Age of Empires III

Age of Empires III is a real @-@ time strategy video game developed by Microsoft Corporation 's Ensemble Studios and published by Microsoft Game Studios . The Mac version was ported over and developed and published by Destineer 's MacSoft Games . The PC version was released on October 18 , 2005 in North America and November 4 , 2005 in Europe , while the Mac version was released on November 21 , 2006 in North America and September 29 , 2006 in Europe . An N @-@ Gage version of the game developed by Glu Mobile was released on April 28 , 2009 . It is the third game of the Age of Empires series and the sequel to Age of Empires II : The Age of Kings .

The game portrays the European colonization of the Americas , between approximately 1492 and 1876 CE . There are fourteen total civilizations to play within the game . Age of Empires III has made several innovations in the series , in particular with the addition of the " Home City " , which combines real @-@ time strategy and role @-@ playing game features . Two expansion packs have been released : the first , Age of Empires III : The WarChiefs , was released on October 17 , 2006 , and introduced three Native American civilizations ; the second , Age of Empires III : The Asian Dynasties , was released on October 23 , 2007 , and included three Asian civilizations .

Age of Empires III has sold over 2 million copies as of May 2008 . As well as receiving favorable reviews , it has garnered awards , including GameSpy 's " Best RTS game of 2005 " , and was one of the best @-@ selling games of 2005 . In 2007 , Age of Empires III was the seventh best @-@ selling computer game , with over 313 @,@ 000 copies sold that year .

Gameplay

Players begin with a constructed town center or a wagon that will build into such , an armed explorer , and a modest number of villagers . Players explore the map and begin gathering resources used to build additional units and buildings and to research upgrades or technologies . Actions such as training units , constructing buildings , killing enemy units etc . , earn the player experience points . At certain experience point thresholds , players earn shipments that may be turned in for cards from the player 's Home City , which can include units , upgrades , or resources . The game progresses similar to most real @-@ time strategy games until one side resigns .

In Age of Empires III , the player advances through technological " Ages " , representing historical time periods ; these provide access to greater improvements , units , and buildings . They include the Discovery Age , which represents the discovery and exploration of the Americas by Europeans and allows the player to explore and develop their economy ; the Colonial Age , which represents the European Expansion into the " New World " and unlocks early military units ; the Fortress Age , which represents the fortification of the European colonies , unlocks forts , and allows the player to have a more complete military ; the Industrial Age , which triggers a strong economy , due in part to factories ? advanced buildings that automatically produce resources or artillery ? and unlocks all units and shipments ; and the Imperial Age , which unlocks all buildings and upgrades , and allows you to send unit and resource shipments a second time . All Ages cost food and coin to advance to , except the Colonial Age , which only costs food (800) . The price of age advancement is incremental , but does not vary between civilizations .

Similar to the " minor gods " system in Age of Mythology , Age of Empires III uses a " Politician System " to grant bonuses on a successful advancement to another age . When the player chooses to advance to the next age , who is given the choice of two or more " Politicians " that provide them with a different bonus on choosing them . The Politician is given a generalized title from the period that usually reflects the bonus that it gives : for example , " The Naturalist " gives the player four cows , while " The General " gives twelve musketeers and one piece of heavy artillery . As the player 's Home City increases in level , more Politicians are unlocked ? at a rate of one for every ten Home City levels ? up to level 60 .

Nations

Age of Empires III allows the player to play as eight different civilizations : Spanish , British , French , Portuguese , Dutch , Russian , German , and Ottoman . Each of the eight civilizations has its own strengths and weaknesses and unique units available only to that civilization . Specific units for each civilization are designated Royal Guard units , receiving greater bonuses on the Guard upgrade in the Industrial Age , but at an increased price . The player can change the name of their Home City , the Explorer name , and is given a pre @-@ named leader from part of the period (for example , Napoleon Bonaparte for the French Colonial Empire , Suleiman the Magnificent for Ottoman Empire , and Ivan the Terrible for the Russian Empire) . Each civilization has unique shipments to aid its economy and military (for example , the Ottomans are able to order a shipment of gold for both them and their teammates) .

