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## UO: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge - Press Release

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**Ben Kirtland <nom...@nope.com>**

This information was posted in another forum, thought some poeple here may find it interesting:

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Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge  
Details and Documents 19th Nov 2001

### PRODUCT INFORMATION:

#### SKU Details

#### SPECS:

Publishing Company: Electronic Arts  
Developer: Origin Systems  
Platform: PC CD - Online  
Format: Windows95/98/ME CD-ROM  
Category: Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game  
Ship Date: Feb 12th 2002  
Docs & Box: English + European (tbc)  
Software Languages: English + European (tbc)

#### Background

UltimaT Online has been available to the public for over 4 years, providing a fantasy online world to complement the Ultima series of games. With over 230,000 subscribers from every continent on Earth, it has unparalleled experience and depth.

UO gives a player access to a persistent-state world that exists in real time, 24 hours a day, 365.25 days a year - and the amount of time devoted to playing continues to reflect the amount of passion players have for UO. About ½ the active subscribers are logging onto UO every day and the average player logs about 12 hours every week. The people who play UO regularly are heavy users and extremely absorbed into the whole experience.

Then UO launched in 1997 it was the first successful multiplayer role-playing product in the market. Despite competition from EverQuest, Anarchy Online, Asheron's Call and the newly released Dark Ages of Camelot, Ultima Online has expanded and gone from strength to strength as the multiplayer online marketplace climbs.

#### Product Overview

Ultima Online, the Internet's premiere fantasy world experience, now deeper and darker with over 30 new monsters from the mind of Todd McFarlane.

The worlds of Ultima Online have been revolutionized with exotic and fantastical creatures. Enter a world oppressed by evil forces, where diabolical villains have returned and aligned their powers in an attempt to conquer and vanquish the virtuous. Over 30 new monsters and creatures designed by Todd McFarlane add a darker twist to the once familiar land of Ilshenar. A new land area located in the centre of Ilshenar is the setting for the beginning of this dark siege. Who will prevail in this legendary

battle of good versus evil? What new characters will emerge to protect and defend the heroes of Britannia? What frightening and evil foes await them?

Join the world of Sosaria and help the citizens save their land from Lord Blackthorn's Revenge.

## Key Features

### A WORLD OF NEW FEATURES TO EXPLORE

Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge will offer both the new and current player a host of new and exciting features significantly expanding the depth of the experience offered in the game world.

a.. Over 30 new monsters and creatures from the mind of Todd McFarlane.

Who better than the master of SpawnT himself to create the most compelling and fantastic monsters ever to roam an online massively multiplayer world? These new monsters will be as clever as they are visually compelling. Watch where you go, because you never know where one might just "spawn."

a.. Access to the 3D land of Ilshenar for 2D players.

Now, all the citizens of Britannia can enter the realm of Ilshenar and experience all its fantastic glory in both 2D and 3D. Monsters, creatures, and map locations will all be available to the 2D player in their full beauty as exact replicas of their 3D models. It's also rumored that Lord Blackthorn will be making his new home somewhere in the land of Ilshenar. See it and experience it as you have always wanted to, and join the fight for Virtue!

a.. Over 30 new items to craft, collect, and trade.

Make no mistake, Britannia is growing. There will be new items to craft, collect, and trade. Try your skills as a Blacksmith, Swordsman or Mage. Each profession has its own set of challenges and rewards, as well as special strengths. Just don't get caught wandering alone by Lord Blackthorn or his fearsome minions!

a.. New ongoing fiction tied to in-game events in which players determine the outcome.

An intriguing plotline has been introduced, which describes a series of events taking place in the world, portending an oncoming reign of evil. This ongoing fiction will spin a tale of intrigue and deception, and new fiction will continue to be released here on our website, both prior to and following the launch of Lord Blackthorn's Revenge. Each chapter will have serious and far-reaching repercussions on the world of Sosaria. Only by taking action and joining forces as allies will the citizens of Britannia be able to push back and affect the outcomes of the battles to come. Join the battle, help fight for a virtuous land, and stop Lord Blackthorn's Revenge from destroying the world of Sosaria.

a.. Monster AI oriented toward strategic combat tactics as opposed to simple skill gain.

