

= Rise and Fall : Civilizations at War =

Rise and Fall : Civilizations at War is a real @-@ time strategy game developed by both Stainless Steel Studios and Midway Games ; it was released on June 12 , 2006 . The game incorporates segments of both third @-@ person and first @-@ person shooter gameplay , by allowing the player to temporarily control a " hero " . Rise and Fall is based in the first millennium BC , and features four playable civilizations : Persia , Greece , Egypt , and Rome . The game includes over eighty civilization @-@ unique military units , as well as eight " hero " units ? of which only one may be purchased during a game . In Rise and Fall , there are two campaigns : one follows the conquests of Alexander the Great ; and the other , the fictional liberation of Egypt by Cleopatra .

During the game 's development , Stainless Steel Studios closed . They abandoned all their games , including Rise and Fall , which was near finishing . Rick Goodman , founder of Stainless Steel and the lead designer of Rise and Fall , reported that Midway stopped funding the game when its release date was pushed back by several months . Midway then decided to finish the game themselves . Reviews of the game were mixed ; it won two awards , and was commercially successful in the United Kingdom .

On October 16 , 2008 , Midway released a free , ad @-@ supported version of the game , supported by the US Air Force .

= = Gameplay = =

Featuring mainly RTS , but also third @-@ person and ? with a few heroes only ? first @-@ person shooter scenarios , the gameplay in Rise and Fall is unique . The goal of the game is to defeat the opponent (s) , which is done by first micromanaging a base , and then training an army to destroy the enemy 's position . Both land and sea units are available , allowing for different strategies , including amphibious warfare . As in most RTS games , units fight using a rock , paper , scissors method , meaning some soldiers are more capable of defeating a certain kind of enemy , while being defeated by another (ex. cavalry defeat archers , archers defeat spearmen , spearmen defeat cavalry) .

Military units in Rise and Fall are grouped as infantry , cavalry , special , siege , or naval . Infantry , cavalry , and some special units automatically group themselves into formations ? groups of soldiers that receive attack and defense bonuses ? when at least eight of that kind of unit is present ; the maximum number of units a formation may consist of is sixty @-@ four . The unit 's speed , attack , defensive capabilities , and range vary , depending on several factors ; these include their civilization ; unit type ; the upgrades that have been purchased ; whether or not they are in formation , and , if so , its size . Three resources ? wood , gold , and glory ? are used to build structures , train units , purchase upgrades ; a fourth resource , stamina , is spent using " hero mode " . Wood and gold are deposited in settlements , or one of their various upgrades , such as town centers . Glory and stamina are both earned : glory by building and fighting , and stamina when the hero unit kills an enemy . In several RTS games , upgrades ? sometimes called " Ages " ? are available that represent time periods or technological levels ; Rise and Fall uses a similar concept . When upgrades to the hero ? called " Levels " in this game ? are purchased with glory , new technologies , upgrades , units , and advisors are unlocked . Advisors ? paid for with glory as well ? provide civilization @-@ specific benefits and bonuses to the player 's army and economy . Outposts , guarded by artificial intelligence soldiers , ? soldiers who defend automatically ? also play an important part in Rise and Fall . Conquering outposts increases the number of units trained from military buildings or ships , while not augmenting their price . The outpost guardians , however , protect it , and reappear until the outpost is taken by a player ; once captured , they protect the outpost from attacks by the owner 's enemies .

Another feature in Rise and Fall is " hero mode " , which allows the player to temporarily take control of a hero , as if in a third @-@ person shooter game ; certain heroes ? for instance , Cleopatra ? can zoom in further than others with their bow , allowing the player to aim as if in a first @-@ person shooter game . In hero mode , the hero unit becomes much more powerful , often

allowing the player to destroy multiple enemy formations . Stamina is required to use this mode , however , and is lost quickly during its duration . The longest a player can spend in hero mode varies with stamina levels , which is increased with upgrades to the hero . To balance the game , hero mode can be used much less than RTS mode . Each civilization has two heroes from which to choose , usually a famous leader in history , ? such as Alexander the Great ? but sometimes pertaining to mythology ? such as Achilles .

Rise and Fall may be played in both single @-@ player and multiplayer . In single @-@ player games , only one human player may play , against one through seven computer players . If more than two players will play , they may be grouped into teams , which can be chosen to be either permanent or manageable during the game using diplomacy . Other options available before beginning a game include the " population capacity " ; ? the number of units that are trainable ? which map of the twenty @-@ four to play on ; the difficulty setting ; the number of resources given at the start ; and the color and civilization of all players . Rise and Fall 's multiplayer component is powered by GameSpy , and may be played by anyone who has updated his or her version of the game . Players may host or join matches through either the internet or LAN . The host of the game chooses the options , while the player (s) who join the game either agree to the conditions , or reject them ; the match begins when all players agree with the host 's terms . Each player may select his own civilization and color , and does not require the host to change them . The multiplayer was discussed on the forums of Rise and Fall Heaven , a popular strategy game fansite . It was said that it is not frequented by many players , and that matches are often difficult to begin due to indecisiveness . During a game , the rules previously agreed upon are often broken by one or more players , leading to unruliness . Despite these drawbacks , several players reported that they played multiplayer .