There are other civilizations playable via the campaign , which include The Knights of St. John , John Black 's Mercenaries , and the United States of America , which are played as the Spanish , German and British civilizations , respectively , with slight modifications . Non @-@ playable campaign civilizations include the Pirates , Circle of Ossus and Native Americans , although these civilizations are playable using the Scenario Editor .

Twelve different tribes of Native Americans are in the game as well , but these are not in themselves playable factions . However , players can gain access to unique units and improvements by forming an alliance with the tribes by building a trading post at their camps . The native tribes featured are the Aztec , Carib , Cherokee , Comanche , Cree , Inca , Iroquois , Lakota , Maya , Nootka , Seminole , and Tupi . Three of these tribes were made playable in the expansion pack Age of Empires III : The WarChiefs : the Iroquois , Lakota (under the name Sioux) and Aztecs . These civilizations were removed as the smaller , alliance based tribes and were replaced by the Huron , Cheyenne , and Zapotec , respectively . In The Asian Dynasties another three civilizations were added , along with several new native tribes . The civilizations are the Indian , the Japanese , and the Chinese .

= = = Home Cities = = =

Age of Empires III is the first game in the series to introduce the " Home City " concept . The Home City functions as a second city , a powerhouse that is separated from the active game . It cannot be attacked or destroyed , although an Imperial Age upgrade called " Blockade " stops the player 's opponents from receiving Home City shipments . Similar to a role @-@ playing game character , the Home City is persistent between games , meaning that upgrades gained through separate games can be applied and stay applied for as long as that particular city exists . Multiple Home Cities can be created and maintained , although each supports only one civilization .

The Home City is composed of five main buildings from which the player chooses their new shipment cards and customizations : The New World Trading Company , the Military Academy , the Cathedral , the Manufacturing Plant and the Harbor . Players can also access the Home City during a match by clicking on the " Home City " button represented on the HUD as the nation 's flag . The Home City functions differently inside a game . Instead of customizing a Home City or choosing cards , a player can ship cards chosen before the game (and added to a deck) .

During the course of a game , players gain XP (experience) by completing actions such as constructing buildings , training units , killing enemies and collecting treasures . Whenever a certain amount of experience points are gained , the player can make use of a shipment from their respective Home City . Shipments slow as the game goes on , since more XP is required with every consecutive shipment . This XP is also added directly to the home city and is collected over multiple games , allowing it to level up over time . Players can gear their cards into three different combinations : " Boom " (economic combinations) , " Rush " (military combinations) , or " Turtle " (defensive combinations) . The first few cards chosen are automatically added to the player 's portfolio , where it can be copied onto a deck for use in a game . Later in the game , cards have to be manually chosen because of the limit of cards in one deck . Most cards are available to all civilizations , but some are unique to one . If the Home City being played has more than one deck , the player must select which to use when the first shipment is sent . During a game , players keep

this initial deck ; this feature encourages players to build decks that are customized for the map being played on , or that counter other civilizations . The decks support twenty cards . As the Home City improves by level , you may gain an extra card slot for the decks for every 10 levels .