Now, the monsters and creatures populating the world of Sosaria will be even more clever and compelling. Some of them will have special powers, and only through ingenuity and logic will they be bested. However, if you do defeat them, great rewards will be yours. You may even win their undying loyalty or, in some cases, their loathing!

a.. Significantly enhanced new player experience.

Joining the world of Britannia as a new citizen just got better, easier, and a lot more fun! Now, new player templates have been adjusted to allow new players to learn skills and develop their abilities at a much more manageable rate while having fun and participating in new player quests and combat situations. Also, new players will be actively recruited by veteran players to increase their strengths and Virtue levels. Plus, a new Game Wizard tied to the UO website is available to answer any questions a player may have as they explore the land. A fully downloadable version of the New Player Guide is also updated and accessible through the website at UO.com.

a.. Introduction of a Virtue System.

An additional level of character development will enhance your ability to customize your character in the world of Sosaria. Learn about all the Virtues, how they will combine for different character combinations, as well as how to gain or lose them. Who do you want to be: a noble lord or an honest merchant? The choice is yours!

Target Audience

Current UO players, Lapsed UO players, New UO players

Current UO players:

a.. Need to purchase the retail product in order to access the new features. Nothing from this product will be patched and free to current players.

a.. Range from highly dedicated UO players with vested emotional interested in their characters, possessions in game, and sometimes numerous accounts, to single account holder players, socialising in game.

Lapsed UO Players:

a.. Could well be tempted by the new experiences in this product.

a.. Are always looking for the next big online gaming experience.

a.. More often than not, did not stop playing online games, but switched brand when cancelling their UO account.

New UO players:

a.. Need a box that stands out from the crowd in store.

a.. Have either NO expectations, or very high expectations for a PSW product.

a.. Need assurance of a great new player experience. Ease of use is critical.

a.. Need persuading that the UO brand is new, exciting, full of potential and online experiences they don't see in other products.

Currently own/playing: Diablo 2 Expansion, Baldurs Gate 2 Expansion, (RPG/Adventure games.)

UO Player Lifestyles

UO Players can be roughly sectioned into lifestyle choices, depending on the current age of the account holder. The most important age ranges are detailed below:

## 15-24 Male (UK)

- a.. The post-spectrum gamers.
- a.. Don't own vinyl records, always known CDs.
- a.. Expect their products to work first time, every time.
- a.. Want immediate results. Impatient. Never had to wait for their game experience.
- a.. Capital Radio, Kiss FM, Radio 1, Pub Indie Pop OR Kerrang! Metal Hammer. (New Alternative Rock, e.g. Limp Bizkit NOT Metallica.)
- a.. Buffy/Angel, Terry Pratchett, Sci Fantasy, Red Dwarf, Comedy.
- a.. Loaded, GQ, FHM, Bizarre.
- a.. Quake 2/3, Diablo 2, FIFA - massive games, latest consoles.
- a.. Use high technology but don't know how it works.
- a.. Disinterested in old school games.
- a.. Vague awareness of a time before theirs.
- a.. Want fast action - not details but outcome. NOW!
- a.. Uses shorthand txt msg-ing. (ys pls. snd it 2 me. OGM! LOL!)

