

testing, Delta
Done Right)
hours into
from across the
could be a
game....

exile from the
somewhere. There are
Mon Calamari
Dwarf, Halfling
nobody--this
race to

by Ed Carmien

Warning: this game is addictive. Currently in advanced beta Tao's online interactive fantasy role-playing game (think Ultima is as addictive as they come. This reviewer has sunk countless playing this darn game, and he's even managed to drag friends country into this bottomless pit of fun. So beware. Your buttocks lot flatter in a few months if you decide to start playing this

[Gimme the details](#)

This is a top-down role-playing game. You adopt the role of an empire, now living on some hick island out in the ocean many different races to choose from (let's see: Thoom (think from Star Wars), The People (humanoid cats), Sylvan (Elf), (Hobbit), and oh, yeah, Human. There is another option: hooded is what you are before you choose to "reveal" your character's everyone else in the game.

and a stick.
the little
the possible
that as yet
beta testing."

be little
with. Then there
intelligent to ?
haven't even
cougars, lions,

gets dull, your
explore Ash Island.

Your character begins broke, with the clothes on his or her back, It's up to you to run your character through Puddleby (currently village where one starts play) and learn how to become one of character classes in Clan Lord: Fighter, Healer, or Mystic. Note there are no Mystics. Say it with me now: "This game is still in

Even in beta, the array of foes in the world is daunting. There critters, such as rats, ona chiggers, and vermine to contend are several flavors of myrm (giant ants), Orgas (think semi-intelligent giant gorillas), and undead to deal with. And I mentioned various animal nasties such as ferals (wild dogs), and so on.

The area around Puddleby contains lots to explore. When that character can spend a few coins and rent a boat in order to In the land of Clan Lord, there's never a dull moment....

successful
interested in
Ancient, in one
takes the
heal characters
a darker
an eye.

invaded. Typically,
Orgas will return
once, so goes
hive and into
to assist her in

character to a
hurt other
with Ultima
but light snacks
mechanisms to foster
by thanking
roster of good and
like.
names appear

Yes, there are gods

As one might expect from Delta Tao, makers of the wildly Spaceward Ho! and Dark Castle games, the designers are very the events and people of Clan Lord. So you might run into an form or another. If you're lucky, it might be Astral Spark, who form of a ball of light (when you can see it at all) and who can very, very quickly. Then again, you might run into an Ancient in mood, someone that can fry half a dozen people in the blink of an eye.

Clan Lord is anything but static. Periodically, Puddleby is after a bunch of characters raid the Orga village, a bunch of the favor. Don't let anyone tell you they are dumb animals. And the tale, when the Queen of the myrms was teased out of her town, she suddenly began talking and summoned her minions her time of need.

Character Interaction

No player killing. Hear me? Unless you voluntarily move your place where it is possible to strike other characters, you can't people. Physically, that's good. Anyone who has any experience Online, or even most MUDs, knows that newbies are nothing for experienced characters. Delta Tao has created two cooperative playing styles: karma and sharing.

Karma is simple. You can give good karma to other characters them. You can also curse other characters. Everyone has a bad karma, and everyone can see what your karmic balance is Characters with negative karma are easy to spot because their in red letters. If your character does a stupid thing, like leading

a critter to
each other),

self-esteem
characters
in such a way
There's no

solo play. If
experience
gets fifty
moment. That
with a total of
each individual
"sharing on" with
is given to
character's total

characters who
value of a
and share

other characters busy doing something else (like, say, healing your character is apt to get cursed.

Some characters appear to enjoy this. I question the level of involved, but some people like to play evil characters. I've seen deliberately lead monsters to other characters, and even move as to block characters who are trying to escape from a monster. accounting for taste, I suppose.

Sharing is an ingenious mechanic that encourages group versus your character kills a creature solo, your character gets full points for that creature. Everyone that hits a creature that dies percent of the experience points for that creature. Think a means that two people divvy the total, but three people end up 150% of the creature's total experience value (even though still receives only 50% of the value). Here's the kicker: by another character, 10% of the experience your character earns the character you share with. This does not reduce your experience gain.

The long and the short of this mechanic is that a group of five cross-share with each other can gain as much as 400% of the creature by making sure everyone gets a blow in. If you share alike, your character will advance much more quickly in power.

Character development

game designer
seems
statistics, even
resolved not to

There are some annoying aspects to Clan Lord. As a published and player of role-playing games since 1976 (dang I'm old!), it obvious to me that players will want to see their character's if they are expressed only in terms of words. Delta Tao is provide such an option, however, hoping to keep the focus of

the game on
stats. Those of
us who
is require
characters train.

role-playing and characterization, not statistics.

Sorry, guys. Learn your market audience. We rpg'ers want the
us who are good at role-playing will role-play well, and those of
aren't, won't. The only thing keeping the stats out of sight does
players to keep scrupulous notes about what skills their

will evolve
Fighters have
defense,
bit more
strategy for
more strikes at
Other fighters
be able to crush

The great thing about character development is that characters
differently depending on the choices made by you, the player.
many different options to explore, being able to train in attack,
toughness, balance, balance recovery, and so on. Healers are a
restricted, but still have plenty of opportunities to pick their
success. Some fighters prefer to train balance, to give them
the enemy and better defense against being struck themselves.
might prefer to concentrate on attack and damage, hoping to

counterattacks. Some may
one thing.

least not at
lot of ranks
means the
because it
areas that are
invariably
what seems to
of the

means
means that many of
Joe Williams,
sharing might

you don't
hankering for the
my job. This
might not agree
rpg's, with
to that of

ships the

their enemies quickly and thereby avoid too many
prefer an all-around approach, avoiding over-specializing in any

The reason this works is the game is not entirely open-ended, at
this stage of the beta software. Characters who have earned a
(experience) tend to earn more ranks much more slowly. This
choices you make while ranks are plentiful will be important,
seems very difficult at this stage of the game to train in all
available. This mating of playing style with character ability will
result in very different high-level characters...as opposed to
happen in most on-line role playing games: the higher the level
character, the more alike they are in combat ability.

Bones in the fish

It's not perfect. For one thing, it's beta software. Right now, that
glitches. For another, nothing is set in stone just yet. That
the good features I described here might change. For example,
President of Delta Tao, warns that details about training and
still change.

Too many words

Well, I've already written about 1200 words about this game. If
already want to go out and play the beta, or at least have a
commercial release (Christmas, maybe?), I haven't been doing
is a great game, even if the designers made some choices I
with completely. Look for it to set a new standard in on-line
mechanics that encourage role-playing and action much closer
table-top role-playing than I've ever seen before.

More to come: I'll be doing a review of the game when Delta Tao

columns, either
events. If
review of Clan

Braveheart's web
with graphics,
guide (and in fact
about Clan

commercial CD, and once that happens I'll do a series of news
here or on the IMG web page, consisting of Clan Lord news and
you're interested in learning more about the game, a thorough
Lord web pages is a good idea. Start here:
<http://www.deltatao.com/clanlord.html>, and then go to
page. There are so many excellent hint and tip pages, complete
that Delta Tao may never make any money selling a strategy
they are opposed to the idea in any case--it's more fun to learn
Lord by playing it!)