= = = Units = = =

 The units of Age of Empires III are based , as in previous iterations of the game , around military classes of the historic time period . The player controls a variety of civilian and military units , and uses them to expand and develop their civilization , as well as wage war against opponents . The base unit of a game is the settler , responsible for gathering resources and constructing buildings , in order to improve the economy of the civilization . The number of units a player can control in a scenario is limited by a " population limit " , a common real @-@ time strategy game mechanic . Houses and town centers raise the starting limit , to a maximum of 200 , while each unit that is produced increases the population count . Basic units such as settlers and infantry count as 1 , but others , including most cavalry and mercenary infantry count as 2 . More powerful units , especially artillery or mercenary cavalry , can count for a population as high as 7 . Native warriors , explorers , tamed and grazing animals , hot air balloons and warships do not count towards the population limit , but generally have a build limit , allowing the player to deploy only a certain number of those specific units at a time .
 Military units are used for combat against other players . Infantry are the cheapest unit type and all are land based , using weapons ranging from crossbows to early muskets to more advanced rifles . The heavier artillery classes also make use of ranged weapons , primarily cannon and mortars ; however , there is also artillery armed with grenades . Mounted troops are also present , and are armed with either hand weapons , such as swords , or ranged weapons , such as pistols . These units also have significant features , such as skirmishers which do bonus damage against infantry , and ranged cavalry does bonus damage against other cavalry . A new unit introduced in Age of Empires III is the explorer , which is chiefly responsible for scouting and gathering treasure but is also capable of building Trading Posts and has a special attack , used at the player 's command . This unit cannot be killed , but can be rendered unconscious , to be revived when friendly units are in range ; also , a ransom can be paid to have it reappear at the player 's town center . This ransom is credited to the player that disabled him , when applicable . Some shipment cards increase the explorer 's effectiveness in gameplay ; for example , providing it with " war dogs " can aid scouting and combat . In Age of Empires III , ships are available on most maps . Military ships makes use of cannon or flaming arrows , while some ships can collect resources or transport land units .
 Mercenaries may aid the player in their campaigns in the New World . Mercenaries are not trained like standard units ; instead they can be shipped from the Home City or hired from saloons for much coin , so that only economically powerful players can employ them . Most are powerful , but hiring them does not provide experience points , so mercenaries cannot effectively replace the player 's standard army , and can negatively affect a player 's economy if used excessively . Incidentally , along with hero / explorer units , Mercenaries were vulnerable to assassin units such as spies , agents and ninjas . In most cases , a selection of Native American tribes populate game maps , and support their own brand of military units that can be trained once an alliance has been formed . Some Native American military units use mêlée weapons , a few use indigenous ranged weapons , such as bows and arrows or atl @-@ atls , while still others adopt ranged European gunpowder weapons . These units usually pertain to the infantry or cavalry classes , but , on maps with water , canoes are also available to the player through the dock .

= = = Buildings = = =

 Buildings play a big role in gameplay , as they are used for training civilian and military units , researching improvements , supporting population , providing structural defense or as resource providers . The buildings portrayed in Age of Empires III resemble the architectural design of that era . All of the games in the series share several buildings , including the Town Center and Docks .

The appearance and attributes of a building change as the player advances through the Ages , and some civilizations have their own unique buildings . The appearance of these buildings depends on the civilization . Some buildings can only be built at certain times like the defensive towers .

There are certain architectural styles present in the game ; architectural styles determine the appearance of in @-@ game buildings . Each civilization is automatically assigned its architectural style . These three architectural styles are the Western European , which consists of classical styled wooden buildings and is shared by the British , French and Dutch ; the Eastern European , which consists of wooden and straw structures and is shared by the Germans and Russians , and the Mediterranean , which consists of buildings made of stucco cement and dry brick , which is shared by the Spanish , Portuguese and Ottomans .

= = Plot = =

The story @-@ based campaign mode consists of related scenarios with preset objectives , such as destroying a given building . In Age of Empires III , the campaign follows the fictional Black family in a series of three " Acts " , which divide the story arc into three generations . All three acts are narrated by Amelia Black (Tasia Valenza) .

Instead of playing as one of the standard civilizations , the player takes command of a special civilization that is linked to the character or period that each Act portrays . Most units of the player civilizations speak in English language , with the exception of unique units such as Spanish Rodeleros , Spanish Lancers , German Ulhans and German War Wagons .

= = = Act I : Blood = = =

During Act I , the player assumes command of the Knights of St. John , which resembles the Spanish civilization (even though the faction played is actually Maltese) . The Spanish had numerous colonies in the area played throughout the Act .

