

# Total War: Warhammer

## A Review by Daniel Barbuto

Earlier this year in May, Sega and the Creative Assembly released their most ambitious Total War game yet, and the first non-historic entry into the series. Teaming up with Games Workshop, purveyors of all things overpriced and beautifully crafted, Creative Assembly fused two powerful forces in gaming hobby into one. With the lore and world of Warhammer and the interface and mix of strategic and real-time battles, Total War: Warhammer smashed into PC gaming and continues to draw in crowds as new downloadable content (DLC) are released. It is a worthy successor to previous Total War installments, improved over its forebears in many ways, and fun for anyone who enjoyed tabletop Warhammer Fantasy.

For those not familiar, Total War is a series of computer games that from their inception melded a strategic campaign with real-time battles of individual units. Ranging throughout history from ancient Rome to 1880's Japan, the various Total War games and their expansions allowed gamers to not only feel like a general on the field but also a king or emperor of a vast realm. The games blending the two components seamlessly attributes to their wild success in the strategy gaming genre, of which Creative Assembly's Total War is king. Recently, there was some disappointment with the second version of the Roman themed game, Total War: Rome II. The game was poorly optimized, and failed to live up to a standard previous titles had met. It was followed by Total War: Attila, set in the 400 A.D. migration period Europe. This was a far better entry into the series and introduced better AI as well as new mechanics that would become pivotal in Total War: Warhammer.



Total War: Warhammer, at its release, allowed for players to fight with 4 or 5 races, depending on whether one had purchased the game early enough to receive bonus content. This practice of bonus content plus DLC is repugnant and I'll cover that more later. The five races include the Dwarves, Vampire Counts (Undead, skeletons, zombies), Orcs, the Empire (Humans with a Renaissance Germany flavor) and the Warriors of Chaos (Demonic influenced humans, beasts, barbarians, eldritch horrors, etc.) Added later and recently in DLC were the Beastmen, a collection of foul Chaos tainted half-men, and the Wood Elves, whose name is self-explanatory. More races are found in the Warhammer world, but there is no confirmation as to which will be joining the game. In fact, Creative Assembly and Games Workshop have stated that this is the first of three games set in the Warhammer Fantasy world.



The game mechanics follow the previous Total War entries, with a grand strategic map on which armies and characters are moved and cities are managed. When combat is engaged, a battlefield is loaded and the components of each army are then realized in 3D units made up of hundreds of individual models. For any wargamer, the sight is impressive as well as marvelously easier than traditional tabletop setup and teardown. However, one can't admire and grow attached to computer generated models in the same manner as plastic and metal, hand painted and crafted. Being a fantasy based game, in addition to traditional knights and footmen, crossbows and cannons, all sorts of bizarre and monstrous units exist. Warhammer has always been a bit silly, with goblins wielding giant balls and chains, and goblins being catapulted with wings and missile shaped helmets, and goblins riding round creatures with no arms and all teeth named squigs, and goblins...well, you get the idea. Goblins aren't the only ones though, with Dwarven gyrocopters, Beastmen minotaurs, and Empire Steam Tanks being some more examples of strange but fun units. Interestingly, with the aforementioned gyrocopters, griffins, harpies, and other flying units, Creative Assembly had to create battlefields with a more extensive 3rd dimension consideration than ever before. And it works beautifully.





If one thing makes Total War: Warhammer more fun to play than its predecessors, it's how well the game plays! Very few bugs, excellent graphics rendering, and magnificent game mechanics make battles fun, with little of the past frustrations that came with thousands of individual 3D models engaging in combat. The AI is impressive, and operates efficiently for the most part, although in the campaign mode it can make some very strange decisions. The game does not require too much in the way of computer capabilities, but a good processor and graphics card will absolutely improve one's enjoyment.





Each of the different races has a unique playstyle, unique units, and Hero characters which lead and/or aid armies. Quests for magical items as well as a role playing skill tree for characters creates a depth to the game even when the player is not necessarily sure what to do or who they will combat with next. In short, the amount of depth in Total War: Warhammer exceeds the two most recent Total War games. Though in fairness, many aspects of Total War: Attila, such as horde mechanics for armies in place of settlements, are to be found now in Total War: Warhammer.



On the negative end is an issue that Creative Assembly has been refusing to change for quite some time; that is, excessive DLC. More egregious is the fact that much of the content the studio sells separately from the main game arguably should have been included in the game from launch. Worse still, the price of some of the DLC is outrageous. For all currently available DLC, you would pay as much as you did for the original game, if not more. The two additional races so far, each are charged at \$18 a piece, together being over half the price of the game at launch. The additional content is an unknown quantity, as I have not chosen to buy it, waiting instead for the inevitable sales in which its price will be reduced.

For a fan of the Total War series of games, of Games Workshop Warhammer Fantasy, or for fans of both like myself, Total War: Warhammer is a game deserving the gravitas that both sides of its name carry. If one has an interest in purchasing the game, it should be listed at a lower price soon as Steam, an online PC game retailer, prepares for its winter sale. Also, some DLC is free of charge at all times, and though a minor point, certainly makes the game a little more fun for no extra cost. Overall, I'd recommend this title to anyone with an interest with either of the fandoms that it involves.