## 25-30 Male (UK)

- a.. SFX, Fortean Times, Focus, Q, White Dwarf
- a.. Remember Dr. Who, Blake's 7, Star Wars in the cinema.
- a.. XFM/Radio 1/Radio 2/Radio 4.
- a.. Reasonably High IQ.
- a.. Sci Fi, Pratchett, Red Dwarf, Buffy/Angel
- a.. Hardcore Gaming - remembers Spectrums, Amigas, Ataris, Pacman.
- a.. Had to follow new technological advancements, seen PC develop.
- a.. More forgiving than the NowNowNow attitude of the 18-24s.
- a.. Some experience of tabletop roleplay, board games, roleplaying.
- a.. Technical or Creative Breed: want details of change, not just final outcome.
- a.. Solid opinions on technology, changes, games, platforms, etc.
- a.. Has used the Internet for social activity for 3+ years as a minimum.
- a.. Doesn't use Internet shorthand extensively, but understands it. (Yes please! Send it to me?)

The Female lifestyle choices are varied and complicated. The assumptions here are based on the last 8 years experience, playing both other online games and UO with female players. The results are less age dependant and more psychologically dependant on career, motivation, and personality. There

will be more details on this as they are compiled into groups.

### Key Marketing Challenges

- a.. Get Ultima Online into stores with full force, supported by POS, with the hype of a new expansion to a successful product brand.
- a.. Defeat the old tired stale approach to UO as a 4 year old product and replace with the attitude of an experienced, exciting, detailed world to play in.
- a.. Provide as much encouragement and information as possible to PR in order to achieve good review scores and great consumer awareness.
- a.. Take full marketing advantage of the name Todd McFarlane with respect to his range of toys and cult status.
- a.. Reach brand new gamers. Current players know it already.
- a.. Change public gaming perception of UO.

### Ideas & Franchise Strategy

Ultima Online is a 4 year old online world, based on the Ultima Series of games. In the US this is a well-known brand and stands for innovation, realism, fantasy roleplay and intriguing adventures.

In Europe, it is not as well known for the Ultima brand and much better known as an online game that was surpassed technologically by EverQuest and subsequent online worlds.

This needs addressing.

Focus on cool monsters, gameplay features, and gaming experience. NOT - old timer online world.

The option is to focus considerably on the title 'Lord Blackthorn's Revenge' and less on the Ultima Online logo and brand.

UO suffers from its age and experience, ironically. Perceived as neither the biggest nor the best there needs to be a style change in order to provoke more consumer interest.

Emphasis: It's a new online gaming experience, for new interested players. To current gamers it is an expansion.

- Don't try and appeal to current players: they know it's coming and they will buy it if they're interested, purely for the new features.

- New players are critical.

- Don't dumb down the online experience. Concentrate on the exciting aspects of online play and monsters and skills and abilities.

### North America Marketing Details

- a.. Building out 100K for the U.S. first build.
- a.. Box design and production: EA Creative Services is helping us with our box design due to a special McFarlane Toys action figure and McFarlane comic book based on the UO prequel fiction bundled into our box.
- a.. The box will also have a CD in a jewel case, Quick Start Guide, Tent

## Card, 2-Sided Map.

- a.. US goldmaster date for gold to Ops is December 7, 2001.
- a.. US local product manager is Chris Binky Launius.
- a.. The box cover will be an exclusive, original illustration done by Todd McFarlane.
- a.. US are doing a pre-launch comic book with two large game retailers one month prior to the launch of the game, they will be distributing a special 8-page version of the comic book that is going in the SKU (a 24-page comic book) to anyone who buys an EA Game or McFarlane action figure between January 15 and February 12 or as long as they have the books in stock. We can forward either one of those files to you all to localize if you would like, work through me on that one. Those files will be available to forward on or around December 15, 2001.
- a.. US are running full-page spread ads in the Feb and Mar editions (street dates are: Jan and Feb) in PC Gamer, CGW, CGM, Wizard, SciFi Magazine.
- a.. US are also running a print ad in the 3 different McFarlane comic books during Feb and Mar and will be looking to do online buys as well with ign, ugo, stratics, gamespy, gamespot, voodooextreme, bluesnews, avault, castersrealm, markeedragon, comicon, digitalwebbing.
- a.. US are investigating running print ads in some selected DC Comic books by Wildstorm, that are fantasy oriented series.
- a.. US will be using the FanFest also as a big pre-launch event and will be giving out a collectible edition of the CD (no box no docs version).
- a.. US anticipates having a joint event at the McFarlane toy showroom during Toy Fair the week of February 12th, to promote the launch. McFarlane Toys anticipates launching their toy line based on UO during mid- to late February in sync with our launch.
- a.. US are also producing an EPK, that has a promo flick, screenshots, background information on the game, and selected other assets.
- a.. We also have an offer in the McFarlane UO toys boxes, anyone who buys the figures will get a promo code that offers them \$10 off the purchase of the game via a special link to the EA Store.

