GENERAL

age of sigmar and the end of warhammer terminally incoherent

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Age of Sigmar and the End of Warhammer: Terminally Incoherent or a Bold New Chapter?

The world of tabletop miniature gaming has been forever altered by the transition from Warhammer Fantasy Battles to Age of Sigmar. The phrase **“age of sigmar and the end of warhammer terminally incoherent”** has become a rallying cry for fans who feel the change was chaotic, while others celebrate the fresh narrative possibilities. In this comprehensive guide, we explore the origins of the shift, the lore changes, the impact on gameplay, community reactions, and what the future holds for both the setting and its devoted players.

1. The Legacy of Warhammer Fantasy Battles

1.1 A Rich, Decades Long Setting

Warhammer Fantasy Battles (WHFB) first launched in 1983 and quickly became a cultural touchstone for tabletop enthusiasts. Its grimdark, high fantasy world—complete with dwarfs, elves, orcs, and the ever looming threat of Chaos—offered a sprawling narrative that evolved across multiple editions. The setting’s depth was matched by its rules, which blended tactical combat with an expansive army list system.

1.2 The Evolving Ruleset

Over the years, WHFB saw several major rule revisions: the 2nd edition (1995), 3rd edition (2000), 4th edition (2005), 5th edition (2008), and 6th edition (2010). Each iteration refined combat mechanics, introduced new factions, and tweaked the balance of power. Despite these changes, the core ethos remained: a brutal, war torn world where heroism and tragedy coexist.

2. The Dawn of Age of Sigmar

2.1 Why the Shift?

By the late 2010s, Games Workshop (GW) recognized that the aging Warhammer Fantasy setting had become stagnant. The narrative felt repetitive, and the rules were increasingly complex. GW’s goal was to modernize the game, attract new players, and streamline production. The result was Age of Sigmar (AoS), launched in 2015 as the spiritual successor to WHFB.

2.2 Core Premise of Age of Sigmar

AoS reimagined the world as the Mortal Realms—a collection of disparate, chaotic realms ruled by the god king Sigmar. The setting moved away from the single, unified world of Warhammer to a fragmented, mythic landscape where each realm has its own lore and aesthetics. The narrative focuses on the eternal struggle between the forces of Order and the Chaos of the Mortal Realms.

2.3 The “Terminally Incoherent” Narrative

Many fans describe the transition as “terminally incoherent” due to the abrupt shift in lore, the introduction of new deities, and the re branding of familiar factions. The original Warhammer world’s continuity was largely discarded,

replaced by a more mythic, less grounded narrative. While this has been criticized for losing the gritty realism of WHFB, supporters argue that the new mythos offers richer storytelling potential.

3. Lore Overhaul: From Warhammer to Age of Sigmar

3.1 The Collapse of the Old World

The core narrative of AoS begins with the **Great Scourge**, a cataclysmic event that shattered the old world into the Mortal Realms. This event explains the loss of continuity between WHFB and AoS. The Great Scourge also introduces the concept of the **Sigmarite**—heroes who survived the collapse and now serve as the bridge between the mortal realms and the gods.

3.2 New Factions and Rebranded Forces

- Stormcast Eternals – The re imagined Space Marines of the Old World, now divine soldiers of Sigmar.
- Chaos Warriors – Former Chaos forces re branded with new lore and aesthetics.
- High Elves, Wood Elves, Dark Elves – Repositioned within the new realms, with distinct mythic backstories.
- Dwarfs, Lizardmen, Ogre Kingdoms – Recast as part of the Mortal Realms, each with unique cosmological roles.

3.3 The Mortal Realms Explained

AoS is divided into several realms, each with its own governing deity and thematic focus:

1. The Realm of Order – The center of Sigmar's power, home to the Stormcast Eternals.
2. The Realm of Chaos – The domain of the Chaos Gods, where the forces of ruin dwell.
3. The Realm of the Undead – A grim, ever dark realm populated by necromancers and the undead.
4. The Realm of the Wild – A chaotic, untamed realm where the forces of nature roam.
5. The Realm of the Gods – The celestial realm where the gods of the Mortal Realms reside.