Set in the late 16th century , the first act of the single @-@ player campaign begins with the player in the role of Morgan Black ? of the Knights of Saint John ? defending the last stronghold on Malta from Sahin " The Falcon " of the Ottoman Empire (in a telling of the Great Siege of Malta) . Morgan is ordered by his superior Alain Magnan to hold Sahin on the beach , which he manages to do until the Ottomans bring up their great bombards . Morgan then lights a signal fire to call in supporting cavalry led by Alain , who drive the Turks back and they defend the base .

Using a captured Ottoman cannon , Morgan and Alain then drive the Ottomans from Malta and detonate Ottoman weapon caches in the nearby caves . Inside , they discover that the Ottomans were really interested in a hidden stone library telling the story of the Lake of the Moon , which contains the Fountain of Youth , a secret Native American relic which is told that it has the ability to give eternal life , and the secret society , called the Circle of Ossus , who seek it for their own gain . Alain orders Morgan to sail to the New World to search for the Lake , but Morgan is attacked by the Pirate Elizabet Ramsey (Lizzie the Pirate) and is forced to land in the Caribbean islands . After re @-@ engaging and defeating Lizzie , Morgan 's men find some navigation charts which guide them safely to New Spain .

In Yucatan , Morgan confronts Sahin and the Ottomans searching for the Lake and destroys the Ottoman base . However the Spanish conquistador , Francisco Juan Delgado de Leon , captures Sahin and some other Ottoman soldiers before Morgan can . Morgan is then forced to fight and defeat the Spanish , who are attacking Morgan 's new allies , the Aztecs . After his battle to defend the Aztecs , Morgan realizes that Delgado and the Spanish were after the map to the Lake of the Moon disguised as the mosaic in the Aztecs ' town square . The mosaic shows the Lake of the Moon being in Florida .

Morgan sets sail for Florida , hoping to beat the Spanish there , but his fleet is damaged by an oncoming hurricane and he is forced to dock in Cuba , where he leaves his ship in Havana . There he earns the respect of Lizzie the Pirate and strikes a deal , promising Lizzie the gold from the Spanish treasure fleet if she takes him to Florida .

In Florida , Morgan and Lizzie are met by Alain Magnan , who orders Morgan to capture the Spanish treasure ships while he rushes ahead to capture the lake . Together Morgan and Lizzie capture the fleet , killing Delgado in the process , and capture Sahin . Sahin tells Morgan that the Circle believes the Lake of the Moon is the Fountain of Youth and that his intention from the beginning was to prevent the Circle from obtaining the Fountain .

Alain Magnan returns from the Lake and orders Morgan to execute his native allies and Sahin as heathens , but Sahin and Lizzie convince Morgan that Alain is actually the leader of the Circle of Ossus . Therefore , the knight , the Turk , and the pirate decide to work together to destroy the Fountain of Youth and stop the Circle 's plans for domination of the New World permanently .

Upon reaching the Lake of the Moon , the group captures and retains an enormous stationary cannon called a " Fixed Gun " from a Circle 's town across their fort . Using the Fixed Gun , Lizzie 's fleet of fire ships made from captured treasure ships loaded with Sahin 's explosives , and Morgan 's ground forces holding off the Circle 's elite Boneguard , they destroy the Fountain . As damage to the Fountain increases , Alain Magnan personally leads a force of Boneguard in a counterattack and is killed during the fighting .

After the Fountain is destroyed and the Circle defeated , Sahin returns to Turkey , and Lizzie , with all her Spanish gold sunk to the bottom of the lake , leaves for the Caribbean : however , it is ambiguously stated that she and Morgan reunited several years later and a romance eventually blossomed between them , implying that she was the mother of Morgan 's children , making her also an ancestor of all future Blacks featured in the campaign . Morgan is last seen wondering about the significance of the Fountain and whether it really was the Fountain of Youth , and is seen refilling his empty canteen from the water of the lake .