## Packaging

Todd McFarlane in the US is creating packaging, and as soon as there are visuals these will be included.

Using the principles that this is a brand new product to brand new gamers, the requirements are:

- Great reviews.
- Quotes available.
- Detailed feature list.
- Obvious character creation experience.
- Examples of success a character can achieve in game.
- Cool screenshots of Monsters
- Solid tie-in with McFarlane (who is creating the box art)
- Online marketing campaign.
- EA Games branding.
- Strategy guide deal.
- Bundle deals.

## Online

The network of Online Gaming websites for news and reviews all know about Lord Blackthorn's Revenge and have been feeding their users the details. This is of great interest to current players and good awareness levels have already been set.

An online campaign for this product would capitalise on the net awareness, and should be viewed as very required, be it banner campaigns or competitions with well matched websites.

## Category/Competition Overview

The Online Worlds category has many games in development from various developers & publishers, however, the top 5 are:

1) EverQuest: Over 400,000 active subscribers. EQ is very strong; its players have a reasonably unique tendency to be friends out of game. Common in the UK for EQ players to all drink together and then meet in game once they all get home.

2) Dark Ages of Camelot: Over 100,000 active subscribers in North America but yet to release in Europe. There is lots of advance awareness for the game, backed by its impressive technology support and design.

3) Asheron's Call: Over 100,000 active subscribers. Classified as one of the steadiest and 'roleplay friendly', AC has been around for approx. 3 years.

4) Anarchy Online: Sci-tech, Futuristic PSW. Launched Summer 2001, was very well anticipated, and had good in store awareness. Suffered outrageously bad launch technically, and had a lot of players leave the game very early on. Subscriber numbers are unknown at this time. Looks great - gained great interest for it's style and subject, if not it's design and playability.

5) WW2 Online: Disastrous launch left this product with very little respect in the Online Gaming Internet circles. A very niche subject matter does not make this product hold much mass appeal. Still live, however. Subscriber numbers are unknown at this time.

## Pricing

Final pricing to be confirmed.

Currently looking at a mid-price (£19.99) in-store??

## FAQ For CURRENT PLAYERS

Q. How much will Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge cost?

A. Blackthorn's Revenge will retail for \$29.99.

Q. What do I get in the box for \$29.99?

A. This is our coolest package yet! In addition to brand new original cover art by Todd McFarlane, Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge comes with a special collector's edition 24-page comic book created by Todd McFarlane and the UO Content Team (which you can only get in this box). And of course, you'll also get the UO: LBR CD and our full two-sided parchment map, as well as an easy to use and updated Quick Start guide.

Q. Is there any new land to explore in Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge?

A. A previously unknown area of Ilshenar has been uncovered for exploration. Do you dare brave what lives there?

Q. Will there be new housing space?

A. No, the new area will be open for exploration but there will not be new housing space added.

Q. When will Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge be released?

A. Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge will be released early 2002.

Q. What did Todd McFarlane contribute to this game?

A. Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge is the merging of great game design concepts from the Ultima Online team with the addition of great art concepts from the unique mind of Todd McFarlane. In this particular version of UO, Todd McFarlane and his organization have played a major role in helping bring our new vision of BritanniaT to life. Players will experience over 30 new strange and bizarre creatures, each with improved AI and exciting new battle tactics, which will add a new level of gameplay and challenge to Ultima Online.

