out schedule, but I can tell you that we have basically the

entire design team thinking and working on additional content for this game. Because of our server structure, we can and will be very aggressive, and plan to set a new standard in the MMO space.

What sets the Guardian and Defiant factions apart?

The Guardians were present at the moment the Ward was shattered. They witnessed the act that caused the rifts to come and they died at that moment. The Gods of the Vigil chose the most powerful of the slain and resurrected them into Ascended heroes. The Ascended have the ability to contain multiple souls and derive power and abilities from them.

The Defiant, however, have seen the end of the world. Without Ascended of their own, they were unable to fight either the Guardians or the invading Planes. Finally, as Regulos the Destroyer is about to consume the last living portions of Telara, the Defiant find a way to imbue a being with multiple souls. They send their Ascended army back through time to a critical point in Telara's history. At that time, Guardian and Defiant Ascended fight each other as well as the invasions. This is not a case of 'Hey, let's all just get along and take out that big evil guy...' The technology that the Defiant need in order to maintain

their Ascended consumes sourcestone, the sacred material that the Gods used to create Telara.

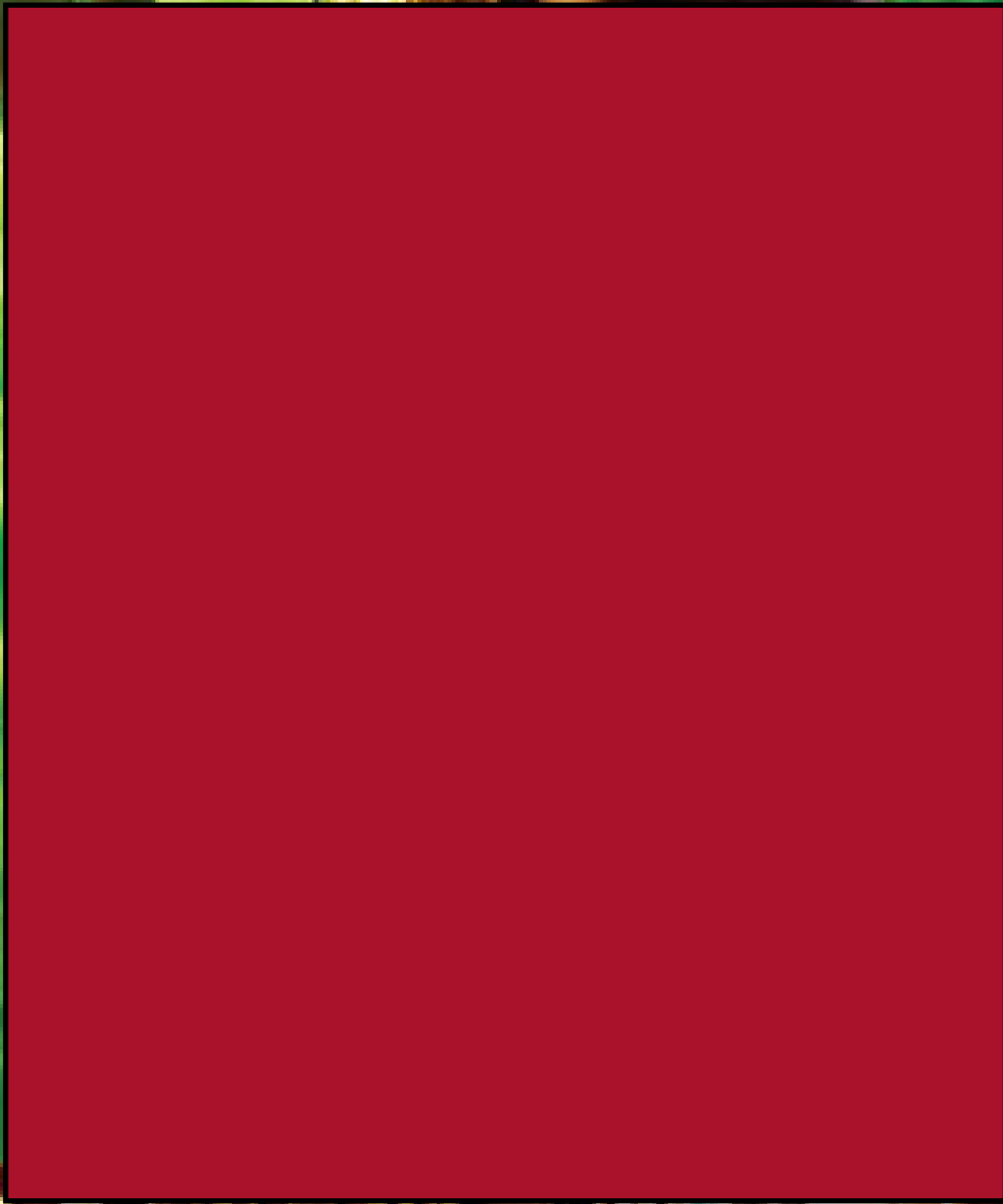
Where do you see Rift in the MMO landscape, and do you think it can challenge the almighty World of Warcraft?

We are not delusional. We know that success means standing tall next to impressive competition, including WoW. I see Rift as the natural next step for players who have been-there-done-that. Our world looks better than any MMO launched or coming out this year. Our dynamic gameplay with rifts, invasions and events is simply amazing. We are a nimble, lean, hungry team of expert and experienced game developers willing to respond quickly to improve our game. We are capable of rolling new content to the player-base in ways that no competitor can touch. ●





Book your ticket to Telera!



COMPETITION!

5 COPIES OF RIFT TO BE WON!

We've teamed up with Trion Worlds to give a handful of lucky readers one boxed copy of one of the most highly anticipated MMOs of the year, RIFT!

For your chance to win, all you need to do is answer the question on the right-hand side of the page and enter your details before 31st March. A winner will be chosen at random at the competition's end. Good luck!

For full competition terms and conditions, please see www.gamerzines.com