= = = Act II : Ice = = =

During Act II , the player plays as John Black 's Mercenaries , which is modeled after the German civilization with occasional elements of the French civilization . At the time , the French were involved in the fur trade in North America , and German mercenaries were in great use .

In the mid @-@ eighteenth century , Morgan 's grandson , John Black , and his Mohawk friend Kanyenke are on their way through the Carolinas to Brunswick with their band of mercenaries after being called for by the colony 's governor , John 's uncle , Stuart Black . After defending the colony against Cherokee raiders , John and Kanyenke attack the Cherokee war camps , forcing the Cherokee to arrange a peace settlement . But while John , Kanyenke , and most of the colony 's garrison are away at the negotiations both they and Brunswick are attacked by a British army under General Warwick , who capture the town . Warwick captures Stuart and begins questioning him about the location of the Lake of the Moon .

John and Kanyenke return and drive Warwick 's forces from Brunswick , but Warwick and Stuart are gone . John realizes that the Circle of Ossus has returned . Kanyenke believes that his sister , Nonahkee , could be in danger , too , and the pair leaves for New England . Kanyenke 's suspicions prove correct and they confront Warwick again when he attacks Nonahkee 's village hoping to extract John 's location from her . After the battle it is revealed that John Black and Nonahkee are in love , but are keeping it a secret from Kanyenke until a more peaceful time , although it is seen that Kanyenke is aware of this .

John and Kanyenke then take their mercenaries in pursuit of Warwick 's fleeing army , and ally with the French in the Seven Years ' War against Warwick . When Colonel George Washington tells them that Warwick is a renegade and has been hunted by the British as well , John agrees to track him down for the British . John leads his mercenaries and Washington 's forces and destroys Warwick 's base in the Great Lakes region . The presence of the Circle of Ossus ' Boneguard prove to John the existence of the Circle and that Warwick is the current Circle 's leader . In the ruins of the Circle 's base John finds the decapitated body of his uncle Stuart . John then demands that Nonahkee be kept at home while they pursue Warwick , who has again escaped and fled to the Rocky Mountains . Kanyenke agrees and reveals that he knows about John 's relationship with Nonahkee . He tells him that he would not have chosen John as her husband , but he accepts it

because he knows that she decides who she loves .

John and Kanyenke then set out to follow Warwick , first earning the respect of the Great Plains tribes by good deeds and helping to defend them against Warwick 's forces , then they intercept Warwick 's supply train and destroy a fortified Circle base in the mountains . They soon discover that Warwick and his soldiers have fled even farther west , to act as a checkpoint at Alaska , where they notice the Circle 's new ally , the Russians . They realize that the Circle plans to capture British and French colonies and towns while their soldiers are at war with one another , and that Warwick wants the Circle of Ossus as the new leader of the New World .

With the help of some miners , John and Kanyenke bring down large rock bridges to stop the Russians ' large cannons from getting through . John then sends Kanyenke and the remainder of his mercenaries back east as he plants explosives to cause an avalanche and bury the Russians in the mountains . In the end , as John is setting up the dynamite , Warwick and several Boneguard approach him . Warwick attempts to kill John but John uses a barrel of gunpowder as a shield (knowing that Warwick won 't risk detonating it by shooting at him) , jumps to the trigger , and pushes it , detonating the mountainside ; killing himself , the soldiers , and Warwick ; and causing an avalanche . The avalanche buries the Russians and sets the Circle of Ossus back so far that they cause no problems for many years .

By spring , Kanyenke has returned to his village , where he learns that his sister has given birth to John 's son Nathaniel , whom he begins to help raise .

= = = Act III : Steel = = =

During Act III , the player plays as the U.S. civilization (only available in the campaign) , which resembles the British civilization .

In 1817 (five years after Nathaniel 's funeral in 1812 , his death date according to the The WarChiefs campaign) , the narrative shifts to Amelia Black , the granddaughter of John Black and Nathaniel 's daughter , and heiress owner of The Falcon Company (possibly named after Sahin) , a railroad company whose sights are set on expanding new railroad operations in the United States since the compensation given by the British and Americans for John Black 's sacrifice has been exhausted by John 's son Nathaniel financing the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War .