Q. Are there any additions other than new monsters to fight?

A. Yes. Players will also be able to craft and use more than 30 new items.

Q. Will there be new rideables?

A. Yes, there will be new McFarlane-inspired mounts introduced as part of the ever-unfolding Lord Blackthorn's Revenge fiction in the months following the launch.

Q. Is there a Virtue System in Ultima Online?

A. As the story of Lord Blackthorn's Revenge is revealed in the months following the launch, a full Virtue system will be incorporated over time into Ultima Online, challenging players to excel in both body and spirit.

Q. Do I get any free game time when I buy Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge?

A. Each retail box contains an upgrade registration code and a new account registration code. Only new accounts created receive the 30 days of free game time. All current customers receive both an upgrade code and a new account registration code, giving them an opportunity to open a new account and receive 30 days of free game time, as well.

Q. I don't have a 3D video card in my computer; can I still play the game?

A. YES! Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge has both a 2D and a 3D mode so that everyone can play.

Q. I already play UO and I play in the 2D client. Will I be able to explore this new land?

A. Yes, you will be able to access all the land of Britannia in this version of Ultima Online. We have implemented a new system that will allow 2D client users to see and explore the lands of Ilshenar for the first time, as well as venture into the new land area that is added with Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge.

Q. Will there be new art for the 2D client as well?

A. Absolutely! The new McFarlane creatures have been created in 2D as well, allowing players who use the 2D client to experience the full impact of these unique new creatures. Plus, 2D users will also see, for the first time, the detailed original versions of most creatures formerly only visible in the 3D client.

Q. Will there be new music added to the game?

A. Yes! Not only has the music in the game been converted to a new digital file format, but you can even replace our files with MP3 favourites of your own.



Q. Can I just download a patch to get the art and allow 2D access to the lands of Ilshenar?

A. With all the new creatures and art we've added to Ultima Online for both clients, the art and animation files are far too large to be downloaded from the servers. In order to access all the great new McFarlane additions and the full land of Ilshenar with the 2D client, you'll need to purchase Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge.

Q. Is this what was formerly known as UO2?

A. No, this is the newest addition to the world of Ultima Online. We are using some assets that were created previously for Origin Systems, but this will not be associated with any of the fiction created in the past for UO2. There will also be quite a few additions to the world of Britannia that were created exclusively for this new incarnation of Ultima Online.

Q. Can I play as a Meer or a Juka?

A. No, the Meer and Juka are being introduced into the lands of Ilshenar as non-player races.

Q. I'm a current 3D player. Do I need to purchase Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge?

A. The brand new CD will be the most updated version available of both clients conveniently bundled on one CD, saving the Third Dawn player the time and frustration of downloading over 12 MB of patches. The retail box will also be the only way to get the parchment map, updated Quick Start guide, and your exclusive collector's edition 24-page comic book created by Todd McFarlane and the UO Content Team. Plus, 3D players will want to take advantage of our new digital audio file format for game music. However, those 3D players who choose not to purchase UO: LBR will be able to download patches containing the 3D versions of the new McFarlane creatures from our servers at a later date.

Q. If I own more than one account, do I need to buy multiple copies of Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge?

A. Players who want the full benefit of UO:LBR on more than one account will need to purchase a separate copy for each account. Since 3D players will be able to download the new art, 3D players with multiple accounts will only need to purchase multiple copies if they wish to experience the new digital music format on each account they own.

#### SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

##### Minimum Systems Requirements:

Pentium II 300 or AMD K6-2 300, 28.8 Modem, 64 Megs of RAM, DirectX compatible video card with 12MB of video RAM, Windows 95 or better operating system, Windows compatible sound card, 4X CD-ROM, Approx. 600 Megs hard drive space available for a full install.

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Ben