= = Campaigns = =

Rise and Fall includes two campaigns , which are divided into acts containing from two to four chapters each ; a chapter comprises a battle and a cinematic . The first campaign follows Alexander the Great on his quest to defeat the allegiance of his brother , and the Persian general , Memnon . The second campaign features Cleopatra , and her attempts to repel a Roman invasion by Octavian .

The Alexander the Great campaign recounts the young king 's conquest of Asia . The beginning cinematic is of the killing of Philip II of Macedon , Alexander 's father , and introduces Alexander as a naive and unprepared prince , who is challenged by the duties thrust upon him . Alexander decides to follow the advice of his tutor , Aristotle , by quelling rebellions in Greece and its territories , as well as forming an allegiance with Parmenion . He then follows his brother ? who had left to Persia ? by sea , and faces off against the army and navy of General Memnon . Captured by deceit , Alexander escapes , but only after fighting in an amphitheatre . He then begins to sack Persian cities , and takes a temple containing the Bow of Heracles , a mythical weapon of immense power . Alexander eventually captures his brother , and executes him for treason . Finally , during the Siege of Tyre (332 BC) , Alexander defeats Memnon , and is portrayed as having earned his kingdom . By now , Alexander has matured , and his men hold him in high esteem .

The Cleopatra campaign focuses on Cleopatra VII and her efforts to drive out an invasion by Octavian . As the Roman legions take control of much of Egypt , Cleopatra , her lover Mark Antony , and her brother Ptolemy free areas under Roman rule . Antony distrusts Ptolemy however , believing him to be in league with Rome . Meanwhile , Cleopatra defeats several of Octavian 's legions , causing him to send one of his best generals to eliminate her . After an expedition to Nubia , Cleopatra and the Egyptians gain the ability to train war elephants , a gift from the Nubian queen . Ptolemy is found guilty of treason , as Mark Antony suspected , and is arrested . He escapes , killing the guards , but is recaptured . Before being executed , he says he did not kill the guards , and escaped only to save himself ; he blames a priest , Tor , for being allied with Rome and killing his guards . The warrior priest kills two more guards as soon as he hears this , before Mark Antony attacks him . Tor quickly kills Antony , and escapes . Bent on revenge , Cleopatra tracks him down

and defeats him , along with many Romans and Egyptian traitors . Octavian 's general soon arrives with his legions , but is defeated multiple times . Octavian , tired of his defeats , kills him before the Roman armies , setting an example for his men . The Emperor himself then leads the attack on Alexandria , and plunders the city until Cleopatra arrives . Then , he and Cleopatra fight ; the Egyptian queen slays Octavian , but is mortally wounded , and dies moments after having freed Egypt . Ptolemy buries his sister in a pyramid , and many Egyptians attend her funeral procession .

= = Development = =

Rise and Fall was mainly developed by Stainless Steel Studios (SSSI) from 2005 to early 2006 . Stainless Steel was founded in 1998 , by Rick Goodman and other Age of Empires designers . Before working on Rise and Fall , they had released Empire Earth and Empires : Dawn of the Modern World , two commercially successful titles . In addition , they created two game engines , the Titan , and its upgrade , the Titan 2 @.@ 0 .

Rise and Fall uses the Titan 2 @.@ 0 engine to run . It includes many features , such as the game 's scenario editor , graphics , and artificial intelligence . The engine also powers the multiplayer mode , and handles all objects in the game world .

The scenario editor for Rise and Fall is similar to that used in Empires : Dawn of the Modern World , though Stainless Steel claims it has been improved . Features from the Empire Earth editor were re-@-@ introduced into that of Rise and Fall , and new ones were added as well . The editor handles flora in an advanced way , and has improved its movement . Ranger , a Stainless Steel Studios staff member , announced that all units ? including the hero ? will be editable using triggers ; in Titan editors , triggers can alter unit statistics and features , allowing for many alterations to the game . The editor also allows the existing maps to be edited , and new ones created . The developers of Rise and Fall created the campaigns using the built in editor , meaning that experienced enthusiasts and modders of the game have the option of creating new missions .