3.4 Mythic Storytelling vs. Gridiron Realism

The shift to AoS introduced a more mythic tone. The narrative now leans heavily on epic battles between gods and mortals, a departure from the gritty realism of the old world. This change has both attracted new players who appreciate the mythic flair and alienated veterans who miss the tangible, grounded feel of Warhammer Fantasy.

4. Rules Evolution: From 6th Edition to Age of Sigmar

4.1 Core Rulebook Simplification

AoS introduced a single, streamlined rulebook that consolidates all the core rules into one volume. This move was designed to reduce the learning curve for new players and to eliminate the need for multiple rulebooks that were common in earlier editions of WHFB.

2.2 The "Living Rulebook" Approach

Games Workshop's "Living Rulebook" approach allows for rapid updates and changes to the rules. Instead of releasing full new editions, GW releases supplements that tweak specific aspects of gameplay, ensuring that the system remains fresh and balanced.

3.3 New Mechanics: The "Wargear" System

AoS introduced the **Wargear**system, a flexible, modular approach to equipment and upgrades. This system replaced the old, rigid "gear" system from WHFB and allows for greater customization of units.

4.4 The "Heroic" and "Warlord" Rules

The new rules emphasize heroism and leadership. Units can now benefit from the presence of a hero or warlord, granting them bonuses that reflect the narrative significance of these figures. This shift encourages players to craft more dynamic army compositions.

5. Community Reception: The Debate Over “Terminally Incoherent” Change

5.1 Criticisms from Long Time Players

Many veterans of WHFB criticize AoS for its perceived loss of continuity. They argue that the abrupt narrative shift and the removal of beloved lore elements create a sense of disconnection. The term “terminally incoherent” captures the frustration felt by those who feel the setting’s new mythology is confusing and disjointed.

5.2 Praise from New Players and Casual Gamers

Conversely, new players appreciate the simplified rules and the mythic storytelling. AoS offers a more accessible entry point, with clearer army lists and a streamlined command structure. The emphasis on epic battles appeals to those who enjoy a more cinematic gaming experience.

5.3 The Role of Digital Platforms

The rise of digital platforms like **Warhammer Community** and **Games Workshop’s official app** has helped bridge the gap. These platforms provide lore articles, rule clarifications, and community forums, allowing players to engage with the setting and its mechanics more deeply.

6. The Business Perspective: Why GW Made the Switch

6.1 Market Trends

The tabletop gaming market has seen a shift toward more narrative-driven experiences. GW’s decision to pivot to AoS reflects this trend, positioning the brand to attract a broader audience.

6.2 Production Efficiency

By consolidating rules and rebranding factions, GW reduced production costs. The “Living Rulebook” approach also allows for quicker updates, which means less downtime between releases.

6.3 Brand Refresh

The AoS rebranding provides a fresh, modern image for GW, distancing the brand from the “grimdark” stereotype associated with Warhammer Fantasy. This move helps attract younger audiences who may be turned off by the darker themes.

7. The Impact on Miniatures and Collectors

7.1 Re sourcing and Re painting

Collectors face the challenge of re sourcing or re painting old WHFB minis to fit the AoS aesthetic. Some factions have dedicated re-sourcing kits, while others require manual conversion.

7.2 New Miniatures and Art

AoS introduced a new line of miniatures that reflect the mythic art style. This has led to a surge in demand for high-quality, detailed models, benefiting both hobbyists and professional artists.

7.3 The Value of Legacy Pieces

Despite the shift, many legacy pieces remain valuable. The nostalgia factor and the rarity of certain WHFB models

keep them in high demand among collectors.

8. The Future: Where Age of Sigmar Is Heading

8.1 Continued Narrative Development

Games Workshop continues to expand the Mortal Realms narrative with new books, supplements, and lore articles. The upcoming releases promise to deepen the mythos and introduce new factions.

8.2 Integration with Other Games

AoS has already seen crossover content with Warhammer 40,000, such as the “Horrors of the 40,000” supplement. Future collaborations may further blur the lines between settings.

8.3 Digital Evolution

The integration of digital tools—such as augmented reality overlays and online wargaming platforms—will likely play a significant role in shaping the future of AoS. These tools can enhance both the visual experience and the strategic depth of the game.

9. Tips for New Players Navigating the Age of Sigmar Landscape

9.1 Start with the Core Rulebook

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