

BE MINE! BE MINE!

# THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE: MINES OF MORIA



## FORMAT

PC

## PUBLISHER

Codemasters Online

## DEVELOPER

Turbine

## REVIEWED BY

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**A**s an extension to the *Shadows of Angmar*, the *Mines of Moria* expansion allows players to continue exploring the realms of Middle-Earth, discovering new dangers and challenges within the treacherous – and, it has to be said – massive *Mines of Moria*. Mirroring the style from the *Shadows of Angmar*, players will have access to new 'Epic Quests', which cleverly intertwine with the *Lord of the Rings* story, keeping players involved with the occurrences from the books and films we're all familiar with. As before, you'll often be acting as someone aiding the fellowship from the sidelines, but the rewards for doing so are suitably bountiful.

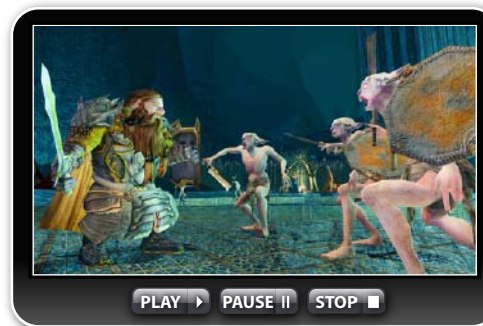
As opposed to the darker, more desolate Moria that was depicted in *LOTR* on the big screen, the area is suitably inhabited by sparse groups of dwarves to fulfil vendor and transport needs, but the overall scale of the area remains suitably impressive – grand staircases, sky-high ceilings and large sculpted carvings adorn Moria, and players new to the area will be greeted with new quests left, right and centre; as bleak as it is, there's certainly plenty to do.

In addition to the new setting and continued story progression through the game's quests, players will also be able to acquire new 'Legendary' weapons, which much like the player, can be levelled up and improved in a variety of ways as you gain experience points. After advancing a level for your weapon, you'll receive a number of points to spend on improving abilities used

with the weapon, but at a slightly higher cost you can also boost basic stats like DPS. Legendary weapons can be tailored however you see fit, and as Bards are used to alter traits, there are characters to reset or change which stats you've placed on legendary weapons. So by no means are statistics set in stone unlike other RPGs, though alterations will cost you.

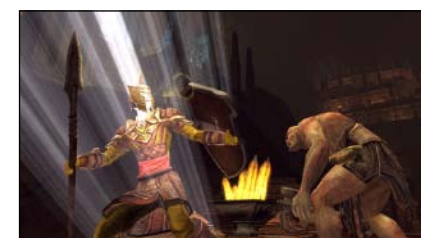
Fortunately for new players wanting the luxury of the expansion, Turbine Entertainment has included two new character classes that should appeal both to newcomers and veterans from the *Shadows of Angmar*. The Warden, although dealing neither massive damage nor being blessed with extortionate health, focuses on building up a variety of physical attacks, with different enhancements (to heal, or improve defence for example) in a string, in order to use a superior move after using the correct combination of attacks or taunts. There's more technique here compared to using a standard tank class, but as the Warden gains new combos and abilities progressively with level – and *LOTRO* is relatively slow-paced with levelling – combinations become easier to remember; which, considering they're the Warden's greatest asset, is vastly important.

The next new class, the Rune-Keeper, is arguably better suited to players who already have a good understanding of the *LOTRO* universe. The game itself is packed with different ways of advancing your character, and an entirely new player may find themselves faced with too many initial



complexities. The simplest way to describe the Rune-Keeper is with a set of weighing scales; on one side is restorative magic, while the other is destructive magic. If a Rune-Keeper wants to unleash his most powerful destructive attacks, he'll have to keep using destructive magic until he gains access to the strongest destructive spells. However, if you pile on the destructive magic, you won't be able to use progressively better restorative magic. In battle you can either sit in the middle and use a bit of both without any significant strength, or focus heavily on one or the other. This has great advantages in any group quest situation, as the Rune-Keeper will be able to change role between a damage-dealer and a healer depending on what is needed most.

Although there are plenty of new and exciting additions on offer, the new content doesn't change the standard formula (slow paced level progression, crafting, fetch-quests and so on), so if you aren't already psyched about the MMORPG genre, or at least interested in pursuing it, this



expansion is unlikely to change that. For anyone already enjoying *Shadows of Angmar*, however, *Mines of Moria* is a near-essential purchase, not only in regard to progressing through the *Lord of the Rings* storyline, but in offering a fresh style of play through the new classes and a lengthy boost to the game's lifespan.

**VERDICT** ★★★★★