After defeating a rival railroad company and laying track to supply the US Cavalry near the Mexican border , Amelia meets a French prospector named Pierre Beaumont , who helps her and US Cavalry commander , Major Cooper , defeat a Mexican army attacking a fort . He then lures Amelia to a mine in Colorado where a surprise visit from an aged Kanyenke , who has brought Cooper and the cavalry with him , reveals Beaumont as the leader of Circle of Ossus . Amelia , Kanyenke , and Cooper chase Beaumont through the mines , where they find a map to the Lake of the Moon .

The three travel to Florida , but find that the Lake has dried up and is now a swamp filled with gold from the sunken treasure fleet last seen in Act I. There , they destroy a Circle base in the swamp . Cooper finds and attempts to capture Beaumont , but Beaumont commands two wolves to attack him . Cooper shoots one of them with his pistol , but the other kills him . Amelia , now wanting to avenge Cooper , learns from the local Seminoles that there is an Inca city in Pacamayo Valley where several barrels of the Fountain 's water have been stored .

Amelia and Kanyenke immediately sail to South America , where they help Simón Bolívar defeat the Spanish . Bolívar offers them guides and , with the Circle 's army close behind they make a dangerous passage through the bitingly cold Andes and discover the Inca city in Pacamayo Valley . After helping to defend the city from the Circle in a hardfought battle , Amelia finds that Beaumont has once again escaped , this time with the hijacked barrels of the Fountain 's water .

Amelia and Kanyenke next fight the Circle at their last stronghold in Cuba , and , after allying with the Spanish colony of Havana and awaiting the arrival of the U.S. Navy , they destroy the Ossuary and the fixed guns guarding it . As the battle is ending , Amelia and Kanyenke pass under an archway in which Beaumont is concealed . Beaumont jumps down and attempts to stab Amelia but Kanyenke pushes her out of the way . All three tumble to the ground . Beaumont charges at Amelia , about to stab her , but when Beaumont gets near , Amelia kicks him and pushes him backwards .

He quickly charges at her again , but she grabs her shotgun and shoots him . Amelia later uses the Circle 's stored treasure to revive the Falcon Company and succeeds in building railroads to the west coast .

During the credits , there is a final cut scene between Amelia and an Old Coot first introduced earlier in the campaign . At first , his comments regarding how her family must be proud of her seem out of place ? then he makes a reference to the Circle and how she was able to defeat them in only one lifetime , hinting that he is indeed the original Morgan Black . As the Old Coot walks away , his voice grows deeper with a more exaggerated Scottish accent , further supporting this idea . It appears he has lived longer than the average person because he drank from the Fountain of Youth after Act I. Amelia then asks what he just said , he replies with a knowing , " Don 't miss your train , " and then he walks away .

= = Development = =

= = = Technical features = = =

Age of Empires III builds on and introduces new features to the Age of Mythology engine , called Bang ! Engine . One new feature is the inclusion of the Havok physics simulation middleware engine on the Windows version and the similar PhysX engine on Mac OS X. This means that many events such as building destruction and tree falls will not be pre @-@ created animations , but will be calculated according to the physics engine , in an innovation for the series . Other graphical features of the game include bloom lighting and support for pixel shader 3 @.@ 0 .

= = Audio = =

The Age of Empires III Original Soundtrack features an original musical score composed by Ensemble Studios musicians Stephen Rippy and Kevin McMullan , whose previous work includes other games in the Age of Empires series as well as Age of Mythology . It was released on November 11 , 2005 by Sumthing Else Music Works . Stephen Rippy , music and sound director at Ensemble Studios , said , " Age of Empires III is a game with an epic topic ? it covers the colonization of the Americas over a period of some three hundred years , so it needed to have an epic @-@ sounding score to match . Using a full orchestra and choir as well as some more period @-@ inspired instrumentation , the music follows the story of Morgan Black and his descendants as they battle the Circle of Ossus for a foothold in the New World . " The soundtrack also features a bonus DVD that includes fourteen tracks remixed in 5 @.@ 1 surround , a behind @-@ the @-@ scenes video of the studio session , the Age of Empires III cinematic trailer and five exclusive bonus tracks .

