Apple’s M3 iMac still starts at $1,299, still doesn’t replace the 27-inch model



reader comments

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- The new iMac comes in the same seven colors as the old one.
- Apple pitches the iMac as a family desktop computer.
- Its ease of setup and unique design make it a better fit for weird areas in your home where you don’t want to park a laptop or a bulky tower-and-monitor setup.

NEW YORK—The new MacBook Pros are the biggest news from Apple’s October Mac event, but one other model got a long-overdue refresh, too—the 24-inch iMac, most recently refreshed with an Apple M1 processor in June 2021.

Apple iMac

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The new iMac is available for order today, and the first ones will arrive on November 7. The base model, which includes an M3 with an 8-core GPU, 256GB of storage, two Thunderbolt ports, a non-Touch ID keyboard, and 8GB of RAM, starts at $1,299. An upgraded version with a 10-core GPU, a power brick-mounted gigabit Ethernet port, two additional USB-C ports, and a Touch ID keyboard starts at $1,499. Those prices are $1,249 and $1,399, respectively, for education users.

The most important upgrade—and really the only one of note—is an upgrade to the new M3 chip. Because it was the only Mac to totally skip the M2, the new iMac hops forward two generations at once. Apple says that the M3's four high-performance CPU cores are up to 30 percent faster than those in the M1, and that its four high-efficiency CPU cores are as much as 50 percent faster. Apple says that the 10-core GPU in the M3 is up to 2.5 times faster than the M1, and that its 16-core Neural Engine is up to 60 percent faster.

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The M3 also bumps the iMac's maximum system RAM from 16GB to 24GB, though the base amount remains the same at 8GB. Wi-Fi 6E and Bluetooth 5.3 round out the silicon-related upgrades.

Aside from the M3, the new iMac is very similar to its predecessor. It has the same 24-inch "4.5K" display (4,480×2,520) with the same 500-nit maximum brightness, the same seven color options (silver, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple), and the same divisive all-white bezel. the same one-external-display limit, and the same steep price increases for additional RAM and storage.

The 24-inch iMac update won't satisfy people who are still waiting for a true replacement for the large-screened 27-inch

5K iMac, though the M3 should help make it faster than most Intel iMacs at most things. Apple says the M3 is 2.5 times faster than “the most popular 27-inch models” and as much as four times faster than “the most powerful 21.5-inch model,” though these are comparisons to 3- and 5-year-old six-core Core i5 processors that are especially flattering for the M3.

Even the hoped-for USB-C refresh of the iMac’s Magic accessories isn’t happening. Apple is selling the same Lightning-powered, color-matched Bluetooth Magic Keyboard, Magic Mouse, and Magic Trackpad models with the new iMacs as it did with the old ones. The base model’s keyboard still doesn’t include a Touch ID sensor.

All in all, the M3 iMac is a solid update to its predecessor, though it was never clear why the iMac skipped the M2 generation in the first place. It’s still expensive for what you get, especially once you start adding upgrades, but it’s a lot faster today than it was yesterday, which is good news to anyone who has been waiting for a refresh.

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