The developers , however , did not finish the game due to the sudden closure of Stainless Steel . Goodman blamed Midway Games , the publisher , for not funding the project , which led to the firing of employees . A GameSpot news article on the subject read , " He [Goodman] reportedly told Gamestar that after the PC strategy game 's release was pushed from October to early 2006 , Midway cut off advances to Stainless Steel , which in turn had to lay off its staff due to lack of funding . " As former AI programmer Daniel Higgins said , " This is true , SSSI is no more . I can 't give details as to why , but I can tell you the product is in excellent shape , the team was in high morale and plowing ahead at full steam , and we were just weeks from gold disk . " To complete the game , Midway , the publisher , shuffled it to their San Diego studios , where it was finished . As The Armchair Empire said in its review , " Overall , Rise & Fall feels like an unfinished product . Besides AI that often lines up to be killed , the engine powering the game stutters often . After doing a bit of research , this can probably be traced back to the financial woes of publisher Midway . Close to going " gold " developer Stainless Steel Studios ceased operation due to insufficient funds , Midway shuffled the project internally . The lack of polish is the result . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Reviews = = =

Rise and Fall was received by critics with both positive and negative scores , with an average rating ? according to Game Rankings ? of 65 % (78th PC game of 2006) . PC Gamer UK called it " Pure 24 @-@ carat gaming gold ! " Games Radar said " This RTS has its ups and downs ... " , while Games Radar UK said " The RTS Rubicon has been crossed . " GameSpot remarked that " this game doesn 't quite know what it wants to be . " ; IGN stated that " ... there 's very little reason to recommend this title to fans of the strategy or action genres . "

The graphics were examined by the reviewers . Games Radar admired them , having said " Rise &

Fall is about pretty units killing each other in a beautifully drawn environment ... " GameSpy reported that they " are way behind the curve " ; GameSpot agreed , saying : " Buildings and units seem boxy and chunky , suffering from a low number of polygons , while the textures themselves look grainy . "

The sound in the game fared well in the reviews . GameSpot said of the music " The game sounds better , at least , thanks to some appropriately pompous Gladiator @-@ style music . " IGN reported that " Music is decent , and voice @-@ overs are passable , but sound effects need some serious help . "

The campaign was also criticized , and was said to have " poorly rendered , incomprehensible cutscenes filled with bad dialogue and characters that seemed to swagger like they were walking down Main Street in a Western @-@ movie gunfight " by GameSpy ; IGN agreed , reporting that " the cutscenes are also presented as pre @-@ rendered engine movies compressed to questionable quality . " GameSpot said that the hero @-@ only levels required " ... a vast amount of patience , the reflexes of a teenager , and a good deal of luck , " and that the campaigns are " bound to turn off strategy fans " . IGN complained that " these levels take a long damn time to load ... "

Naval warfare was thoroughly reviewed as well . GameSpy enjoyed it , saying " The game also puts a new spin on naval combat ... when everything goes just right with ship movement ... this is a blast . " On the other hand , IGN thought it was not well done , and wrote that " One of the features that looked fairly tasty was naval combat and some aspects of it are nice ... Unfortunately it 's another case of execution not coming through . Pro @-@ G agreed , and did not enjoy the naval side of the game at all , complaining that " ... it 's often near impossible to dock on dry land . " , and that " numerous boats in your fleet ... complicate things further , with the path finding AI seemingly unable to navigate around other boats in anything but huge stretches of open water . "

Hero mode was also praised by some , and depreciated by others . Games Radar thought , " ... it ? s cool to pick off enemy soldiers in first person ... " , while Pro @-@ G 's impression was that " Hero mode is a good idea that 's gone badly wrong . " IGN said that " the lack of personality , special combat moves , and the fun factor that most action games focus on really makes hero mode dull . " GameSpot was more forgiving ; they thought that " In small doses , hero command is a nice feature that lets you vent some steam by hacking and slashing mindlessly . But when it 's the basis of an entire level it can be maddening ... " GameSpy had mixed opinions ; they began saying that " the Hero ... is a genuinely fun part of the game as well as a key element of the player 's strategy . " , but then shifted to a more negative view : " Once players get past the visceral thrill of being able to buzzsaw through enemy armies ... they 'll realize that such moments are pretty few and far between . " Finally , they mentioned that " the hero controls are a bit swimmy , and the game 's collision detection in third @-@ person mode is kind of wonky . "

Overall , the opinions of reviewers seem to have been summed up by Pro @-@ G : " One day someone is going to combine the RTS with another genre and pull it off really well ; Rise & Fall isn 't that game . The basic RTS elements are sound , but the hero mode verges on awful , boat control is a nightmare , and the campaigns are dull ... There are so many other games out there that offer a better all @-@ round RTS experience , there 's really no reason to bother with Midway 's effort . Some praise must be given for trying something a little different , but Rise & Fall is another idea that falls a long way short of its potential . "

= = = Awards and popularity = = =

Rise and Fall received two notable awards , and achieved high sales in the United Kingdom . It was one of the winners in the " E3 2005 : Best of Show " , hosted by The Wargamer . They were impressed with the game , and complimented its innovation : " ... real @-@ time strategy games are simply wars between faceless and lifeless armies . Sure , it ? s nice to put a zillion units on the game screen and watch them run into each other , but too often these games blend together because they lack personality . Stainless Steel Studios seems to have solved that problem in Rise & Fall , their new historical strategy game which allows players to not only control massive armies at war , but also jump into the shoes of the heroes themselves ... " . The other award won by Rise and Fall was in the " Strategy " category at the British Academy Video Games Awards . According to the

Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA) , Rise and Fall became one of the best @-@ selling games in the United Kingdom soon after its release , and it remained in the top ten for two months .