

World of Warcraft: The War Within

Review by Vertebras

WARCRAFT... IS IT BACK?

What a strange world we're in.

Preface.

World of Warcraft: The War Within is the next and, now current, expansion for the hit MMORPG. And while this game has somehow endured its own hubris, the challenging tides of a powerful contender on the market, and a serious scandal, it manages to recapture so much already.

But what does that mean? Warcraft as a series has existed for 30 years, in fact, and has gone through eras of gaming growth. And World of Warcraft was in part one of the reasons that made Blizzard such a big company, especially for PC players. The War Within was announced at the last confirmed BlizzCon 2023 and it had some serious questionable pieces that I will hit on during the First Impressions.

Review is on 2 different PCs with varying specs, and a ROG Ally.

First Impressions & Comparisons.

This is going to be a bit different than other reviews since it spans a lot of time via previous content releases.

First Impressions of the War Within Prior to Release:

- I like Xal'atath as a character (I have three Priests...)
- Didn't particularly like the idea of Earthen as the Allied Race
- 4 new zones didn't bring any hope for a coherent story
- 8 new dungeons also felt incredibly cookie cutter and safe
- Hero Talents were a controversial design choice

First Impressions of the War Within in the First Month:

- I definitely enjoy Xal'atath as a villain
- The story actually is something impactful
 - The main story quest is short and does move through zones a bit fast
 - However, there's TONS of side quests that feel almost like an Elder Scrolls
- I actually have shifted from disliking the Earthen to rolling and leveling one all the way to 80 (they're a Brewmaster Monk, if you were wondering)
- Some of the Hero Talents are surprisingly fun and do bring a great mechanic to some classes while others are flat-out bad

- I still think tying certain Hero Talent Specializations to certain racial sub-classes is a terrible idea
 - Why does my Mechagnome have any association to Dark Rangers?
- The leveling zones are some of the best that I think World of Warcraft has ever had
- Delves are a great addition and help break the repetition and the urgency that Mythic+ exudes unfortunately.

The Wound.

World of Warcraft needed a win, and that's such a terrible and drawn out thing to say given I feel like I made this same sentiment with Dragonflight. But Dragonflight wasn't terrible, it did have some of the best player retention that WoW has ever had and seems to transitioned into The War Within pretty flawlessly. What I mean is that World of Warcraft was in a recovery state, Dragonflight felt and played safe. It needed to fix the bleeding wounds that Battle for Azeroth and Shadowlands caused to the brand, to the players, to the Blizzard team. Dragonflight was the gauze to stop the bleeding, The War Within kicking off the Worldsoul Saga is the rebirth. The "you're all good, kid. Go win this thing" moment in sports movies. And as long as Blizzard remains on this path, and the writing remains coherent (*hi Metzen*) - I think it'll remain a surefire story.

The Path Forward.

As we already know, by the time of writing, Blizzard has announced the first patch of the War Within. The 30th Anniversary of Warcraft as a series is being turned into a massive celebration with a plethora of content, cosmetics, and things to do in the world. It feels that the development team has refined its content speed throughout Dragonflight and is keeping that pace for future iterations beyond the Anniversary.

Conclusion.

The War Within is something for everyone who has had some interest in World of Warcraft. From the cosmetic hoarders, to climbing Mythic+ keys, hardcore raiding, to the new Delves. World of Warcraft: The War Within is a breath of fresh air and as a player since the Wrath of the Lich King, I am glad to see it.

I rate World of Warcraft: The War Within:

9 / 10 so far.

The WoW team has managed to invoke something positive and I hope they can keep that energy forward.