Unlike previous versions of Age of Empires the AI nations in single player skirmish mode will send voice messages to the player at various points in the game , taunting them if they are selected as an enemy to the player or sharing military plans with a player who is allied with them . All the AI characters have different personalities and many different quotes exist in the game . The feature can be easily removed if required .

= = Release history = =

Following the announcement of the game on January 4 , 2005 , a trial version was released on September 7 , 2005 . This contained a cut @-@ down version of the game , introducing new features , such as two campaign scenarios , two random map scenarios (New England and Texas) and access to two civilizations (British and Spanish) , and a variety of modifications . An updated demo version was made available with the game 's release on September 22 , 2005 .

The release of the game on September 22 , 2005 saw two separate editions being made available . The standard edition included the game and manual , a collector 's edition version in a presentation

box that includes the official soundtrack , extra documentation , a hardback book titled Art of Empires that contains concept art and 3D renders from the game and a DVD entitled The Making of Age of Empires III .

The release of the game has been followed by a series of patches that have fixed minor bugs in the software or added new features .

Ensemble Studios released an expansion for the game named Age of Empires III : The WarChiefs on October 17 , 2006 . It contains three new native civilizations that can be completely controlled : The Iroquois Confederation , the Great Sioux Nation , and the Aztecs . New content for existing European civilizations , maps and gameplay additions (such as the " revolution " feature , in which players can " revolt " from their mother country and start an active military coup in the game) was added . Both the original game and the first expansion were made available in a single " gold " edition on October 23 , 2007 .

A second expansion pack , Age of Empires III : The Asian Dynasties , was announced on May 18 , 2007 and features three Asian civilizations : the Indians , Chinese , and Japanese . It was released on October 23 , 2007 .

A Mac OS X port of the game was released on November 13 , 2006 by MacSoft , followed by the first expansion on June 18 , 2007 .

In 2009 , when Ensemble Studios was closed and no support was to expect by the successor company Robot Entertainment , the game community tried to provide game support and fixes of remaining issues themselves , for instance with fan patches .

On November 21 , 2010 Microsoft sold the game including its two expansion packs as a part of its relaunch of its Games for Windows Live platform for 10 cents or 10 Microsoft points . The overwhelming and unanticipated demand created a shortage of account keys leaving some of those who had purchased the game through the promotion unable to install the game . Microsoft remedied this issue by assuring all customers who purchased the game that account keys would be generated within one week and automatically uploaded to each profile . As a result of this promotion the overall sales of the game have sharply increased .

= = Reception = =

Age of Empires III was well received by critics and reviewers . The game received an average score of 82 % according to Game Rankings . Age of Empires III was listed as the eighth best @-@ selling PC game of 2005 , and over two million copies of it had been sold by May 2007 . GameSpot pointed out that " Age of Empires III has some very big shoes to fill , " and GameSpy remarked that it " may not redefine real @-@ time strategy gaming , but it sets the bar so high that we will be comparing games to this for years . " IGN also commented on the game , saying " Age of Empires III is a superbly balanced and polished game , " and that " Discounting a few niggles in the interface , the whole presentation is rock solid . " Game Revolution said that it is " as detailed as a history book , and about as much fun , " while GameZone stated it is " one purchase you will not come to regret . "

Age of Empires III was the eighth best @-@ selling PC game of 2005 despite its late release , and sold over 2 million copies by May 2007 .

= = = Graphics = = =

The game 's visuals were highly praised by reviewers . In a preview , IGN said that " After seeing the screenshots , our jaws hit the floor at the amount of detail , " while in their review , 1UP.com described it as " one of the most beautiful games you will put on your computer for the foreseeable future ; " GameSpy agreed , stating , " Age III 's graphics are unmatched in the strategy genre . " GameSpot also admired the graphics , but had a negative comment as well ; they said , " Were it not for the awkward unit behavior ... Age of Empires III would look truly amazing . " GameSpy awarded Age of Empires III the " Best Graphics " award at GameSpy 's " Game of the Year 2005 " , mentioning that the graphics engine boasted " all the high @-@ end technology you would normally find in first @-@ person shooters . "

= = = Sound effects = = =

GameZone praised the game 's sound effects , saying that " you will feel the explosions of the cannon balls , the muskets firing their endless volleys , and the destruction of a building . It all sounds extremely realistic , and makes the game come that much more alive . " Eurogamer said " AoE3 ... sounds fantastic , " while Game Revolution mentioned that " The ambient sounds , music and voice work all suit the colonial theme . "

= = = Single @-@ player campaign = = =

Reviewers were divided about the single @-@ player campaign . GameSpot thought it was " standard for a real @-@ time strategy game " , but also complained that it had " less @-@ than @-@ stellar voice work and awkward cutscenes ; " GameSpy agreed that " Age of Empires III 's campaign is not revolutionary " , but thought that " the voice acting is great . " IGN praised the campaign 's story , in that it gave the player a " nice sense of purpose " ; they thought " The 24 @-@ mission campaign is very well designed . " Eurogamer said the campaign lacked originality , stating , though " well @-@ written and imaginatively framed , " the campaign " offers exactly the same kind of challenges that RTS campaigns have been offering for years ; " Game Revolution disliked the campaign more than the other reviewers . Comparing it to Age of Empires II 's campaign , they said : " The plot actually got worse . Age of Empires III ... avoids all the interesting and prickly issues like genocide , epidemics and slavery , instead subbing in a wimpy tale of a family destined to protect the Holy Grail from a Satanic Cult . "

= = = Multiplayer = = =

Age of Empires III 's multiplayer was the first in the series to be integrated into the game interface and was highly lauded , as was the Home City concept . The topic of multiplayer was touched by GameZone , who said " this game demands multiplayer mode , and Ensemble Studios provided this for the players , " while at 1UP , the reviewer commented similarly , stating , " Multiplayer support has been significantly upgraded with a slick interface , support for clans and a number of other useful features . " GameSpy commented on the Home City as well , saying , " the ' home city ' system creates long @-@ term depth and strategy . " EuroGamer , however , stated : " Stop with the gifts ! ... You do not need to let me flick to a home city screen every few minutes so that I can select a free unit or resource windfall . I 'm not some spoilt toddler that needs to be bribed with endless sweeties . " Age of empires III uses the ESO server for multiplayer .

= = = Awards = = =

The game was presented with two awards by GameSpy in 2005 : " Real @-@ time strategy game of the year " and " Best Graphics " . GameSpy highly praised the game overall , giving it 5 stars in its review , which particularly noted the graphics and multiplayer experience . The game was named fifth @-@ best game of 2005 by GameSpy .
Other awards , including an " Outstanding " from GameZone , reflect the positive critical reception of the game .
The game was given an ' honorable mention ' in the ' Best Music ' category .
Yahoo ! ' s report differed , but still had many positive features . Like GameSpy , Yahoo ! also praised the effort put into the graphics and physics , but maintained that these are essentially eye @-@ candy . Both Yahoo ! and Eurogamer were disappointed by the traditional economics @-@ based strategy of the game and believed that this , with the lack of useful formation and tactics , meant that the game does not stand up to other modern real @-@ time strategy games . Eurogamer shared these final thoughts and described the new Home City shipments , along with all the treasures scattered around the map , as silly and childish ways of trying to complement the game 's

lack of strategy and tactical choices . However , Eurogamer recognized that Ensemble Studios was brave to implement " something quite different " from other real time strategy games ? the Home City concept .